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MUSICALIZATION: EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC ACCESS, DISCOURSE, AND PRAXIS IN NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS, 2014-2015

by

ANDREW APRILE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017

by

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Musicalization:

by

Andrew Aprile

Advisor: Ofelia García

Over the past two decades, charter schools have become a hallmark of education reform in the United States. Concurrent with this movement is the increasing prominence of high stakes testing. While much research has sought to compare the effectiveness of charter schools and traditional public schools in terms of standardized assessments, scant attention has been paid to the role of arts and music in charter schools, and little has been done to distinguish the distinct strands of the charter school movement. Given what we know about the importance of music education and the growth of charter schools, it was the purpose of this research to provide a multi-level assessment of early childhood charter school music programs in New York City (NYC), a major hub of the charter school movement. On a macro level (district/citywide), this study compared access to music in charter schools and traditional public schools serving kindergarten through third grade (K-3), and examined how different socio-demographic factors were related to the presence of music instruction in both sets of schools. At the meso level (school), a typology of NYC charter schools was developed and refined by the researcher through discourse analysis of charter school mission statements. This typology was used to assess access to music between NY charter schools, and in conjunction with micro level (teacher/classroom) analysis, which examined K-3 music programs available in different types of elementary charter schools. Qualitative analysis of interviews and observations was used to evaluate music teachers’ conceptualizations of the musical and pedagogical features of their practice in relation to the ideological orientation and discourse of the schools in which they work. Results indicated that charter schools and traditional public schools offered early childhood music programs at comparable rates, and that the prevalence of music was correlated with school size. However, when accounting for music instruction by non-certified school-based staff, traditional public schools were significantly more likely to provide K-3 music than their charter school counterparts. Whereas socioeconomic status and racial composition of the student body were related the presence of music in traditional public schools, no such correlations could be established for charter schools. The incidence of music instruction did, however, correlate with charter school type: charter schools that focused exclusively on core curriculum and character in their missions were significantly less likely to provide K-3 music. Charter school discourse also impacted classroom practice, as music teachers adopted the behavior codes of their respective schools. Music teachers found different ways to adapt diverse performance practices to classroom management and literacy goals.

Keywords: charter schools, access to music, equity in arts education, early childhood music education, typology, discourse analysis, culturally responsive pedagogy, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)
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Firstly, this study must acknowledge an indirect source of inspiration, those who I serve—my students. From the preschoolers and kindergarteners who bring me joy with their innate musicality and creative movement, to the diverse CUNY populations who bring an ever interesting blend of openness and gritty New York to college and masters level classes, my own teaching encounters give pause to remind me of the reason that we analyze and theorize issues surrounding education. As such, I am forever grateful to the teachers who entrusted me to teach in their programs—Bob Townley and Russ Schulman at Manhattan Youth, Peggy Geller at Kane Street Kids, Taunya Black and Rachel Webber at Brooklyn Friends, and Drs. Gay Wilgus and Patricia Cooper at CCNY and Queens College. Students’ aspirations and realities forge a guiding light to reflect on daily, not only for this study, but more broadly in this philosophical journey I have undertaken, attempting to understand how the minutiae of classroom experiences project onto the larger social project of education, and vice versa. Teaching can be so personal and so political, and rewarding as it can be, it is no doubt a grind.

It is with this context in mind that I must thank those to whom this study owes its existence. The teachers who participated in observations and interviews opened their classrooms, lent their time, and shared their resources for not much more than a sandwich or Clif bar. I wish I could tell all their stories in full. They opened themselves up for critique, vulnerable to the whims of my research and, at times, petulant children. In more controversial cases, teachers offered a risky rebuke of their own administrations and alma maters. And still, they were gracious enough to impart their teaching knowledge in ways that have benefitted my own practice, and will hopefully benefit a wider audience, beyond the classrooms and the students they serve.

Teachers play such an important social role. They may see students for as little as half an hour a week, but the lessons teachers communicate, both implicit and explicit, may last a lifetime. I would most certainly not be writing a dissertation today if not for those teachers who enabled, ennobled, and encouraged me along the way. Chief amongst these teachers are the ones I have been with for most of my time on this earth, those to whom I owe my deepest gratitude—my family.

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In gratitude,

Andrew Aprile
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Chapter 1
Introduction:
Statement of Problem, Significance, and Research Questions

From the conception of kindergarten to the inception of the common school, music has been a central component of education—a way to enhance cognition, instill traits beneficial to humanity, promote cultural appreciations, and provide aesthetic experiences to students. Increasingly, music programs have been excised from schools on account of budget constraints and the narrowing of curricula in the face of government policies that stress high-stakes testing. Charter schools have emerged within this political context, offering an alternative to traditional public schools while promising more budgetary freedom, improved academic achievement, and greater cultural responsiveness in the communities in which they are situated. And yet, there is little research on how music and arts fit within the charter school paradigm. Despite the fact the charter school movement has gained momentum concurrent to policy initiatives predicated on accountability, there is no definitive evidence as to whether charter schools are more likely to offer music programs to their students, nor is there much research on the types of music programs that charter schools implement.

It is the purpose of this research to provide a multi-level assessment of early childhood charter school music programs. I look at the question of access by comparing charter schools to traditional public schools to understand how different socio-demographic factors relate to the presence of music programs in both sets of schools. With regards to music programs in charter schools, I examine K-3 music programs available in different types of elementary charter schools and evaluate music teachers’ conceptualizations of the musical and pedagogical features of their practice in relation to the ideological orientation and discourse of the schools in which they work.
Recent evidence from the field of neuroscience has revealed the profound connection that exists between music and language development in early childhood. Just as young children are developing their vocabulary and syntactic awareness in their home language, they are also developing culturally coded musical schemas. Unfortunately, as children enter into kindergarten and first grade, they are too often denied the opportunity to participate in music making, and too often this shortfall results from the devastating effects of poverty. What’s more, music curricula often narrow around this time, and coalesce around a very specific subset of musical skills and songs that relate to literacy in music notation. Instead of following the prescriptions for movement, play, the playing of instruments, and folk music espoused by prominent early childhood music pedagogues, many classroom music teachers in elementary public schools (both traditional and charter) are compelled to focus on academic and cognitive tasks, and with them, simple children’s songs that promote literacy in music notation. In other music classrooms, behavior management dictates classroom policies that focus on compliance. In essence, the beautiful diversity represented in community and world musics can be foreclosed in favor of a particular cultural intuition about the way education should look (ordered), and the way literacy should be understood (intent on the symbolic and intellectual comprehension of music).

Although charter schools are all different, given the rapid growth in the movement, and their recent entry into the pre-school market in NYC, it was deemed imperative to investigate the extent to which charter schools may alter the music education landscape, in terms of both access and the cultural practices that they reaffirm. Moreover, I wanted to understand how broadly music teachers in charter schools conceived of music competence and literacy, and how their practices and conceptions related to the ideological orientations of the charter schools they worked in. Aside from the fact the charter movement represents a bold, new, expensive
experiment demanding inspection from academics and journalists, part of this study seeks to investigate the ways in which charter schools operationalize the claim that they serve diverse students in innovative ways.

Given what we know about the importance of music education and the growth of charter schools, it was important to find out whether elementary charter schools have made any difference in transforming access to, and quality of, music education. The next section then poses my research questions.

**Research Questions**

The overarching research questions that framed this study were:

1) *Is there a difference in access to early childhood (K-3) music instruction between elementary traditional public schools (TPS) and charter schools (CS) in New York City?*

   - *How do socio-demographic variables (SES, PTA funding, race/ethnicity, disability, English learners, enrollment/school size) and geographic variables (district/neighborhood) relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction in NYC public schools serving K-3? Do these variables impact music offerings differently in TPS and CS?*

2) *With regards to charter schools serving K-3, how does charter school type relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction, if at all?*

3) *In different types of charter schools with K-3 music instruction, is the music instruction culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate?*

4) *How do charter school music teachers conceptualize the cultural responsiveness and developmental appropriateness of their practice, and how does this relate, if at all, to the discourse and the context of the schools in which they work?*

My research questions and study are grounded in New York City (NYC). I do so because I have had much experience with music education in the City, having taught music in different contexts for the last nine years. In addition, NYC was chosen as the site of analysis because of the high
sample of charter schools and the prominence of certain NYC charter networks in the broader movement.

This dissertation has four parts:

- **Part I: Framing and Background**
  - Chapter 2 presents my theoretical framework on *musicalization*.
  - Chapter 3 reviews the literature on sociocultural approaches to learning and music education.
  - Chapter 4 provides background on the history and dilemmas of music education in New York City.
  - Chapter 5 describes how charter schools have been categorized and described in different typologies, and reviews the scant literature on music instruction in charter schools.

- **Part II: Research Design**
  - Chapter 6 outlines the mixed methods of data collection and modes of analysis that were used in this study.

- **Part III: Findings**
  - Chapter 7 reports on access to K-3 music in charter schools and traditional public schools; quantitative analysis establishes a correlation between socio-demographic variables and the presence/absence of music.
  - Chapter 8 maps the geographic distribution of music instruction to show how socioeconomic status projects onto neighborhood/district, impacting access to K-3 music.
  - Chapter 9 employs discourse analysis of keywords to create a typology of NYC elementary charter schools and assess links between charter school type and the provision music instruction.
  - Chapter 10 builds on findings from Chapter 9, investigating how prominent discursive constructions of character, culture, and community infuse music teachers’ classroom management practices and their perceptions of the efficacy of teacher training.
  - Chapter 11 focuses on the musical features of teachers’ objectives and praxis, expounding their varied conceptualizations of repertoire, music literacy, developmental appropriateness, and cultural responsiveness.

- **Part IV: Conclusion**
  - Chapter 12 recapitulates significant findings and weaves together the various strands of this study to ponder implications and offer policy recommendations.

The following chapter presents a theoretical framework for this study.
This dissertation proceeds from the notion that music is a vital component of the upbringing and socialization of a child. Although many defenses of music (and other arts) take on rationalizations pertaining to the many corollary benefits conferred upon tested, academic subjects and non-cognitive domains encompassing behaviors and emotions (eg., self-esteem, interpersonal intelligence, and physical health), my study is concerned with music, as taught to younger children in elementary schools, in and of itself, imbued with social, cultural, and most importantly, aesthetic possibilities. The theoretical framework of this study is oriented towards the music, musical skills, and pedagogical techniques that music educators teach and employ. In the following, I discuss the term musicalization, which will be defined as the educational process through which children become musical.

Framed by theories of human development proposed by Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner, this chapter explores sociocultural theory and culturally relevant pedagogy as a lens to investigate and interpret the ways that children learn music, the ways in which elementary school teachers conceptualize the musical and pedagogical features of their practice, and how their conceptualizations relate to the cultural, structural and institutional situatedness of music in New York City schools. So much critical, sociocultural theory has been developed within the area of culturally relevant/responsive curriculum and pedagogy (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995); and yet, not much of this theory has been applied to music education. It should be noted that many of the teachers interviewed for this study did not really grasp the sociocultural implications of music education, or grapple with notions of cultural responsiveness.
This inquiry framework was borne from a preliminary study that I conducted in Brazil, which was specifically tied to questions of race, repertoire, and teaching methods. During a professional development workshop on African music for teachers in Rio de Janeiro, I discovered a term that I would like to deploy as the operating principle of this study: *musicalização*, or musicalization. Strictly speaking, *musicalização* entails what educators in the U.S. would refer to as “early childhood music education,” encompassing the pedagogies associated with music instruction from age two through eight, including pre-kindergarten and kindergarten through third grade. Like their American counterparts, early childhood music educators in Brazil have incorporated methods developed by Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze, and Suzuki as well as other influential pedagogies developed by Willems and Tobin, which are less popular in the U.S. Pedagogies derived from the work of Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze stress the importance of rhythm, movement, and folk music and have had a profound effect on early childhood music education throughout the world (and on my own teaching practice). These pedagogies will be discussed in the fourth section of the literature review.

In spite of the descriptive nature of the terms *musicalização* and *musicalização infantil* in much of the Brazilian literature (education research in English makes no reference to *musicalização* or musicalization), the teachers that I interviewed for the preliminary study identified common threads that tied together their philosophies of early childhood music education, imbuing the term with specific, culturally-coded beliefs and practices. These teachers were compelled to “musicalize” their students towards a host of goals that I fear are largely missing from the music experiences that many students receive in U.S. elementary schools: appreciation for a national canon of popular music; facility with concepts and practices embedded in this music (in the case of Brazil, syncopation and group singing were two salient
features); attention to movement and dance; the fostering of open-mindedness; and, perhaps most importantly, the cultivation of joy or *alegria*. As it turns out, *musicalização* encompasses a much more holistic theory of the construction of musical knowledge in Brazil, beyond specific early childhood pedagogies and developmental approaches, wherein the main objective of educators is to awaken and cultivate a love for music as an integral aspect of human development (see Snyders et. al, 1992; Brescia, 2003; Nogueira, 2003; Ostetto, 2004). Central to this goal is the role of play in improving and enriching children’s capacities for auditory perception, coordination, spatial awareness, memory, socialization, expressiveness, and imagination. Through playful processes involving imitation and creativity, children are motivated towards musical expression.

I have found myself attracted to the broader notion that musicalization refers to the process by which music teachers attempt to make their students musical, which will necessarily differ according to sociocultural context. Musicalization herein will refer to the skills, songs, and educational practices that form the basis of the musical enculturation process. For teachers, this includes the attendant pedagogical orientation, purposeful methods that inform the learning goals, and their relation to students’ cultural competencies. While formal musicalization in Brazil might follow the conventions outlined above, musicalization in a different social setting might adhere to a completely different set of norms, such as facility with musical notation, fluency in a given canon, or competence identifying and performing certain dances.

Not limited to Brazil, the term “musicalization” (*musikalisierung*) has entered German educational discourses to connote “the very basic ability to act musically… analogous to language, where one acts verbally,” where “music attains a self-evident existential value as an art form which transcends mere practical functions” (Gruhn, 2006, p. 25, 17). Such a conception of
music education remains in stark contrast to pedagogies that privilege the music making and listening practices of Western art or “classical” music and focus on discrete skills aimed at literacy in staff notation. An expanded notion of musical competence would explore the multitude of music communities and community musics while accessing the various ways that people engage in music activities, what Small (1996) refers to as “musicking”: listening, performing, composing, learning. I am by no means the first person to attempt to deal with these issues in the realm of music education (see Reeder-Lundquist, 1991; Elliot, 1995/2014), but they persist nevertheless.

Early in the development of the field of ethnomusicology, Blacking (1973) had to remind scholars and students that conservatories, in teaching “musicology,” have actually been teaching “one particular kind of ethnic music… …the so-called ‘art’ music of Europe” (pp. 3-4). Blacking (1973) was lamenting the fact that, in our society, “general musical abilities should be restricted to a chosen few” (p. 4). One need not try too hard to think of the many adults and children who feel incapable of musical participation, most often owing their reluctance to experiences in music classes that falsely instilled the notion that they were not “musical” because they didn’t reach or adhere to the expectations set forth in the class. Byron (1995), in summing up Blacking’s philosophy, wrote: “This fundamental quality of being human [ie., musical ability] ... is systematically stifled in the West by elitist conceptions of music, which arbitrarily set standards of musical competence that inhibit the general participation in artistic creativity of which we are all capable” (p. 18). Despite the fact that the vast majority of world musics are taught through mimesis and not notated, literacy in music notation remains the foremost purview of music education.
From a sociocultural perspective, the skills and traits associated with musicality are not hard-wired, they are socially developed through what Bronfenbrenner (1994) terms proximal processes. These processes might consist of a wide array of culturally-coded experiences—in school or peer group, at home with overbearing parents who force their children to practice an instrument for thousands of hours (consider Mozart), navigating contexts increasingly permeated by mass media, or as toddlers who learn to absorb the beat attached to a dancing mother’s back. To limit musical interactions in school to a very specific set of skills would seem to run counter to the goal of getting children to enjoy acting musically.

Sociocultural theory presents a unifying framework for the interpretation and renewal of culture, linking development, pedagogy, research, and the pursuit of social justice. Although the word “culture” has been deconstructed and largely abandoned by anthropologists who point instead to cultural practices, I find it useful to employ the term, not as an autonomous, geographically-circumscribed, fixed entity, but rather, to describe the processual and fluid practices, customs, beliefs, and artifacts of particular social groups in relation to ethnicity, nationality, and social class.

Pedagogically, sociocultural approaches to education seek to unite teaching, learning, and development, advocating the use of students’ cultural competencies as a means to scaffold academic subject matter. Research strategies dovetail this approach, elucidating exemplary, culturally relevant teaching while investigating and reevaluating community practices. This sociocultural approach to research serves to explain cultural differences without placing value judgments on particular cultures, thereby challenging dominant theories of learning and development as well as their attendant models of deficit learning. By emphasizing the
educational successes of marginalized social groups, sociocultural theory addresses historical inequities in its effort to promote a more just society.

In the realm of music education, sociocultural theory holds a high level of promise because of the way it might be employed to defend and spur transformations of curriculum choices and pedagogical practices. And yet, sociocultural conceptions of music education have not entered the mainstream. Using community resources in the music classroom is an excellent way to promote cognitive development and access students’ cultural competencies in ways that are foreign to most general music classes. Sociocultural approaches to music tend to use the art form as a bridge to academic subject matter. The most popular manifestations of these practices are the various forms of hip hop pedagogy (also known as Hip Hop Based Education, or HHBE) that have emerged over the past two decades. Whether promoting academic literacy (Morrell and Duncan-Andrade, 2002), reinforcing memory (Hall, 1998), improving therapeutic experiences for delinquent youth (Tyson, 2002), or fostering identity formation (Hill, 2008), hip hop has been used as a musical means to other ends. This study deals with sociocultural approaches to, of, and for musical learning—that is, music in its own right.

Sociocultural theory also provides a comprehensive social justice-oriented framework with which to examine musical development and consider its cultural alignment with the music teaching practices in charter schools. Elementary school classrooms are one of the more potent and formative venues in which musicalization might take place. I was specifically concerned with the role and importance of rhythm, movement, and play in the musicalization process, as well as the presence or absence of African, African-American, and Afro-Latin musics. These musics are an important component of this framework for a number of reasons: 1) African-Americans and Afro-Latinos have played an indelible and undeniably profound role in the
construction of aesthetics in American music as well as predominant popular musics around the world; 2) charter school populations in New York City are disproportionately African-American and Hispanic (Hoxby et. al., 2009, p. II-2) and the teaching of Afro-American and Afro-Latin music might offer a culturally responsive bridge to musical knowledge; 3) African, African-American, and Afro-Latin histories and cultural practices have been marginalized or all together neglected in school contexts and curricula; and 4) these music practices are uniquely disposed to precisely those elements advocated by early childhood music pedagogues--rhythm, movement, and play.

Although many early childhood pedagogies advocate that special attention be paid to rhythm, movement, and play, elementary school music teachers often diverge from these foci as children grow older, and instead concentrate on narrow conceptions of music literacy and/or behavioral goals the limit movement and creative expressiveness. The great attention paid to sight reading and other written work can easily displace and makes expendable activities geared to promote bodily cognition and rhythmic awareness. Because reading complex, syncopated rhythms is so cognitively demanding, and because instruction geared towards musical literacy demands a rhythmically simple repertoire, engaging children in rhythmically complex musical traditions can become supplemental to a core music curriculum. For many students, the cognitive demands of reading music notation defer actual music making in favor of academic conceptions of music education, which privilege normative understandings of literacy as limited to written text. 1 Such normative understandings of literacy are often perceived as the focal objective of

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1 While I would prefer expanding the notion of literacy beyond written text, to include “reading” musical performance in terms of understanding musical conventions, and “writing” music as the act of composing, such a notion would obscure the concept and unnecessarily burden the reader with alternative definitions that belie standard meanings. As such, the acts of understanding and creating will be referred to as musical competencies.
schooling, which might explain why formal music education so often entails instruction in music notation.

History and the discriminating attitudes of parents and principals have long injected the instruments, compositions, and practices associated with European art music and its derivatives with an air of cultural superiority in formal institutions. This ascription remains pertinent, complex, and unjust, despite the fact that it has been disrupted by institutional rearrangements of the canon, namely the entry of jazz and world music programs into colleges beginning in the 1950s, and the advent of “multiculturalism” in K-12 schooling in the 1960s. The origins, development, and implications of this phenomenon are beyond the scope of my proposed study, but open-ended interviews yielded insight into the fraught matter of teaching popular and folk musics in formal school settings. The field of multicultural music education remains problematic because it has not adequately addressed the issue of appropriation, the persistent exclusion of some cultures, nor the pedagogical implications of adapting didactic, oral-aural modes of transmission to accommodate conflicting impulses towards systematic methods and the promotion of creativity. Just as important as recognizing the absence of many cultures in music curricula is the acknowledgement that appropriations for classroom use must be culturally sensitive, responsive, and appropriate.

The following chapter reviews the literature on sociocultural theory and music education. The first section provides background on sociocultural theory and an outline of its distinct strands, starting with Vygotsky’s departure from constructivist conceptions of cognition, and then covering Culturally Responsive teaching and Activity Theory, which seems to borrow from constructivism in ways that might run counter to the tenets of sociocultural theory. The second section expounds upon Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological framework and its application to
musical endeavors. The third section elaborates on sociocultural approaches to music education. Many of these approaches, in providing an alternative to aesthetic models of music education, orient themselves towards praxis and a social basis for musicking. I argue that although sociocultural approaches might broaden the music that is played and performed in classroom, there exist theoretical tensions with regard to some of the theory’s constructivist tendencies and multicultural efforts. These tensions arise from the implementation of apprenticeship models of musical learning in classroom settings as well as the historical treatment and dismissal of popular music in schools, issues that remain conspicuously absent from the much of the music education literature. In the fourth section, I discuss the potential for teacher research in music education and describe some of the prominent pedagogies associated with early childhood music education. I then interrogate the issue of social justice while reflecting on my own experience teaching African and Afro-diasporic musics within a sociocultural framework.
Chapter 3
Review of the Literature:
Sociocultural Theory and Music Education

Introduction

In this chapter I review two components that are most important to understand my study. The first one deals with sociocultural approaches to learning and ways in which pedagogical practices have responded to it. I then discuss sociocultural approaches to music education, focusing on the theories of Bronfenbrenner. I then extend Bronfenbrenner’s theory and discuss general sociocultural approaches to music education. Finally, I end the chapter by discussing methodological approaches to music education that fall within a sociocultural tradition and explore what scholars say about its benefits.

Sociocultural Approaches to Learning and the Pedagogical Paradox

Two of the most widely cited and influential theorists in the field of developmental psychology are Jean Piaget (1964) and Lev Vygotsky (1978). Piaget (1964) came to prominence by explaining the difference between learning (as “provoked by external situations”) and development (“a spontaneous process, tied to the whole process of embryogenesis...the development of the body”), positing the existence of four distinct developmental stages--sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational--that delineate a certain measure of logic at different points across any given human life (pp. 19-20). Though Piaget (1964) acknowledged developmental factors such as experience and social transmission; the underpinnings of his theory, taken up by constructivists, treat learning as subordinated to development. Cognition in this theory is contingent on the learner’s developmental capacity, which sets the stage for any interactions with people, objects, or the physical environment. Education and linguistic transmission are minimized in this conception of
development because “the child can receive valuable information via language or via education directed by an adult only if he is in a state where he can understand this information…. to receive the information he must have a structure which enables him to assimilate this information” (p. 23). In constructivist models, environmental forces are secondary to the active learners who must assimilate information and skills or accommodate cognitive structures to account for novel experiences.

In contrast, socio-constructivist understandings of learning build on the seminal work of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and assert the inherent sociality of learning. Vygotsky argued through his concept of “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) that learning is achieved “through the support and ‘scaffolding’ of our joint activities by more experienced others” (Wells and Claxton, 2002, p. 5). Rather than focus on the cognitive requisites for a given task, Vygotsky posited that it is the cognitive consequences of a given task or set of practices that lead to development. Contrary to the cognitive views of human development proposed by Piaget, which assume age-related capabilities, commonly referred to as “developmental stages,” socio-constructivists and sociocultural theory articulate the social and cultural nature of development. In this model, proficiency with material and semiotic tools, which in large part constitutes intellectual aptitude, is “culturally rather than biologically inherited” (Wells and Claxton, 2002, p. 4). The impact of environmental forces is thus profound—not only does the social environment shape the development of a child, but the historical context dictates the content and transmission processes embedded in cultural practices.

Vygotsky saw school as the primary sociocultural institution. For many education theorists, sociocultural approaches to schooling recognize that students best develop and learn through teaching that is culturally relevant. That is, learning should occur in ways compatible
with a student’s cultural repertoire of practice and schools must make efforts to bridge academic goals with the knowledge and skills with which students gain facility in their families and communities (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003). This theoretical framework undermines some of the assumptions underlying Piaget's constructivism, which presumes a measure of cultural universality in the course of normal development.

Carol Lee (2003), a prominent sociocultural pedagogue and theorist, attacked this presumed universality and pointed out the ways in which prevailing, implicit assumptions about cognitive development privilege a particular cultural standpoint and thus serve to hamper the education of minority groups: “scientifically determined normative development continues to be the purview of communities of people of European descent” (p. 3). Current educational research and practice manifest reductionist views of race, characterized by homogeneity and cognitive deficits, in which “the European-American middle class is consistently used as the point of reference from which to compare cultural practices” (Lee, 2003, p. 3). Such perspectives extend to the aesthetic realm, where Western art music is consistently privileged above folk and popular forms. Socioculturalists seek to dismantle the marginalization of communities that this positioning fosters.

In terms of pedagogical practice, sociocultural theory has proposed two overlapping, yet distinct systems: Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and culturally relevant teaching. CHAT recognizes in culturally responsive teaching the needs, concerns, and extant cultural practices of students and proceeds from the notion that “human development depends on the appropriation and reconstruction by each individual of the resources that have been developed within their culture” (Wells and Claxton, 2002, p. 7). CHAT thus negotiates a tense terrain between reproduction and renewal, “between education as enculturation and education for
autonomy and originality” (p. 8). In order to operationalize the zone of proximal development (ZDP), CHAT relies upon two major elements of progressive practice: building upon a community’s knowledge base and promoting peer interaction within the context of meaningful activities. However, the constructivist tendencies of progressive student-centeredness represent a potentially problematic aspect of CHAT’s pedagogy that I will elaborate on below.

Matusov and Hayes (2002) discussed the disjuncture between “class curricula and ‘real life’” in multicultural education. Whereas the “transmission of knowledge educational model” promotes relations between instructor and student predicated on hierarchy and deficits, “Instructional sensitivity is an interactive process of seeking teacher-student mutuality regarding guidance, learning, and what their joint activity is about” (p. 241). Such mutuality is consistent with progressive teaching practices; yet, in many indigenous paradigms, the teacher-student relationship is defined by an apprenticeship model and its attendant hierarchy and deficits, and thus not at all mutual. Rogoff (1991) addressed this issue and it will be discussed in relation to music education in the third section.

CHAT conscientiously averts didactic instruction based on the belief that such training inhibits the cultivation of certain habits of mind and dispositions necessary for lifelong learning. This may very well be the case. Student-centered activity, both self-directed and cooperative, is an undoubtedly effective means of learning and development, but despite more than a hundred years with progressive and constructivist ideas, discovery-, inquiry-, and problem-based learning remain far from the norm of schooling practice. However, it is also clear that many communities, minority and otherwise, relate knowledge and skills through hierarchical, direct training. Thus emerges an inconsistency between ideology and pedagogy in sociocultural models of teaching
and learning: though CHAT seeks to meld progressive pedagogy with a community’s knowledge base, it does not necessarily accommodate the local culture’s modes of transmission.

The adoption of an inquiry-based framework presupposes alignment with community practices. Wells (2002) noted that curricula and activities should “not only provide systematic opportunities for learning what are referred to as ‘basic knowledge and skills’, but also develop the dispositions that will enable today’s students to participate responsibly and effectively in solving the problems they will encounter as citizens” (p. 199). Social meaningfulness and cultural relevance are clear corollaries to these instructional goals, but the question of methods and pedagogy remains. CHAT makes explicit its “attention to the implicit values and assumptions of the culture, and to making sure that its objects, its tasks, its non-verbal signals and so on are consonant with the dispositions that the culture wishes to develop” (Claxton, 2002, p. 32). However, the purportedly organic congruence between Piaget, Vygotsky, and the cultural practices of minoritized communities may in fact be more aspirational than descriptive. Despite moving away from cognitive approaches to learning, CHAT’s emphasis on culture necessitates consideration of the fact that didactic teaching models are sometimes the dominant mode of transmission in certain communities of practice.

Ladson-Billings (1995) acknowledged that culturally responsive teaching can occur while utilizing traditional or progressive methods (p. 478). Rather than stress a progressive or constructivist component, Ladson-Billings focused on cultural competence as a way to support achievement in school and ultimately foster social justice. Teachers are compelled to match the home and community cultures of students by using certain language interaction patterns, by incorporating students’ knowledge base, and by motivating students with community-based projects. This approach demands that teachers are steeped in the cultures and communities of
their students. For music teachers, this means facility with the genres and styles that students listen to, which consequently demands research on the part of the teacher.

Sociocultural theory posits that teachers must work with students’ strengths, as articulated by the cultural experiences and identities that inform student development. Rather than remain abstractly theoretical, scholars who use sociocultural theory as a lens are wont to give concrete, practical examples of what should go on in culturally relevant, inquiry-based classrooms. In this way, scholars make clear connections between educational research and classroom practice. Validating lived experiences as sources of knowledge can provide cognitively expansive, genuine and reassuring schooling experiences for impressionable students while redefining the relationship between parent, teacher, student, and school, thereby increasing a sense of access to educational institutions (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, p. 108). The investigation of successful teaching practices and the refutation of so-called cultural deficits as they relate to students of non-dominant groups are tantamount to sociocultural approaches to pedagogy and research. Equally important are the teachers and researchers who must be commissioned to mine the strategic and cultural resources that households and communities maintain (see Kincheloe, 2003).

**Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Sociocultural Framework in Music Education**

It is useful to turn to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological framework to map out the ecology of music as it is listened to, performed, taught and embedded in communities of practice. Like Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner recognized that children are enmeshed in a sociocultural context that profoundly shapes development. For Bronfenbrenner (1994), development is situated within the context of family, culture, and community. Bronfenbrenner sought to map out a theory that could empirically test the effects of these contexts via operational research models to examine the
impact of different environmental factors, like diet or provision of schooling, each representing an opportunity structure that contributes to an individual’s potentialities. Unfortunately, many teachers interviewed for this study could not make explicit connections between their teaching practice and their students’ musical lives. Those that did not tended to view their music students from a deficit perspective, while those that did exemplified multiple levels of engagement with their students. Although teachers’ integration of students musical lives did not always neatly fit into Bronfenbrenner’s framework, teachers consistently connected their teaching practice to their own musical backgrounds, thus pointing towards an alternative reading of Bronfenbrenner’s modeal, as applied to teachers.

The beauty of Bronfenbrenner’s framework lies in the way that it organizes and delineates the various environmental domains that contribute to human development. In this section, I will expound on the five subsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), which interact with each other and with humans to inform and promote development. For each subsystem I suggest ways that Bronfenbrenner’s schematic might apply to the domain of music, with respect to content and structure (including pedagogy). While mapping out the musical life of an individual in the context of his or her environment, it is important to think about what processes engage people in musicking and to what extent these experiences contribute to the musical development of a learner. Although empirical testing would probably prove too onerous considering the many ways that music permeates our lives and contributes to our learning and development, Bronfenbrenner’s framework proves useful for researchers who simply want to investigate the different musical interactions that occur for a given human being. The five systems are: 1) the microsystem; 2) the mesosystem; 3) the exosystem; 4) the macrosystem; and 5) the chronosystem.
The first and most prominent system is the *microsystem*: “… [a] pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced… in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with… environment” (p. 39). The microsystem is defined by proximal processes: “enduring forms of interaction” between an (evolving) individual and “the persons, objects, symbols in the immediate environment” (e.g., “parent-child and child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, studying, athletic activities, and performing complex tasks”) (p. 38).

Microsystems (e.g. “family, school, peer group, and workplace”) are especially important to Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework because his two main propositions—that human development takes places through proximal processes; and that “the form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person [and] the environment”—largely occur in the intimate proximity between the learner and his or her immediate environment. Even in cases where the remote environment directly affects a proximal process, it is still the microsystem that houses the interaction in which proximal processes “operate to produce and sustain development” (p. 39).

In the realm of music and music education the microsystem might contribute to an understanding of the environments that we choose to enter and the environments we have the opportunity to enter. Opportunity, access, and cultural identification are critical for the school that has the resources to offer a music program, to the student whose parents can afford private lessons, and to the genre and music subgroups that foster peer group interactions. It is also in the microsystem that we might address informal music practices among children, like hand-clapping
games, or even something as mundane as “Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Moe.” Symbolically, music is implicated in our genre or peer group identification as well as the semiotics of music (music meanings, topics, gesture, connotations of sound) and staff notation that much of the world has come to accept as a symbol for music literacy and music in general. The people we interact with musically within the subsystem include musicmakers (amateur, professional, parents, family, peers, teachers). Such musicmakers might be engaged in person or via digital (or, less frequently, analog) media. Our musical objects consist of instruments, computer programs, and media devices that allow us to connect to music from the remote environment. I will elaborate on music and media during my discussion of the exosystem.

Invitations to participate in musical practices come from the family or immediate community, in a professional capacity, during concerts, in community-music contexts religious ceremonies, drum circles, jams, child-to-child music games, private music lessons, radio, television, the Internet, and in school music classes (vocal, instrumental, theory, appreciation or in conjunction with other subject areas). Such invitations are permitted by the availability of musical tools and products. Interestingly, the social contexts of music and music education in our society often serve to inhibit musical participation. Stark audience-performer dichotomies serve to elevate professional musicians while often denying amateurs and audience social roles in which they might perform. Social mores that demonize music or condemn certain genres also serve to inhibit music practices. In addition, the boring, overly theoretical music class that most students come to know in school distances children from actual musicking in favor of the goal of getting people to read musical notation. As a result, inhibitions are sometimes created by the very educational institutions that seek to provide opportunities to engage with music.
If anecdotal evidence were not enough to substantiate the divergence in the appeal of school music and music in general among students, McPherson and Hendricks (2010) have demonstrated that students in the U.S. are far more interested in musical learning outside of school than inside of school. A survey of 3037 students in their motivation to study music revealed that music interest inside of school was ranked lower than student interest in any other subject, while interest in music as an extracurricular activity was nearly on par with interest in sports as the students’ highest rank. Such data reflect the uneasy disconnect between the potential of music and the reality of its existence in school curricula, a disconnect socioculturalists might ameliorate through the building of bridges between culture and school (McPherson and Hendricks 2010).

The second system, the mesosystem, comprises the “Linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person” (e.g., the relations between home and school, school and workplace, etc.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). In a nod to what would become a distinct strand of sociocultural theory (see Funds of Knowledge, Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), Bronfenbrenner (1994) cites the increased initiative, independence, and academic achievement among elementary school students who experience high levels of interaction between microsystems (p. 40). Examples of these home-school interactions include attempts to incorporate family histories, expertise and home culture into classroom content. There remains much research to be done investigating family and community music practices that might enter into schooling contexts. It would seem that the mesosystem’s primary function might be to reinforce.

Thirdly, the exosystem is defined by the “Linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which
events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the
developing person lives” (p. 40). Bronfenbrenner cites parents’ workplace, family social
networks, and neighborhood-community contexts. Though I find it difficult to distinguish these
broader community contexts from those that include the developing person, it is clear that mass
media provides an increasingly profound linkage between individuals and the institutions that
condition and are conditioned by macrosystemic features, which I will elaborate on below. The
interactions between an individual and the technological objects that transmit culture seem to
blur the distinction that Bronfenbrenner made between micro- and exo-systems. TV and access
are firmly encampet in the microsystem, and even though they may be conditioned by larger
forces, we engage them on an individual basis and through intimate interactions. Children who
don’t have a TV, or have limited viewing hours, would have a different microsystem profile than
children who are free to watch television or surf the Internet without limitation.

The macrosystem, the fourth system, encompasses “The overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to
the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity
structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems”
(p. 40). In music, the macrosystem might entail the political economy, which limits the
availability of quality arts education for lower socioeconomic classes and precludes opportunities
to participate in specific environments. It is also here where assumptions about music and music
education are formed for particular groups. Though Bronfenbrenner extols the
comprehensiveness of the macrosystem, as it goes “beyond the simple labels of class and
culture,” we can nevertheless see that class is oftentimes a harbinger of music education

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opportunities, and that musical upbringing (ie., parental and adolescent listening habits) influences the ways that we identify and assert musical affinities.

Intricately linked to the macrosystem is the last system, the chronosystem, the temporal component of the Bronfenbrenner’s framework, which accounts for change or consistency in the human and surrounding environment. For music, the chronosystem might explain changes in dominant popular music styles and the media through which we consume it; developments of music production and playback technologies; and how access to teachers and instruments, and educational opportunities has changed over time. In the early 20th century, live music performances were the only way in which people could participate in or appreciate a music performance, now one would be hard-pressed to find someone without a pair of headphones, and it would be nearly impossible to go through the day without being exposed to music. Such a major shift is accounted for within the chronosystem. The chronosystem will also be able to measure the extent of our commitment as a society to preserve real instrument playing as face-to-computer situations account for an increasing share of the musical engagements that take place in our society.

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological framework is important in its reconceptualization of genetic inheritance. The notion that musical genius arises from a genetically inherent talent must be contested and dismissed if we are to consider that in the “mechanisms through which genotypes are transformed into phenotypes… [heritability] is in fact highly influenced by events and conditions in the environment… [and] can be shown to vary substantially as a direct function of the magnitude of proximal processes” (p. 41). Surely, the person born without fingers would find it impossible to play a string-instrument, but heritability only accounts for the potential that a talent is realized or optimized.
Bronfenbrenner was ahead of the curve when he recognized that genes only express themselves in certain conditions, that nature and nurture are far from mutually exclusive. The clichéd debate creates a false dichotomy, which Bronfenbrenner dismisses in his attempts to chart the effects of genes and ecology within the matrix of various environmental conditions. The questions raised by this process-person-context model revolve around how nature and nurture interact, what the impacting components of our natural environment are, how these affect the manifestation of certain genetic traits, and how the elements of our ecological surroundings interact with each other. Bronfenbrenner suggests that “unrealized potentials might be actualized through social policies and programs” (p. 41). Since heritability only measures variation attributable to actualized genetic potential, the degree of non-actualized potential remains unknown. Enhancing proximal processes and environments (ie., in schools) can increase the extent of actualized genetic potential (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

This is precisely where Bronfenbrenner’s manifesto has appealed to the education community consumed by the quest to fulfill students’ potentials. Few music education scholars have utilized Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework. Exceptions are the works of Majoribanks and Mboya (2004), Campbell (2011), Lew (2006) and Lum (2007), which I review here.

Majoribanks and Mboya (2004) presented a “moderation-mediation model for relationships among family background, goal orientations, and students’ interest in music,” which charted parental aspiration and school learning environments as they contribute to and foster enthusiasm for music education (p. 158).

Campbell (2011) explored the ways in which children become attuned and enculturated to music through the micro-, meso-, and macro-systems articulated above. Not only do children conform to the structures of musical speech and song that they have heard when they creatively
vocalize (Barrett, 2006 in Campbell, 2011, p. 61), they also perform rhythms “audibly and visibly in the ways they bounce… sway, step, and skip” (Campbell, 2011, p. 61; see also Marsh & Young, 2006). These musical exhibitions are manifestations of a child’s profound sociocultural experience with family, friends, and media (Campbell, 2011). Campbell (2011) deftly noted that children often achieve “cultural competence [in music] by way of osmosis,” in contrast to the formal, planned activities that occur in school (p. 69).

Lew (2006) conducted an ethnography of Malay, Chinese, and Indian children, and traced “children’s musical utterances, rhythmic play, and repertoire of heritage songs’” to the experiences at home or in school (in Campbell, 2011, p. 63). Lum (2007) conducted an ethnography of elementary school children in Singapore and found that proximal processes in school were linked to the larger exo- and macro-system vis-a-vis the official curriculum and teacher’s choices, as configured by considerations of politics and cultural identity (in Campbell, 2011, p. 63).

As a music teacher who has engaged with music through many different processes, I consider it appropriate to employ Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework so as to critique dominant forms of music education sustained by schools and media, which often fall short in inviting and even permitting students to fulfill a vast array music potentialities. The sociocultural approaches to music that I cite in the following section provide examples of this sort of critique. No doubt the ecological model creates new challenges, but the model does offer the possibility of discerning the types of processes that contribute to greater development, allowing for a more holistic understanding of our existence as human beings, interacting with other people, things, and symbols.

Sociocultural Approaches to Music Education: Music as Praxis
In discussing sociocultural approaches to music education, it is first important to recognize the ways that current, conventional forms of music education discount the music of students’ cultures. Research has shown that much of what constitutes music instruction bypasses the cultural competencies of students. Sloboda (2001) attributed the waning musical enthusiasm of young people to the fact that curricula no longer reflect a “dominant ideology” around which key stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents, government) might coalesce. The collapse of a dominant ideology, which Sloboda (2001) associated with the cultural shifts of the 1960s, has meant that music engagements in formal educational settings are incongruous with the sociocultural environment of young people. Yet, the large majority of music teachers preserve the supremacy of the classical canon—whereas training in classical music is often a prerequisite for entry into a music teacher training program, most of these institutions do not prepare their teaching candidates to engage different approaches to music (like rock, pop, folk, or jazz) that might strike at pupils’ musical interests. That music education is still controlled by those with classical training, in spite of the liberalization and opening of curricula, reflects an unsustainable tendency that will only further disenfranchise music students.

Green (2002) interviewed popular musicians in order to explore the ways that their informal learning practices might be adapted to classroom contexts. In this paradigm, students would watch, imitate, and pick-up skills and knowledge neglected in formal school settings. In a follow-up publication, Green (2008) described the capacities that students might gain from informal learning processes—increased motivation, autonomy, and cooperation—as well as ways that such practices conflict with official education discourses and notions of teacher professionalism. Allsup (2008) also sought to create a framework for incorporating popular music in public schools and called attention to what was a glaring absence of scholarship on
applied instruction in popular music. Since the publication of Green’s (2002) text, a growing body of literature has investigated the possibilities of integrating popular music in classroom contexts (see DeVries, 2004; Isbell, 2007; Woody, 2007; Randall, 2010; and Biamonte, 2011). But as Allsup (2008) engaged Green’s (2008) most recent work, he lamented the “disappearance of the teacher,” problematized the cultural-responsiveness of guitar-based rock music (a predominantly white male genre), and called into question the possibility that students might gain critical media literacy if they focus exclusively on popular music that they already appreciate, music that has likely besieged them through mass media outlets and the will of powerful corporations. Though these issues may seem new to the field of music education, philosophers of education have long grappled with problem of integrating school and society in meaningful ways (Dewey, 1915/2001). Allsup’s measured, reactionary criticism is important to address, though despite his dedication to popular music, his work reinscribes the distinctions that have been made between classical and popular music, between “high” and “low” art.

Jones (2006) argued for returning music education to the mainstream in order to reconnect with community. In his study Jones (2006) conducted a musical ethnography of Philadelphia to elucidate the many performance practices offered by the city. Though this survey of musical life was oriented towards performances by adults, Jones (2006) made the case that the “rich diversity of offerings” (p. 5) found in Philadelphia is a call for music educators to become “well versed in digital technology, transcribing, arranging, and a wide variety of musics reflective of the Americas including traditional ‘art’ musics of the Western Hemisphere, Bluegrass, folk, jazz, Brazilian, Caribbean, Cuban, Latin American, rock, pop, and World Musics” (p. 1). Unfortunately, data from principals in the city and the U.S. Department of Education offered evidence of the fact that, aside from Western “art” music and instances of jazz
bands, none of the other musical forms were officially sanctioned by the government (Jones, 2006).

Jones (2006) describes the shift away from musical amateurism as tantamount to the “decline of support for and participation in school music” (p. 12). Jones (2006) suggests that “the school’s local community is the logical starting place for developing school musical curricula… [to] develop lifewide and lifelong musical participation skills and habits” (p. 3). In order to “break down barriers between school music and the out-of-school musical lives of… students” (p. 3), schools should connect students with their musical environment; focus on the cognitive, social, physical benefits of music making; and educate children on the manipulation of music by advertisers and mass media (Jones, 2006). Rather than construing the multicultural narrowly as explorations into the culturally-specific “other,” Jones (2006) conceives of a broad area of inquiry encompassing the many practices found in localities that reflect the Americas as a whole.

Regelski (2006) charted the history of “music appreciation” in formal music education contexts and its dissociation from the musical lives of students, noting the formation of an “aesthetic doctrine” in which “‘good’ music exists only to be contemplated… [through] proper ‘appreciation’ [and] informed ‘understanding’” (p. 281). This doctrine presupposes cultural deficits and marks a departure from music as praxis, in which artistic forms are geared towards social needs and use.

The opposition thus formed between the “‘fine art’ view of music as high culture” and “‘everyday’ music culture” has allowed for the disparagement of most sociocultural roles for music education not in tune with the classical paradigm. Regelski (2006) cited Bourdieu (1984) in attributing this socially constructed hierarchy to the sense of social distinction that musical tastes might confer on social status. Nowhere is this hierarchy more visible than in the distinction
between popular musics and more “serious” music. Stalhammar (2000, p. 43) interviewed young people on the topic of school music and found that they would “dismiss their own specific music knowledge when it is not in accordance with what they think is the current school knowledge” (in Regelski, 2006). Regelski (2006) acknowledged that private lessons and pre-conservatory institutions have also contributed to the sociomusical cultural gap in education, and attributed the resulting lack of enthusiastic “independent musicianship” to the gap between students’ musical affinities and their conception of what constitutes school knowledge (p. 286).

These trends, in tandem with the commercialization of listening habits and out-of-school music contexts that enculturate listeners to become consumers, have facilitated a decline in amateurism, to the extent that the word “musician” almost exclusively connotes professional stature. Echoing Small’s (1996) conception of musicking, Regelski (2006) called for a return to music as praxis, in the form of performing, composing, and other forms of doing. For music educators to reinstate praxis, Elliott (1995/2014) suggested that music curricula should include “an apprenticeship or practicum for real musicking of some kind” (in Regelski, 2006, p. 298).

The notion of apprenticeship is important for the many cultures that perpetuate their music through oral-aural modes of transmission and mimesis, but this notion becomes problematic in the instance of American school children, who are more likely to be musically enculturated through systematized pedagogy and/or media than through apprenticeship models. Furthermore, if educators are to tap into student’s prior knowledge and experiences, one would be hard-pressed to think of childhood music sub-cultures that exist outside the realm of mass media. One vibrant exception is the repertoire of drills, handclaps, and dances of Afro-American heritage (Jones & Hawes, 1972/1987).
Corso (2006) analyzed the musical content and learning processes in a community of African-American girls. The analysis was framed by sociocultural perspectives of learning, as outlined by Vygotsky (1978) and Rogoff (1990). Corso (2006) established that children learn music and dance through participation in a “community of practice” founded upon friendship and a network of knowledge and skill (p. 375). Interestingly, Corso (2006) found that, despite the non-school context, specific musical activities are developmentally sequenced—each musical activity is demarcated by age groups (handclapping for girls age seven to nine, drills for girls age nine to eleven, and dances for girls who were eleven and twelve). Learning processes are predicated upon required participation in a social group, motivation on the part of participants, and modeling by some of the more well-versed participants. Corso (2006) cited this modeling as an example of Rogoff’s (1990) conception of development as apprenticeship, whereby attention is focused not only on the experts, but also on the active role of novices organizing their own development and working together with experts to solve problems. Such coordinated efforts prove that apprenticeship models do not necessarily privilege the one-way or dyadic relationship between an expert and his or her protégé as Vygotsky (1978) suggested (Corso, 2006). Rather, Rogoff (1990) explained that “a network of novices and experts” determines value, repertoire, and modes of practice for a given community (in Corso, 2006, p. 379). Furthermore, the example of African-American girls’ musical activities allowed for the reconcilability of apprenticeship and activity theory, in cases where learners are self-guided and self-motivated.

Corso’s (2006) study addressed “the importance of fostering group learning among friends within and across classes and ages” and urged music educators to “recognize the unique qualities of children’s musical cultures,” (p. 381), but it is not so clear that such a model is readily adaptable to other children’s musical cultures, whose tastes and practices are largely
informed by mass media and school. For students whose musical culture does not maintain a set of unique practices, the question becomes how to make learning authentically multicultural. Corso (2006) addressed the fact that multicultural approaches often attempt to “infuse content of ‘other’ cultures, rather than focus on the “sociocultural contexts of music makings and meanings” for students (p. 375). The tension between, and frequent conflation of, sociocultural and multicultural approaches to education is an important one to interrogate. To what extent should music educators induce multicultural experiences if those experiences do not reflect the culture of students? I will elaborate on this issue at the conclusion of the following section.

Oliveira (2005) advocated a *pontes* (bridges) approach, in which the student’s knowledge and previous musical experiences are used as a bridge to the new knowledge that is to be learned. The *pontes* approach problematizes the notion that formal and informal music education methods “must be seen as distinct and complete” (Oliveira, 2005, p. 206). Oliveira (2005) showed that “bridges” can take the form of formal pedagogical actions or informal processes like modeling and oral transmission that, in many cases, overlap. For Oliveira (2005), there was no debate that “teaching-learning pedagogical structures… [must] do justice to the complexity of culturally diverse societies” (p. 206). It becomes the role of the teacher to identify and organize bridges, or “paths of thoughts and specific knowledge transitions,” that facilitate the “cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and sociocultural” aspects of a student’s personal characteristics (Oliveira, 2005, p. 209).

The organization of bridges might also be referred to as scaffolding. Wiggins (2011) explored the tensions between teacher scaffolding and learner agency in instances of collaborative songwriting between teacher and students. Acknowledging that teachers may both “constrain” and “enable” students in the music making process, Wiggins (2011) attested to the
crucial responsibility that a teacher has in “establishing an environment that engenders and honours the personal agency that learners require to be able to invent meaningful musical ideas and… designing instruction that provides the appropriate scaffolding that learners may need, and have a right to receive in… school” (pp. 90-91; italics in the original). Such is the delicate balancing act that music teachers must perform if they are to create contexts for both learning and creativity that are meaningful to youth.

One of the principle features of youth music culture and modern music production is the prominence of technology. Burnard (2007) considered sociocultural and post-Vygotskian Activity Theory as means to reframe creativity and technology and promote pedagogic change in music education. Insofar as proficiency with tools is a key to sociocultural approaches to learning, Burnard (2007) evaluated the “interplay of the social and material resources that are salient to learning” (pp. 44-45) and asserted that Activity Theory can build on the relationship between creativity and technology in different learning communities.

Beyond digital literacy and computer-based music making, Burnard (2007) broadened the notion of community and described the Internet as a community of engagement. Indeed, globalization has ensured that no locality remains completely isolated in its cultural practices. The Internet is proving to be an important site for identifying and developing communities of practice. At the same time, this dominant media platform remains a vehicle for promoting the dominant culture. Within a sociocultural framework, Burnard (2007) also prescribed teachers to move from a research-informed profession to a researched-based profession (see also Kincheloe, 2003).
Developmental Appropriateness and Cultural Responsiveness in Sociocultural Music

This section reviews the sociocultural music pedagogy literature on teacher research a critical multiculturalism and ties together notions of developmental appropriateness and cultural responsiveness espoused in prominent early childhood music programs. If sociocultural theory does anything for music education, it is the further problematizing of curriculum and pedagogy. As Burnard (2007) asked, “What should be included in the curriculum, how it should be delivered, and… why, when and where in the curriculum should it be positioned?” (p. 39). When applying sociocultural theory to the field of music education, there are many clear imperatives. First and foremost is an engagement with musical practices of students, their families, and their communities. “Funds of Knowledge,” and the relation of communities of practice to pedagogy are a fundamental component of sociocultural approaches to music. Educators must acknowledge that student experiences constitute assets with which to build bridges toward academic success and, in the case of music, artistic creativity. Though amateur performances of music and dance have plummeted in our society, there remains a veritable trove of popular forms and attendant listening habits that must be interrogated both critically and with appraisal in the music classroom (critically, to ensure that students can responsibly navigate the world of corporate mass media, and with appraisal to reaffirm students’ musical sensibilities).

In cases where a student’s cultural competencies can be linked to musical explorations, by all means, teachers should investigate those musical cultural practices as a way to both validate the student’s background and provide pupils with diverse musical engagements. But asking a teacher to take on the responsibility of researcher is a weighty proposition. Beyond the tasks of family interviews and observations, there remains a vast array of musics that are woven into our American musical fabric. Becoming a music educator should mean gaining fluency with
as many of these forms as possible; yet, to a large extent, music teacher training programs preclude this possibility, stubbornly entrenched in the Western canonical paradigm. For many defenders of the status quo, however, music education is the last remaining bastion for “classical” music, and refined appreciation of “higher” forms. From this point of view, rather than reaffirm community practices, music education would best serve its students by exclusively focusing on the highly vaunted legacies of European classical music. Rather than reflecting culture, music education is seen as a way of perpetuating hierarchies of aesthetic value, and conferring cultural capital.

Early music pedagogues Rousseau and Pestalozzi insisted that “music had to be introduced in manageable pieces” (in Benedict 2010, p. 147). They supported the idea that musical activities “could be broken from the complex into discrete subskills” (p. 149). Though Pestalozzi and Froebel provided many examples of hands-on musical activities promoting motor function and literacy, their cognitive approach was defined by discrete stages of development. The premium placed on simplicity and the resistance to expressivity in this model have no doubt had an indelible impact on the genre that we have come to know as children’s music, not to mention the music teaching methods that are commonly employed in many music classrooms. It is interesting to note how the sounds and methods of three of the most prominent early childhood music pedagogies—Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff—resonate with and diverge from the practices outlined by Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel.

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2 The Suzuki Method is also widely used in U.S. contexts, but its heavy focus on instrumental technique are not as appropriate in music classes with large groups of young students, and thus more prevalent in private instructions contexts than general music classes.
Early childhood paradigms: Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff. Although the methods developed by Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff strive to cultivate musicality and musicianship in the Western sense with substantial attention to notation, they stress the importance of rhythm, movement, and the playing of percussion and musical games—real music making experiences meant to be activated largely through folk music repertoires. All three pedagogies have a wide following in the United States, primarily among teachers who work with young children (age three to eight), and have inspired multiple professional associations, professional development workshops, and university programs that espouse their philosophies and teachings. I have experienced these methods, to varying degrees, as a student of music education, and I have written about the intersection of Orff Schulwerk (Schoolwork) and African models of music development and pedagogy (Aprile, 2012). The brief summations that follow should not serve to overemphasize any disjuncture between the various pedagogies. They are complementary in many ways, especially considering how their distinct foci overlap with their general tendencies—Dalcroze Eurythmics was primarily concerned with movement, Kodály with singing, and Orff with playing and vocalizing percussion.

Dalcroze, through his program of Eurythmics, sought to reorient music education and refocus the body on rhythm, which was and still is subordinate to melody and harmony (Findlay, 1999). With attention to aural, visual, and especially kinesthetic development, Dalcroze Eurythmics (literally, “good flow” or “good movement”) develops awareness of melody, harmony and musical form, as well as less attended to musical features like timbre and phrasing, by tying these features to gestural and locomotive movement (Mead, 1996). Once thoroughly attuned to these facets of musicality, students go on to ear training and sight-singing exercises in solfege and then onto improvisational activities.
The Kodály method, reliant upon folk music, singing, and literacy, expands upon Dalcroze’s orientation towards movement. Kodály’s method is acutely focused on developmentally appropriate activities that reinforce basic musical concepts through games, movement, and song. Only when a child has a firm grounding in the basic rhythms and melodies will he or she advance to learn notation skills. Underpinning the Kodály method is a very Piagetian conception of development, in which learning is subordinate to the biologically constrained capacities of the child. As such, instruction is organized sequentially, progressively increasing in difficulty; for example, children should become acquainted with the large intervals of a pentatonic scale before attempting to sing half steps in tune (Choksy, 1999).

Two ways in which the Kodály method has greatly impacted the field of early childhood music education are through the prevalent use of rhythm syllables (most often “ta” for quarter notes, “ti” for eighth notes, and “toe” for half notes,) and hand signs that correlate with solfege. The former shares clear musical affinities with cultural practices that employ mnemonic devices to promote rhythmic awareness. A side note, when I presented a syncopated rhythm to a Kodály-trained teacher educator using the aforementioned rhythmic syllables, I was told that students should not be exposed to such complexity before they internalize basic beat structures. Yet, the young children with whom I work are altogether capable of performing these syncopated rhythms. Although Kodály prescribed that children first internalize eighth notes and quarter notes, developmental appropriateness is to be determined by the folk music of a child’s culture (Choksy, 1999).

The dilemma outlined above, between the contingence of developmental capacity and the sociocultural conditions of musical instruction, mirrors the discrepancy in theories posed by Piaget and Vygotsky. DeVries (2000) stated: “Vygotsky focused on the content of the stimulus
while Piaget focused on the structure of the knowing individual” (p. 192). Within the Kodály framework, children are to become “stewards of their cultural and musical heritage” and the selection of repertoire from local, folk domains is meant to buttress this point (Houlahan & Tacka, 2008, p. 37). Yet, despite this sociocultural bent, Kodály-based music programs often narrow their focus to specific musical skills and content—voice takes precedence over suitable percussion, and the Hungarian, English, and Irish tunes that support in-tune singing and basic solfege awareness continue to predominate (DeVries, 2001). It is important to note that Kodály expanded notions of music literacy beyond mere reading and writing, to include “thinking musically,” but notation-based practices have continued to override other aspects of musicking (DeVries, 2001).

By and large, Orff Schulwerk provides a balanced approach to early childhood music education that is most in line with my own philosophy of early childhood music education. Despite the occasional overreliance on an overly simplistic repertoire of nursery rhymes, Orff programs coalesce around the natural acquisition of music as language, discovery-based explorations of instruments, and informal, child-centered strategies for musical learning that incorporate play, all organized through diverse musical content. Just as Orff was inspired to make an African instrument, the xylophone, a cornerstone of his pedagogy, Amoaku (1982) contended that the foundations of Orff Schulwerk—speech, rhythm, movement, and improvisation—are entirely compatible with traditional African approaches to teaching. Moreover, the Orff Schulwerk method closely resembles indigenous, oral-aural instructional practices. After hearing a song with the Orff method, students internalize the melody and apply small gestural movements, (clapping, snapping, patting laps, heads, or shoulders) that fit melodic phrases. Once students can repeat these movements in harmony with each other, percussion
instruments are introduced for polyrhythmic exercises, then melodic instruments for the students to perform in harmony.

Orff approaches have secured much popularity in early childhood music programs, as evidenced by the commonly used musical instruments that bear his name as well as the multitude of writing that connects Orff pedagogy to present educational practices, especially music education settings that seek to employ diverse cultural content. Goodkin (1994) has gained international acclaim conducting Orff workshops around the world and dismissed the false choice between pluralism and particularism, embracing a rich heritage of diverse cultural music. In *Now’s the Time: Teaching Jazz to All Ages*, Goodkin (2004) presented an Orff-based sequential curriculum aimed at getting students to perform jazz standards in ensembles, but there is far more than just jazz in the games, songs, chants, body percussion, and movement activities that Goodkin generously researched and shared. In order to convey some of the musical concepts embedded in jazz, such as syncopation, Goodkin (2004) draws on African and Afro-American traditions distinct from jazz.

As a music teacher who focuses on Afro-diasporic musics (ie., African, African-American, and Afro-Latin traditions) with student populations that often come from different backgrounds, the question remains: Is it socioculturally appropriate to teach about a music culture to which only a minority of *my* students have access? The answer, I believe, rests on three propositions. Firstly, Afro-diasporic musics form a significant portion of the aesthetic basis for much of the music we listen to and perform today in American society. Secondly, Afro-diasporic musics compel cognitive development, especially in rhythmic and kinesthetic domains, in ways that Western schooling and the Western canon often ignore. And finally, Afro-diasporic musics present a compelling opportunity to promote social justice in the music classroom by
recognizing the persistently marginalized cultural backgrounds of minoritized students. Not only do these music and dance forms speak to the “predispositions of the two largest minorities most in need of improved public education opportunities, Afro-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, but moving beyond pluralism [they let] everyone participate in a living tradition” (Keil, 1985, p. 89).

**Critical Multiculturalism and social justice.** It is important to elaborate on the notion of social justice. A critical multicultural approach, according to Kincheloe and Steinberg, “exposes and challenges the socio-cultural politics of systemic oppression while affirming cultural differences and the contingency of identity” (in Morton, 2001, p. 36). If we “reinforce the integrity of musical meaning by emphasizing the importance of cultural and historical studies” through dialogue and conversation, as Barrett, McCoy and Kari Veblen suggest (in Morton 2001, p. 38), then we can ensure that the socio-cultural and humanistic benefits of multicultural music education are conferred alongside critical consciousness and political discourses that challenge dominant ideologies, stereotypes, and cultural hegemony (p. 40).

Despite the acknowledgement that music education would benefit from a critical multicultural approach, O’Neill (2011) admitted that the concept has stalled precisely because meaningful dialogue has been absent. Moreover, the simple inclusion of diverse musical content is often superficial, and “fails to take into account... the multiple perspectives of those who are involved” (p. 180). In music performance, a culturally diverse repertoire “is likely to be evaluated (albeit implicitly) in terms of the dominant cultural model and either accepted, assimilated, ignored, or rejected by students without any discussion of their lived experience” (p. 181). It is thus not a given that multicultural music education will promote mutual understandings, respect for diversity, or opportunities for dialogue (O’Neill, 2011). Although
inquiry-based dialogic approaches may not be compatible with local communities of practices (consider my discussion of CHAT pedagogy in the previous section), O’Neill (2011) makes them imperative for learning that is to be critical and transformative, morally oriented towards social justice.

That musical practices reflect and reify the dominant forms influenced and perpetuated by mass media, even when that mass mediated music builds on the cultural contributions of marginalized groups, necessitates that educators refocus on precisely that music which has been readily omitted from research and classrooms; that is, the stories and musics that are or have been silenced. Beyond the mere fact of their inclusion, African and Afro-diasporic musics contain a history woven into the fabric of our culture. It is imperative that we pose this history to our youth in order that they form the habit of mind to ask questions about fairness and challenge forms of oppression. This is more so the case because African and Afro-diasporic cultures remain underrepresented in most subject matters and curricula.

Repertoire, choice of musical content, and methods of instruction are thus integral to the process of music curriculum development. Multicultural elements, whether or not they directly relate to the communities of practice in a given student body, must be part of any sociocultural approach to music because schools must provide educational experiences to complement the musics that students experience in their lives outside of school. No matter the level of diversity in a given group of students, explorations of culturally specific musics from around the world are a crucial means for developing forms of cognition and ways of knowing that might not otherwise be accessed in a society whose praxial experience with music has moved so far from performance and practice. What’s missing from sociocultural pedagogical models is an acknowledgment of the pedagogical processes that renew and recreate culture as well as an
admission that teachers and researchers need not abide by a rigid adherence to all the tenets of sociocultural theory. In assessing sociocultural theory’s compatibility with constructivism and multiculturalism, one must accept that some school practices must offer new modes of teaching and learning that might not be readily compatible with the prevailing pedagogical practices in a culture or community. The school is an important part of the child’s environment and cannot be expected to simply mirror his or her ecology outside the school. As such, attention must be paid to the cultural content and community transmission processes that might foster learning in school contexts. The following chapter extends this literature review by providing important background information for this study. I provide a historical review of music education in New York City, starting in 1975 and ending in 2014, the year in which I start my own study.
Chapter 4
A History of Music Education in NYC Public Schools: 1975-2014

Introduction

This chapter concerns the history of access to music education in New York City’s public elementary schools prior to the 2014-2015 school year. I narrate this history in order to elucidate three main issues relating to inequities in music education:

1) disparate forms of music instruction across the NYC public school system;
2) uneven access to highly qualified, certified music teachers; and
3) inequitable external funding for arts education.

Unfortunately, music instruction is often presented as an extracurricular bestowal of cultural capital by parents unto their offspring. Private lessons conducted outside the school setting constitute the most prominent way in which children experience a comprehensive education in music. At the same time, music instruction manifests in many different forms throughout the New York City public school system: music teachers can be certified or uncertified; full-time or part-time; school-based, affiliated with cultural organizations, or freelance; and they might not be trained in music (as evidenced by the number of full-time teachers not certified in the arts content area).

For parents who lack the resources, schools represent the only possibility of music education for their children. Yet public school arts education is characterized by inequity; it is often funded by private sources and it is consistently eliminated (or “excessed” to use NYC school lingo) in schools with budget constraints and for students underperforming in reading and math, who tend to be predominantly low-income and minority. In other words, the City’s school system, which has made strides towards equity, systematically denies music education to many students with a low socioeconomic status. Due to the peculiar nature of arts education in the
City, with its host of partnerships with cultural organizations, there are a wide variety of music offerings and wide discrepancies in engagement, ranging from minimal exposure to rigorous direct instruction.

In this chapter I first present a brief history of music education in NYC from 1975 through 2014. I then discuss the promise and problems associated with the emergence of cultural organizations as significant partners in the provision of music education in NYC. Finally, I present a preliminary analysis of the impact that PTA funding and the socioeconomic status of the parents in the school have had on access to music education in the years leading up to 2014-2015, the year in which my study was conducted.

**Music Education in NYC Public Schools, 1975-2014**

Prior to 1975, New York City public school students were offered a rich experience in the arts. Every student was offered an education in music, and instruments were made available.

Back then it was simple: Music was part of the curriculum, like math, science and social studies. Kindergartners and first graders began with singing, note-reading and rhythm-beating, and as the course continued through high school, it touched on the history of music and how it works… Even more crucial, if you wanted to play an instrument, lessons were free, and the school would lend you an instrument until you felt sufficiently committed…. (Kozinn, 2007)

This vital aspect of the curriculum was effectively abandoned in the wake of the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, when a majority of arts teachers were laid off (OPA, 2008, p. 8).

The restoration of music education in the NYC public schools has been attributed to the creation of The Center for Arts Education (CAE) in 1996. The CAE, sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation, is an advocacy group that promotes equity in arts education, provides professional development, and offers partnership programs that are contracted out to public school. At its inception, the CAE offered direct grants to schools for arts programming. In 1996,
more than one-third of the City’s schools applied for a $75,000 CAE grant (www.centerforartsed.org). The CAE has set two important precedents for public arts education in the City. Private funding is now relied upon to sponsor arts education in public schools. Secondly, it has established independent cultural institutions as a major provider of arts education in public schools. Though cultural organizations had “stepped in to provide arts programming for students” when the arts were cut from the curriculum (Kennedy, 2007, p. 204), the CAE guidelines for arts partnerships marked the first systematic attempt to incorporate cultural organizations into public schools.

In response to the overwhelming demand for CAE grant money, the Board of Education, under Mayor Giuliani, initiated Projects ARTS (Arts Restoration Throughout the Schools) in 1997 to bring “standards-based” arts education to every classroom in the city. Project ARTS delivered system-wide per capita funds for the arts for the first time in more than 20 years. These funds were used for direct instructional services in art, music, dance, and theater as well as equipment, materials, professional development, curriculum development, trips, and partnerships. Its first budget for the 1998 fiscal year totaled $25 million. Thereafter, funds allocated to arts rose to $75 million in 2000 and 2001, fell to $52 million in 2002 and 2003, and rose to $67.5 million in 2004 (Kennedy, 2007, p. 202). The aggregate budgets for 2003 covered approximately $47 per pupil, paltry in comparison to the $700 recommended by the 2003 Committee on Education (Kennedy, 2007, p. 202). Though Project ARTS was expected to increase enrollment in music classes, music enrollment declined, despite the fact that the ratio of music teachers to students increased since 2002.

Table 4.1, below, presents the number of NYC music teachers, enrolled music students, and total students in NYC traditional public schools from 1975 through 2014.
Table 4.1. Number of NYC Music Teachers and Music Students Over Time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th># NYC Music Teachers</th>
<th># NYC Music Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>1,002</td>
<td>209,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>237,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>245,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>302,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>273,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>218,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>210,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>188,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>182,891</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td>209,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>227,545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NYSED Office of Information and Reporting Services, *Music Education Data*, 2008; 2012; 2014. (From the Basic Education Data System)

The above table charts the number of certified music teachers and music student enrollment in NYC public schools between 1975 and 2014. Note the sharp decline in the number of music students between the 2000-2001 school year and 2011-2012. During this time period, NYC lost 18% (219) of its certified music teachers. The significant decrease in music enrollment starting in the 2001-02 school year may be attributed to cuts in the Project ARTS budget (which I described above), a $23 million differential that coincided with the elimination of dedicated funding for the arts (ie., direct instructional services, resources, and partnerships) (OPA, 2008, p. 10). Though Project ARTS funding rose beginning in 2006, this did not coincide with increases in music enrollment. In fact, the number of music teachers and students continued to decline until the 2012-2013 school year.

One possible explanation for the continuing reduction in music programming between 2001 and 2012 is the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, which marked a major turning point in arts education. Though the law lists the arts as a “core academic subject,” clear priority is given to reading, writing, and math, areas in which schools are held accountable for student performance. The depressed number of music teachers and students between 2010 and
2012 may reflect the economic downturn (i.e., *The Great Recession*), which evidently spurred teacher layoffs.

Arts disciplines might be cited as core subjects, but policy emphasis is clearly on accountability in reading and math, which are tested from third through eighth grade (Kennedy, 2007, p. 199). The growing emphasis on testing, enshrined in legislation from No Child Left Behind to Race to the Top, has increased anxiety about the marginalization of the arts in the curriculum. Music is often one of the first subjects to get eliminated. “Concern over performing well on standardized tests has caused many New York City school principals to limit or eliminate access to art and cultural institutions” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 199). Reinstatement of arts education has been countered by the “widely held view… that sees the arts as distracting and detracting from ‘important’ subjects” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 201).

Another reason that music enrollment did not automatically increase along with an increase in Project ARTS funding is that Project ARTS money was not always spent on arts. This issue was deemed insignificant with Mayor Bloomberg’s decision to fold arts funds into general budgets. In 2007, the City’s Department of Education cut dedicated Project ARTS funding, giving principals discretion over $67.5 million that had been earmarked for arts programs (OPA, 2008, p. 9). Though in line with Bloomberg’s predisposition to increase principal control over schools, the elimination of funds committed to arts education ran counter to the apparent prioritizing of arts education under Bloomberg’s administration.

In the face of strict reading and math requirements from NCLB and budget constraints, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein professed arts to be a priority for the City’s public schools. The administration created a *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts* in 2004 to set standards in dance, music, theater, and visual arts. Rather than a standardized curriculum, the
Blueprint continues to include activities drawing on an admirably diverse set of cultural resources. The Blueprint has proposed five strands of learning in music: music making; music literacy; making historical and cultural connections; utilizing community and cultural resources; and developing careers and lifelong learning in music (NYCDOE Blueprint, 2008, p. 10). These strands complement the standards outlined by the New York State Education Department Arts Standards: creating, performing, and participating in the arts; knowing and using arts materials and resources; responding to and analyzing works of art; and understanding the cultural dimensions and contributions of the arts (NYSED website). The Blueprint also sets benchmarks for 2nd, 5th, 8th, and 12th grade students in terms of core musical knowledge as well as vocal and instrumental skills (Blueprint, 2008, p. 13).

While the standards and guidelines set forth in the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Music are indeed laudable, the task of following the Blueprint is hindered by inadequate funding and the absence of accountability. The main problem is that the Blueprint is recommended and not required. In addition, requirements set forth by the NYSED (eg. 186 hours of instruction per year–20% of weekly time spent in school-- allocated equally in dance, music, theater, and visual arts in grades 1-3; and 93 hours--10% of weekly time--in grades 4-6) are consistently not met, couched in a dubious language that often conflates expectations and obligations: “All New York City public schools are expected to meet the NYSED Instructional Requirements for the Arts as outlined below” (NYCDOE OASP, NYS Arts Requirements, 2012, emphasis added). It seems redundant to state that schools are expected to meet requirements, but the use of the word “expected” shows the true expectation to be that schools cannot always meet the requirements. The DOE goes on to state that, “These requirements are included in each school’s Annual Compliance Review and are an important component of principals’ annual...
performance evaluations” (NYCDOE OASP, 2012). In actuality, arts requirements are a minor component of principals’ annual performance evaluations, a fraction of the 15% that remains after taking into account reading and math scores. Still, there have been efforts to hold schools accountable for their arts education.

In its attempt to provide accountability for arts education, the Bloomberg administration initiated ArtsCount in 2006, a major step toward a more comprehensive understanding of participation in, and spending on, the arts. For the past 10 years, ArtsCount has surveyed public schools in the City on their arts instruction and programming. The results have been compiled in the Annual Arts in Schools Report (AASR), whose goal is to “help the DOE identify underserved schools and develop targeted supports for them” (AASR, 2007, p. 9). The data from these reports show the Arts Blueprint to be overly ambitious in presenting an intensely varied and inconsistent portrait of music education. Despite a steadily rising response rate (approximately 75% reporting for 2006-07; 87% for 2007-08; 94% for 2008-09; 95% for 2009-10; climbing to 98% for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012), there remain inadequacies and inconsistencies within the raw data and individual reports that hamper sound descriptive and correlational analyses. Nevertheless, the data provided interesting insights into the state of music education in the City’s public schools.

The opening letter of the first AASR (2007), written by Chancellor Joel Klein and addressed to the public school community, articulated much optimism regarding the revival of arts programs. However, despite statements that positioned schools to be as accountable for arts education as they are for math and English, the report showed a wide spectrum of arts programs failing to meet requirements and not following recommendations. Presently, the State “requires” instruction in visual arts, music, theater, and dance in elementary school, but in 2008, only 45% of elementary schools offered all four disciplines, up from 38% in 2006-07 (AASR, 2008, p. 12).
The state “recommends” that arts classes be taught by certified teachers, but less than half of all elementary schools have a certified music teacher. Of the 709 schools serving elementary school students (ie., K-5, K-8, and K-12 schools) in 2011-12, 378 (53%) did not have a full-time certified music teacher; of the 573 schools serving exclusively elementary level students, 315 did not have a full-time certified music teacher (AASR Raw Data, 2012). A persistent scarcity of full-time certified music teachers can be attributed to budgetary constraints, schools’ partnerships with cultural organizations, and an increasing reliance on teaching artists.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that budget cuts have had a large impact on arts funding. The United Federation of Teachers’ (UFT) Vice President Leo Casey, in a testimony to the New York City Council on April 8, 2008, framed the dearth of certified teachers within a matrix of financial and curricular issues:

With the elimination of Project ARTS, cuts to the school budget, a lack of licensed arts teachers, and many school administrators lacking the skills needed to administer the arts, we’re looking at a dire forecast… Something is seriously amiss when the message is that there’s no longer any time or money for children to be children. We’re paying a terrible price for the emphasis on test preparation. (OPA, 2008, p. 10)

Notwithstanding Casey’s testimony and the national economic downturn that forced $100 million in budget cuts, schools basically maintained arts spending in the 2007-08 academic year in overall terms, relative to spending in other areas, per student. However, funds for supplies and equipment decreased by 63.19% (AASR, 2008, p. 9). Though spending on personnel did not drop, elementary schools experienced a decline in music offerings by school-based staff. Whereas the percentage of elementary schools offering music instruction by school-based staff and/or cultural organizations remained constant at 89% from 2006-07 to 2007-08, the percentage of elementary schools offering music instruction by teachers assigned to music (certified or non-certified) dropped from 82% to 75% over the same period (AASR, 2008, p. 17). Thus, an increase in
cultural partnerships, rather than music teachers, maintained the level music instruction. This decline reflects a similar trend in each arts discipline and points to an increasing emphasis on cultural organizations.

Unfortunately, the past two arts reports (ASSR, 2011 and 2012) do not show specific fund allocation by arts discipline. Furthermore, the distinction that reports once made between instruction provided by classroom teachers, school-based arts teachers, and cultural organizations has given way to analyses which lump these types of instruction together. This has made it much more difficult to investigate the presence of dedicated music teachers on staff in a given school as the lumping together of various types of arts instruction obfuscates the level of engagement between teachers and students.

Between the 2009-2010 and 2011-12 school years, the percent of schools with a school-based music teacher teaching in any grade, 1 through 5, declined from 75%, to 71% to 67%. During this same time period, the percent of schools reporting instruction by a school-based teacher and/or cultural organization decreased more moderately, from 91% to 89% to 87%. The more recent AASR have deftly brandished the latter figures, displaying multiple graphs that show the prominence of music, but obfuscating the increasing reliance on cultural organizations and inflating the perceived implementation of music education.

Cultural Organizations and the Blueprint for Learning in the Arts

The 2007 AASR Report makes clear the importance of arts organizations: “When elementary schools use a combination of school-based staff and arts and cultural organizations to deliver arts instruction, students have access to more arts disciplines and added expertise” (AASR, 2007, p. 7). The following year’s report extends this notion:
New York City’s arts and cultural organizations are a tremendous asset to the public schools, providing students and teachers with access to world-class performances and exhibitions, and bringing professional artists and performers into schools to work directly with students. New York City schools are taking advantage of these opportunities to provide students with rich learning experiences. The arts and cultural organizations of New York City contribute to our work by helping schools reach all of the goals and benchmarks of the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, including, but not limited to, the fourth strand – Working with Community and Cultural Resources. These myriad arts and cultural institution experiences engage students in their studies by providing first-hand experiences with the dynamics of live performances and opportunities to interpret objects and collections. (AASR, 2008, p. 36)

Dennis Walcott, schools chancellor under Mayor Bloomberg, echoed this language, lauding “partnership[s] with five extraordinary arts organizations…. [which] initiated performance assessments in seventy-nine city schools” (AASR, 2012, p. 3). The report further attests that experiences with cultural arts organizations “directly support the goals of the Common Core Standards…” (AASR, 2012, p. 30).

Arts and cultural organizations are indeed valuable supplements to a comprehensive arts curriculum. Their ability to offer unique experiences with professional musicians as well as innovative forms of professional development is a testament to the artistic richness of New York City. However, the reliance on cultural partnerships as the sole providers of arts education in a given school is an inherently problematic solution to the shortcomings of elementary music education.

Firstly, cultural organizations, because of the yearly uncertainty of their partnerships with schools, make sequential grade-by-grade instruction incredibly difficult to achieve. Secondly, arts organizations often enter schools with funding from private foundations and contributors. As such, their consistency is limited by the extent of philanthropic donations in a given year. The New York City Arts in Education Roundtable estimated that $102 million is raised annually by cultural organizations for educational programs in public schools (Kennedy, 2007, p. 205). This
dynamic is mirrored in charter schools, wherein the highest achieving schools have their publicly funded budgets subsidized by corporate donations. While it is certainly a good thing that so much money is raised for arts education, and undoubtedly better than nothing, dependence on such money places the burden of public music education in private hands, out of the City’s control and reliant on the private sector.

In one arts report, an elementary school principal in Brooklyn said: “Although our arts spending has been reduced we will continue to provide quality music, visual arts, theater, and dance instruction from our annual school budget as well as the generosity of volunteers grants, and local partners” (AASR, 2012, p. 30). The highlighting of this sentiment makes it seem as though the City applauds the principal’s resourcefulness, but the underlying trend should be disconcerting.

Arts organizations that receive funds from school budgets are diverting funds away from a potentially more consistent and coherent school-based music program complete with instruments and full-time teachers. This would not be an issue if the wide variety of arts organizations were accountable to the standards set forth in the Blueprint, but that is not the case. It is not my intent to condemn arts organizations, but the sheer number of cultural partnerships and the vast array of services rendered highlight serious methodological problems in the Annual Arts in Schools Reports. In the 2007-2008 school year, raw data of survey responses indicated the presence of 431 different music partnerships, which spent between two and 2,400 hours engaging students (averaging 65.5 hours). The number of students who received services from these partnerships ranged from four to 1100. By the 2011-2012 school year, the number of cultural partnerships explicitly dedicated to music jumped to 876, with an even greater range of hours engaged and students served. Music partnerships engaged students for between 0 and 1000
hours according to the 2012 raw data (averaging 34.7 hours per partnership). These data were deemed unreliable (e.g., 1000+ hours is an unreasonable and uncharacteristically high amount of contact hours for music over a given year). Despite the high outliers, the average contact hours with a cultural partnership show a significant decrease.

There are, no doubt, many cultural organizations that provide comprehensive instrumental instruction to elementary school students. Education Through Music, 144 Music and Art, and Midori and Friends are very successful music programs, to name a few. It should be noted that of the 847 cultural organizations providing music in the 2011-2012 year, there was an impressive and inspiring array of programs available to schools, but only a minority that seemed to have a multicultural or culturally responsive bent. Furthermore, many other organizations offered minimal exposure to music. A surveyed school may indicate that students received instruction in the form of a short concert, despite the fact that attending a concert does not constitute an engaged, sequential learning experience. It was beyond the scope of this research to identify and assess the instructional methods and programmatic structure of each cultural organization that partners with a school to offer music instruction, but this would be a promising line of inquiry for further research.

The AASR also falls short in that they lack a rubric for quality and outcomes of arts education. Although the most recent report mentions partnerships with cultural organizations to create arts assessments, evidence from earlier reports shows that the City has not necessarily followed through in this regard. The 2007 Report promised to “ensure and measure the quality of arts education” through the creation of a rubric by the Arts Education Task Force in conjunction with NYU’s Institute of Education and Social Policy. However, this rubric, which was supposed to “address instructional practices and programmatic structure,” was nowhere to be found in the
2008 Report. “Blueprint-based student assessments… [for the fifth] grade benchmark year” by the Office of the Arts and Special Projects (OASP) were also promised in the 2006-07 Report and were also absent from the 2008 Report (AASR, 2007, p. 24).

Most telling is the lack of information on instrumental instruction, an integral (though not requisite) aspect of fifth grade Blueprint benchmarks for music. What was once a cornerstone of music education is now overlooked on account of limited budgets. Annual Arts Surveys briefly collected data on instrumental instruction (as distinct form vocal and general music), but they no longer ask schools to break down the type of music instruction and facilities available to students:

In 2008-09 through 2010-11 schools were asked to report separately on the number of general music, vocal, instrumental, music recording studio, and/or music technology lab classrooms that were appropriately equipped for music instruction. In 2011-12, these five items were consolidated into an overall music category. This change should be considered when comparisons among school years are made. (AASR, 2012, p. 30)

Arts Surveys have come closer to aligning themselves with the recommendations of the NYC Public Advocate, who suggested that future reports include information on the time allotted to arts education for each grade, the percentage of students participating in each elementary grade, student teacher ratios, and the amount of money that is actually spent on arts education rather than merely budgeted (OPA, 2008, p. 19). But the Annual Reports have done less and less to publish this information clearly. The Public Advocate’s 2008 study showed that nearly all of the 98 elementary schools that provided information for their survey failed to follow the state guidelines for the amount of instructional time in the arts for grades three and four (OPA, 2008, p. 12). In the following two sections, I describe the main sources of inequity affecting access to music education in public education: PTA funding and socioeconomic status of families in the school.
PTA Funding and Music Education

Since New York City has equalized per pupil expenditures in schools across the city, there has been a purported increase in equality and equity across the school system. (This contrasts with much of the country, where school expenditures are funded through local property taxes, which is a widely varying indicator of socioeconomic status.) By looking at arts data for full-time certified music teachers and external funding in tandem with school-wide data on economic need, we can get a better picture of the ways that socioeconomic status can affect access to high-quality music instruction.

Arts Surveys asked schools to report on the use of external funding for arts education. At the elementary level for the 2007-2008 school year, 21% of schools received funds for arts from private foundations, 7% from local businesses, 34% from PTA/PA, 17% from arts agencies, 6% from education associations, 7% from federal grants, 11% from state grants, 22% from the City Council, and 25% in-kind from cultural organizations (AASR, 2008, p. 41). During the 2011-2012 year, 19% of elementary schools received funds from private foundations, 9% from local businesses, 38% from PTA/PA, 19% from arts agencies, 32% from federal, state, or city grants (here too the Arts Survey changed its collection methods), and 43% from cultural organizations (AASR, 2012, p. 61). Many of these sources are neutral in their availability to principals, but PTA funding tends to reflect the socioeconomic status of parents whose children attend a given school. It should be noted that federal grants, such as Title I, are made available to schools with student populations with lower SES backgrounds. Though many cultural organizations target disadvantaged students, the PTA seems to be responsible for a significant
level of inequity in music education as “public school parents in affluent areas pick up the funding slack” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 202).

As previously stated, 34% of public elementary schools in the city reported using PTA/PA funds for arts education in the 2007-2008 school year (AASR, 2008, p. 41). I analyzed raw data from the 2008 and 2012 survey results to show the presence of a full-time certified music teacher in elementary schools, controlling for whether the schools used PTA funds for arts. Not surprisingly, schools that reported using PTA funds for arts education were more likely to have a certified music teacher. In both school years, almost half of all elementary schools that responded to the survey had at least one full-time music teacher.

Figure 4.1 shows the discrepancy in the number of certified full-time music teachers between schools that received PTA funding for the arts and those that did not. Among the PTA-funded schools in 2007-2008, 59% had a certified full-time teacher compared with only 42% for the schools without PTA funding for the arts. Although the percentage of schools that had PTA funding with at least one certified full-time music teacher declined to 52% by 2011-2012, these schools remained much more likely to have a certified full-time music teacher than other schools. In 2011-2012, whereas 52% of the schools with access to PTA funding had at least one certified full-time music teacher, only 40% of schools that did not procure PTA funding for the arts had at least one certified music teacher.
Evidence from both school years shows a significant discrepancy in the presence of a full-time, certified music instructors between PTA-funded schools and schools that did not receive money from parents to be used for the arts. This may be a result of the fact that schools with an active PTA might be more concerned with arts education, but it is fair to surmise that funding was largely responsible. In 2008, three-quarters of school leaders cited funding as their biggest challenge (AASR, 2008, p. 45). In 2012, the biggest challenges that principals cited in providing arts education were budgeting (62%), purchasing supplies (31%), and purchasing services (27%). And low funding remains one of the biggest hindrances to arts access (AASR, 2016).

Socioeconomic Status and Music Education

Beyond PTA contributions, poverty among school families has more broadly impacted
whether a school can maintain a full-time, certified music teacher. Socioeconomic status has long been defined in student populations according to eligibility for free or reduced price lunch. In 2012, the New York City Department of Education introduced a new measure, the Economic Need Index, to “more accurately capture the level of socioeconomic challenges at a school” (NYCDOE, 2012a).

The new formula for this measure is represented in the following equation:

\[
\text{Percent Temporary Housing} + 0.5 \times \text{Percent HRA-eligible} + 0.5 \times \text{Percent Free Lunch Eligible.}
\]

Progress Reports for the 2011-2012 school year revealed an Economic Need Index range of .03 to 1.20, with higher numbers indicating higher economic need (NYCDOE, 2012a). For the purposes of this analysis, Economic Need Index scores were split up into three ranges, .03-.40, .41 to .80, and .81 to 1.20, in order to show different levels of socioeconomic status. These trichotomous data were then analyzed descriptively to show whether there was a relationship between SES and the presence of full-time, certified music teachers. It is clear that there was an inverse correlation between SES and whether a school might have a full-time, certified music teacher.
Figure 4.2 shows that schools with higher economic need (i.e., low socioeconomic status) were far less likely to have a certified full-time music teacher in 2011-2012. The percentage of schools with at least one full-time certified music teacher decreased as economic need increased. Whereas three out of five elementary schools in the lowest third of economic need had at least one full-time certified music teacher, less than two out of five elementary schools in the highest economic need tertile had at least one full-time certified music teacher in the 2011-2012 school year. Proving causality between SES and music instruction variables is difficult. The correlation is not always direct, and there might be a number of intervening factors, including the possibility that schools with higher economic need were also struggling academically, narrowing their curricula to focus on tested subjects as City and federal strictures raised the threat of closure. More research must be conducted to ascertain the extent to which school accountability and performance on high-stakes tests correlate with music instruction. Regardless the mechanism of
causality, these descriptive statistics are a call to action, a clear indication of the fact that access to high quality music education is not equitable.

At-risk schools under the most pressure to perform well tend to be high minority and low-income. Thus, the consequences of low socioeconomic status extend not only to underperformance in tested subjects, but also to a lower quality of arts education. According to a national survey conducted by the Council for Basic Education in 2004, 36% of schools with high minority, low-income populations had cut arts education and 42% were considering it as a means to improve test scores (Kennedy, 2007, p. 200). As the Kennedy report stated:

As long as teachers and administrators feel pressure to focus only on English language arts and math, without understanding that participation in and exposure to arts education contribute to success in these areas, equitable access to arts education… for low-income students will continue to be problematic. (Kennedy, 2007, p. 204)

From a curricular standpoint, music instruction might be cut in order to focus on tested subjects like reading and math, a requirement of No Child Left Behind.

**Conclusion**

New York City has made much progress towards educational equity in recent history. School expenditures have been equalized, and the City has made efforts to standardize the arts curriculum so that every student can receive a quality music education. Unfortunately, the existence of varied cultural programming, the insistence of accountability in English and Math through standardized testing, and the reliance on contributions from affluent parents who proffer advantages to their public school children have created a situation whereby “children in some parts of the City have arts education for ten hours a week with frequent visits to museums and performances while other students receive little or no instruction in the arts whatsoever” (Committee on Education, 2003, in Kennedy, 2007, p. 200). Outwardly, City officials have
continued to profess their belief in arts education as a positive force in the intellectual and social development of students. As one Brooklyn elementary school principal put it, “It is our belief that, through the arts, children learn creativity, communication, self-confidence, self-expression, values, higher-order thinking skills, and a basic joy for work” (AASR, 2008, p. 28). However, so long as public funding remains insufficient, quality music education will more likely exist for students in affluent public schools, or students fortunate enough to attend a school that has partnered with an exceptional cultural organization.

School leaders are expected to “ensure student achievement in the arts; support quality arts teaching; select arts and cultural institutions, services and partners; budget resources; schedule appropriate instructional time; and allocate space” (AASR, 2008, p. 28), but principals have not been held accountable for the provision of arts education (OPA, 2008, p. 12). City Progress reports, 85% of which are based on test scores in reading, writing, and math, have reinforced the notion that schools must focus on tested subjects, discounting the ability of music to enrich learning across the curriculum.

The publication of Annual Arts in Schools Reports have led to many positive developments, including increased accountability and assessment. Data from 2006-07 and recommendations of the AASR led the Office of the Arts and Special Projects (OASP) to inaugurate Arts Education Liaisons, “the conduit through which the OASP disseminates information and provides support to advance student participation in the arts;” design and deliver technical assistance and support to over 800 schools; identify schools in need of improvement; support school leaders through schools visits, consultancy regarding programming and staffing issues, professional development opportunities, and the Cultural Pass Program; film Best Practices in Arts Education videos; and build awareness of the requirements for arts education.
Of the 96 schools identified as needing improvement, 42% responded to a summer follow-up survey stating that the AASR impacted programming for the following year in terms of the re-allocation of funds as well as an increase in the number of students receiving arts instruction.

There is the worry, however, that schools will do the bare minimum to appear successful in their implementation of music education so as to conserve the minimal resources at their disposal. That is why future reports must gather comprehensive data on the percentage of elementary school students receiving music education, the type of musical instruction that they received, and the money that the school spent on music instruction. Reports must also find a way to assess the quality of the different types of music instruction that students are receiving.

Unfortunately, the most recent reports seem to have gone in the opposite direction, failing to clearly show the percentage of students engaged in quality music programming, ignoring the type of music instruction that students receive, and no longer asking schools to report on whether different music facilities are appropriately equipped. This trend makes the immense data collection on the part of the City seem like political spectacle, showing off what amounts to a partially empty concern.

More pertinent to this study is the fact that charter schools are conspicuously absent from these data. Charter schools, through their freedom in the realm of teacher hiring and in their promise to innovate, provide somewhat of an analog to the cultural organizations and teaching artists that are increasingly setting the standard for the provision of music education in New York City. In addition, charter schools serve populations that tend to have higher economic need, populations that have been found to receive more limited access to music education. The
following chapter discusses the discursive landscape of charter schools and the limited research that has been conducted on music in charter schools.
Chapter 5

Arts, Music, and the Charter School Landscape

Charter schools represent a remarkable yet largely unfulfilled opportunity for community engagement. Absent the bureaucratic constraints of local school boards, these publicly-funded, privately-operated K-12 institutions, through their independence, are in unique positions to experiment in meeting the needs of the underserved communities they target. In 2009, almost half of all charter schools in New York City were founded by Community Grown Organizations, led by parents, teachers, or a community organization (Hoxby et al., 2009). However, as the charter school movement has expanded, a different philosophy and set of practices and goals have guided the trajectory of proliferation. While the notion of “community grown” charter organizations has largely faded from discourse, Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)—networks that run multiple schools—increasingly account for most charter school growth. Many of these CMOs, and especially the most visible ones, are premised on a streamlined, “back-to-basics” curriculum, focused on drilling in skills and discipline, and geared towards performance on standardized tests. The increasing prominence of networks and CMOs that coalesce around these guiding principles represents a major shift in the charter school movement. Images of this type of charter school preoccupy the space afforded education policy in academic and mass media discourse. With their uniforms, college iconography, self-regulation mantras, and rigid punishment systems, there is no doubt a specific image that “charter schools” signify to many in the public. And yet, the broad interpretation of charter schools as strict, traditional, and high achieving belies a more complex reality. Charter school type and performance are, in fact, highly diversified and broadly distributed. Although most recent charter school growth can be attributed to networks (and independent charter school operators emulating them), there has been little
impulse to understand the nexus of charter school type, performance, and curricular offerings.

Setting aside the way that charter schools perform on high-stakes tests, this chapter seeks to make sense of the distinct discourses associated with different types of charter schools, and, using music as a proxy for broader educational issues, understand how scholars have mapped the charter school landscape. Despite the fact that charter schools often market and brand themselves on the basis of curricular foci and the strict disciplinary standards outlined above, there is little research delineating the different strands of the charter school movement. Likewise, there are but a few published studies outlining the place that music and the arts hold in charter school curricula and discourse. This chapter is organized into two sections. I first review the literature on charter schools and their typologies. Then, I summarize the available relevant research on the arts in charter schools.

**On Charter School Typologies**

The extant literature on charter school typologies is relatively scant. Whereas critics of the charter school movement have resisted attempts to analyze the differences between charter schools in order to castigate the overarching trends associated with privatization, proponents have been likewise wont to support charters in a general, and thus all-encompassing sense. Perhaps this explains why there has been little published research categorizing the different types of charter schools.

In an attempt to provide a general sense of the fledgling charter school movement in NYC, Hoxby and Murarka (2007) grouped charter schools by authorizer (SUNY, NYCDOE, and NYS Board of Regents), by type of operating agency (Community Grown Organization, Charter Management, and Education Management Organization), and, using mission statements,
assigned type based on a framework of five broad curricular foci: “child-centered or progressive philosophy… general or traditional educational mission… rigorous academic focus… a mission to serve a targeted population of students … and a mission to offer a specific curriculum” (p. 7). The authors acknowledged the overlap between these five categories, and that “there is no way to accurately boil down the schools’ carefully crafted mission statements into a simple framework,” but nevertheless saw fit to identify “several broad educational philosophies held by clusters of schools,” despite emphasizing the uniqueness of each charter school in terms of policy and practice (p. 7).

Hoxby’s and Murarka’s (2007) analyses, based on data from the 2005-2006 school year, showed that most NYC charter schools were governed by Community Grown Organizations and maintained a progressive, child-centered focus. It should be noted that Hoxby’s work, though seemingly unbiased, has consistently supported the growth of charter schools.

One avowed pro-charter advocacy group, the California Charter School Association (CCSA), in its Portrait of the Movement, addressed charter school growth through five lenses: management structure, autonomy, classroom vs. non-classroom-based, conversion vs. startups, and the California-specific ASAM (Alternative School Accountability Model) charter schools which target at-risk youth (CCSA, 2014). The thrust of the CCSA (2014) report was to highlight improvement in the California charter school movement by demonstrating that a higher number of charter schools outperformed predicted academic performance index (API) scores in 2012-13, as compared to 2007-08. This report ignored the fact that an increasing number of California charter schools also scored an API below the predicted level. In this vein, a growing body of research by scholars with a decidedly favorable view of school choice (Dobbie and Fryer, 2013) has sought to distinguish high-performing charter schools from the rest.
A *New York Times* article published in 2016 boldly declared, “Many charter schools fail to live up to their promise, but one type has repeatedly shown impressive results” (Leonhardt, 2016). Based on evidence from a study of Boston’s charter high schools by Angrist et al. (2016), the article lauded “high expectations, high support schools,” which “devote more of their resources to classroom teaching…. keep students in class for more hours…. set high standards for students and try to instill confidence in them…. [and] focus on giving teachers feedback about their craft and helping them get better” (Leonhardt, 2016). With varying degrees of overlap, researchers have also referred to this type of charter school as “no excuses”—schools which “emphasize discipline and comportment, traditional reading and math skills, extended instruction time, and selective teacher hiring” (Angrist et al., 2016). According to Ravitch (2016), “They are called ‘no excuses’ schools, since there can be ‘no excuse’ for failure.”

Using data collected from 39 NYC charter schools, Dobbie and Fryer (2013) identified many of the features of “no excuses” schools as salient in relation to school effectiveness, asserting that “frequent teacher feedback, the use of data to guide instruction, high-dosage tutoring, increased instructional time, and high expectations” accounted for “approximately 45% percent of the variation in school effectiveness.” The authors also concluded that “traditionally collected input measures [such as] class size, per-pupil expenditure, teacher certification, and teacher training” were not correlated with school effectiveness (Dobbie and Fryer, 2013).

A study by Arce-Trigatti, Harris, Jabbar, and Lincove (2015) on the school choice movement in New Orleans, where almost all schools were converted to charters following Hurricane Katrina, underscored the prominence of the “no excuses”/ “high expectations, high support” model, but couched in the language of college preparation and readiness. In a purposeful break with prior studies that emphasized school governance and the difference
between charter and district (ie., TPS) schools, Arce-Trigatti et al. (2015) differentiated New Orleans schools with different governance bodies by “instructional hours, academic orientation, grade span, and extracurricular activities—factors that determine what students and families actually experience.” The study revealed that governance bodies did not directly correspond with instructional factors; however, a clear majority of elementary charter schools in New Orleans could be clustered in terms of “college prep” and “more school hours,” factors aligned with the “no excuses” model.

Since Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has used three agencies to authorize charter schools: the Orleans Parish School Board, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Recovery School District (RSD). Though the authors stressed the variety of options among charter schools, Arce-Trigatti et al. (2015) found that “market differentiation in New Orleans [came] from [the few] schools authorized or run by either the Orleans Parish School Board or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education,” not the RSD, which by 2014 had turned over 100% of the schools under its jurisdiction to CMOs. In other words, “market differentiation” among charter schools was not evident in the group of schools governed by CMOs. Notwithstanding the slight variance that Arce-Trigatti et al. (2015) found among schools run by the same CMO, the diversity of school offerings, in terms of curricular themes and extracurricular activities, was most apparent among non-RSD governed schools. Charter schools run by CMOs in the RSD disproportionately coalesced around the college prep paradigm, most likely because their reauthorization was dependent on test scores.

Whether praising the features of “no excuses” schools (Dobbie and Fryer, 2013), or reporting on their prevalence (Arce-Trigatti, 2015), recent studies have highlighted an important facet of the charter school movement—the growing prominence of “no excuses” charter schools,
both in reality and in discourse, reflects an isomorphic tendency, whereby charter schools, constrained by specific standards of accountability, increasingly ascribe to the tenets of a “no excuses” doctrine deemed most effective. If charter schools are deemed successful by virtue of their students’ ability to perform well on standardized tests, it is only natural that most charter schools would adopt curricula that homed in on core content and high behavior standards. Not only does this “constraining pressure [potentially force] members of a population to resemble one another,” (Carpenter, 2008, referencing Bulkley, 1999 and Arsen et al., 1999), but the success of the “no excuses” model among certain charter schools compels new schools towards this isomorphism and predisposes the movement towards CMOs with an established track record of high achievement and high expectations. Likewise, Lipman (2006), discussing the neoliberal tendencies of school choice policies, argued that although charters are free to be more progressive in politics and pedagogy, these progressive schools are doomed to fail relative to schools that specifically focus on student success on high-stakes standardized tests. Indeed, charter schools are constrained by the very fact that the renewal of their charters depends on test performance.

Thus, whereas charter schools are afforded more freedom to innovate curricula and pedagogy, they tend to integrate corresponding forms of classroom practice that relate more to strict management styles and rigid curricula built thereon. Charter schools are destined to fit into more conventional, teacher-centered educational paradigms. Carpenter (2008), whose comprehensive typology of charter schools will be elaborated alongside the findings presented in Chapter 8, concluded that new charter school creation between 1994 and 2002 indicated “diversity in a standards-based world.” This study views that conclusion much more skeptically, especially as it relates to the present political moment and the availability of arts programming.
Arts and Music in Charter Schools

Lost in the growing discourse surrounding charter schools is the role of the arts and music in school choice reform. A 2010 report by the Arizona Arts Education Research Institute (AAERI) compared district and charter schools and showed that charters were “significantly less likely to provide arts courses for students or have a highly qualified teachers providing instruction” (AAERI, 2010; emphasis added). Less than a third of charter schools in Arizona employed a highly qualified music or arts teacher, compared with eight out of ten district schools. Only 11% of charter schools in Arizona provided students with highly qualified music and visual arts teachers, compared with just over half the district schools.

Though the Arizona Arts Education Census questionnaire garnered only a 22% response rate, the study remains significant because it presents some of the only empirical data on access to arts in charter schools. More significant is the fact that Arizona has promoted some of the most aggressive policies to expand the provision of charters. The Center for Education Reform, a pro-charter advocacy group that assesses each state’s accommodation of charters, gave Arizona one of only five A grades awarded in the country (Consoletti, 2012). Of the 42 states with charter laws, Arizona’s was ranked 4th strongest in the nation, based on the multiple authorizers that consider charter applications, the fact that no caps exist on the allowance of charter, and because charters in Arizona maintain operational autonomy, independent from state, local, and district-teacher contract rules. With 539 schools, Arizona has by far the most charter schools per capita, trailing only California in the total number of charter schools currently operating in any state. It should then seem disconcerting that Arizona’s provision of arts programs was so unbalanced. As one of the earliest and most zealous states implementing charter laws, Arizona may in fact
represent a precursor to the current movement to increase and expand charter schooling across the country.

In their study of charter school music programs, Austin and Russell (2008) found that 70% of the 122 charter schools that participated in the study included music. With attention to “course offerings, instructional time, student participation, teaching facilities, teacher qualifications, and institutional support related to music instruction,” Austin and Russell (2008) surveyed charter school principals and directors to examine the “relationships between charter school characteristics and the status of music instruction” and assess the comparability of charters and non-charter public schools. The present study seeks to expand on this line of inquiry, and also to examine perceptions of elementary music teachers in charter schools. Like the Arizona study, Austin and Russell (2008) noted that fewer charter music teachers were highly qualified compared to teachers in traditional public schools. It also noted that music teachers in charter schools were less likely to follow a formal curriculum, and that course offerings were “narrower in scope” (p. 163). Austin and Russell (2008) concluded that charter schools were not neglecting the arts, however: “a majority of charter school students likely receive instruction in music” and “one out of ten schools claims the arts a curricular emphasis,” yet the authors could not claim that charter schools “embraced” the arts because music instruction therein did “not appear to be… commensurate with that of traditional public schools” (p. 177).

It is important to state that Austin and Russell (2008) acknowledged “no published research has examined music education within charter schools” (p. 176), and this is exactly where my proposed study will fill a large gap in the literature. More recent research by Elpus (2012) and Kelley and Demorest (2016) on charter school music programs in NYC and Chicago
will be discussed alongside the findings in Chapter Six. It not clear whether the narrower curriculum Austin and Russell (2008) described was based on differing value systems, funding discrepancies, institutional arrangements, or issues specific to place.

One compelling hypothesis is that charter schools often revert to a back-to-basics, traditional approach, enforcing strict behavioral standards while circumscribing curricula to focus on tested subjects like reading, writing, and math (Murphy and Schiffman, 2002; Lubienski, 2003). Gratto (2002) cataloged arts provision in six arts-focused charters around the country. Ferguson (2005) used “parent surveys, student surveys, class observations, music teacher interviews, administrator interviews, and a student interview” to examine music education practices in three Edison for-profit charter schools in Ohio (in Ferguson, 2005). Ferguson (2005) found that teachers spent more time giving instruction than implementing music activities, a finding that was corroborated in many of my observations. Mills (2000) investigated music instruction at a multiple-intelligence-focused charter school and noted that a significant amount of music instruction was geared towards other academic subjects. Both Ferguson (2005) and Mills (2000) noted discrepancies in parents’ perceptions of their children’s engagement with music and their observed involvement in music in the classroom.

Aside from a study by Kelley and Demorest (2016) that compared the incidence of music in charter schools and traditional public schools in Chicago (and will be discussed alongside my findings in Chapter 7), the research most pertinent to this study, by Elpus (2012), detailed various features of music programs and charter schools in NYC, including school staffing and compensation, school authorizer, school design partners, academic focus, and music program and teacher profiles. Elpus’ (2012) study suffered from a low response rate (41%), and the broad scope of inquiry prevented in-depth analysis of some issues that were deemed important for the
present study. Significantly, Elpus’ (2012) analysis of the incidence of music by academic focus/Emphasis—a self-reported response to the survey instrument designed by Austin and Russell (2008)—included 17 overlapping types:


Because of the small sample and exhaustive categories, no significant findings could be established regarding a potential connection between charter school type and incidence of music—after the largest group (11 of the 13 schools defined as “back-to-basics” were found to have music), no category contained more than six schools (Elpus, 2012).

With the exception of the small sample of studies briefly described above, there is a clear dearth of literature showing whether or how the narrowing of curricula relates to arts and music instruction in charter schools. And there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding what goes on in charter school music classrooms. In the next chapter, I turn to the proposed methodology of this study.
PART II
Chapter 6
Research Design

Introduction

This study sought to compare the incidence of early childhood (K-3) music instruction in elementary charter schools with that of elementary traditional public schools across New York City. In addition, this study sought to understand the role and form of early childhood music instruction within charter schools.

On a macro level (district/citywide), this research problem addressed the first research question cluster, having to do with access to music and socio-demographic variables in charter schools as compared to traditional public schools. The analysis consisted of a quantitative analysis of the data:

- Is there a difference in access to early childhood (K-3) music instruction between elementary traditional public schools (TPS) and charter schools (CS) in New York City?
  - How do socio-demographic variables (SES, PTA funding, race/ethnicity, disability, English learners, enrollment/school size) and geographic variables (district/neighborhood) relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction in NYC public schools serving K-3? Do these variables impact music offerings differently in TPS and CS?

At the meso level, typological/discursive features of charter schools were explored and analyzed for any connections to the presence of music. This level of discursive analysis responded to the second research question:

- With regard to charter schools serving K-3, how does charter school type relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction, if at all?

At the micro level (the classroom), the role and form of music instruction in different types of charter schools was assessed through observations and interviews. This level of analysis
responded to the third and fourth research questions. The fourth research question attempted to uncover possible correspondence between (micro level) classroom practice and (meso level) school discourse:

- **In different types of charter schools with K-3 music instruction, is the music instruction culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate in different types of charter schools?**

- **How do charter school music teachers conceptualize the cultural responsiveness and developmental appropriateness of their practice, and how does this relate, if at all, to the discourse and the context of the schools in which they work?**

Table 6.1 presents in summary form the research question matrix, including the types of data, as well as the ways in which data were collected and analyzed.
Table 6.1. Research Question Matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Types of Data &amp; Modes of Collection</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a difference in access to early childhood (K-3) music instruction between traditional public schools (TPS) and charter schools (CS) in New York City?</td>
<td>To uncover and describe access to music in NYC public schools serving K-3.</td>
<td>Data on TPS collected by the NYCDOE and available in Annual Arts in School Reports.</td>
<td>772 TPS serving K-3 that responded to the Annual Arts Education Survey for the 2014-2015 School Year.</td>
<td>Descriptive statistical analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do social variables (SES, PTA funding, race/ethnicity, disability, English learners), demographic variables (enrollment), and geographic variables (district/neighborhood) relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction in NYC public schools serving K-3? Do these variables impact music offerings differently in TPS and CS?</td>
<td>To ascertain whether there is a relationship between social, demographic, and geographic variables and the provision of early childhood music instruction in TPS and CS serving K-3 in NYC.</td>
<td>Above data in addition to secondary Demographic Snapshot data collected by the NYCDOE on both TPS and CS.</td>
<td>772 TPS and 125 CS in the sample.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With regards to charter schools serving K-3, how does charter school type relate to the presence of music instruction, if at all?</td>
<td>To create a typology of charter schools by describing, interpreting and analyzing charter school discourse surrounding culture, community, character and arts. To ascertain whether there is a relationship between CS type and the provision of early childhood music.</td>
<td>Official charter school documents procured online.</td>
<td>146 NYC charter schools serving K-3.</td>
<td>Document and discourse analysis of official charter school documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Data collected from CS principals and administrators, and procured online.</td>
<td>125 CS in sample.</td>
<td>Descriptive statistical analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In charter schools with K-3 music instruction, is the music instruction culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate in different types of charter schools?

To uncover, describe, and analyze the pedagogical and curricular choices of early childhood music teachers in different types of charter schools in NYC. Teacher interviews recorded and transcribed. Classroom observations. Interviews with 10 music educators teaching grades K-3 in charter schools. Observations of seven different teachers conducting a music lesson. Content, thematic, narrative, and discourse analysis. Analysis of field notes, coded for specific practices.

How do CS music teachers conceptualize the cultural responsiveness and developmental appropriateness of their practice in the context of the schools in which they work?

To describe, interpret, and analyze teachers’ discourse surrounding music education. To uncover teacher beliefs about the cultural responsiveness and developmental appropriateness of their curriculum and pedagogical practices. Teacher interviews recorded and transcribed. Interviews with 10 music educators teaching grades K-3 in charter schools. Nine teachers were identified through the survey questionnaire and one was identified through a professional development course. Content, thematic, narrative, and/or discourse analysis.

What is the relationship, if any, between a charter school’s official discourse and that of the music teacher in the school?

To ascertain whether there is a relationship between charter school discourse and teacher discourse. Official charter school documents procured online. Charter school discourse and teacher discourse from interviews. Content and discourse analysis of official charter school documents and teacher interviews.

**General Description of Methodology and Data**

In order to assess charter school music programs at macro (district/citywide), meso (school), and micro (teacher/classroom) levels, this study employed mixed methods. Mixed methods integrate quantitative and qualitative data. For this mixed methods study, research followed a concurrent transformative design outlined in Creswell (2009), in which a theoretical framework guides research that simultaneously uses quantitative and qualitative methods. Rather than comparing quantitative and qualitative data sets, they will exist “side by side as two pictures that provide an overall composite assessment of the problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 214).
This study is based on several pieces of data from the 2014-2015 school year. It includes the following:

- **Survey data collected by the NYCDOE** on the availability of music education in K-3 in traditional public schools (Annual Arts Schools Report)
- **Survey data collected by the NYCDOE** on social demographics (enrollment, SES, race/ethnicity, disability, English learners) of traditional public schools and charter schools (Demographic Snapshot Data)
- **Survey data collected through a survey constructed by the researcher** on the availability of music education in K-3 in charter schools and supplemented by online research (constructed by researcher)
- **Official charter school documents**
- **In-depth interviews** with music teachers in charter schools
- **Observations** of music teachers in charter schools

**The Quantitative Data: Surveys**

Prior quantitative studies on music in charter schools (Austin and Russell, 2008; Elpus, 2012; Kelley and Demorest, 2016) have mainly focused on analyzing various features of music instruction in charter schools, such as the staffing, certification, and compensation levels of teachers; the compulsory nature of the program (whether or not it was required/extracurricular); and the musical focus of the program (ie., general music, choral, instrumental, etc.). The quantitative portion of this study disregarded many of those details in an effort to provide a relatively straightforward portrait of the incidence of early childhood (K-3) music instruction in charter schools and traditional public schools; that is, simply whether or not an elementary school dedicated a substantive amount of time to compulsory, sustained, and sequential early
childhood music instruction.\textsuperscript{1} This categorical, dependent variable (incidence of music) was collected via survey questionnaires in the case of charter schools, and through secondary data collected by the NYCDOE and published in *Annual Arts in Schools Reports* (*AASR*) in the case of traditional public schools.

**Demographic data (Demographic Snapshot Data).** The *Demographic Snapshot* data was collected by the NYCDOE for both TPS and CS. Specific social and demographic variables that were assessed included socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, disability, English learners, and enrollment. In addition, PTA funding data for TPS published in individual *AASR* reports was analyzed as a function of SES. Funding data were not available for most charter schools in the sample.

**Quantitative data on music in traditional public schools (*AASR*).** For the quantitative analysis of the incidence of music in TPS, I used data from NYCDOE *Annual Arts in Schools Reports* (*AASR*). Of the 791 traditional public schools serving kindergarten through third grade in New York City in 2014-2015, 772 (98\%) reported data that were published by the NYCDOE in its AASRs (2015), and these 772 schools comprise the sample of TPS used herein.

\textsuperscript{1} For this study, elective and extracurricular music were omitted form the final analysis. Certain co-curricular music programming proved difficult to organize for TPS. Staffing levels (the ratio of students to the number of music teachers) were disregarded in favor of an analysis of the correlation between school size and incidence of music. The compensation level of music teachers was deemed extraneous. And although issues of repertoire and practice were investigated for the qualitative portion of this study, the musical focus was held constant and assumed to be general music given the nature of early childhood music instruction and the tendency to focus on basic skills and singing with young children (K-3). The attempt to streamline the incidence of music in TPS was complicated by the wide variance in music offerings reported in the *AASR* (this will be elaborated upon below). Rather, the streamlined nature of this inquiry served the interests of a short, efficient survey instrument designed to maximize response rates and procure accurate information from charter school administrators who might not have had intimate knowledge of the music program in their school.
Raw data on arts instruction in the AASR are extensive and multilayered. Since its inception, the AASR has refined its survey and now asks individual schools to report arts instructional hours for each class cohort in increments of 10-hour ranges (i.e., 1-10 hours, 11-20 hours, 21-30 hours, etc.). Schools also report whether arts instruction was provided by a certified arts teacher (full-time or part-time), a cultural partnership, or other school-based staff (which, at the elementary level, may include either classroom teachers or cluster teachers not certified in the arts). The addition of these details has been most welcome. However, in spite of the richness of these data, there remain holes and shortcomings. AASR reports have tended to exaggerate extent of aggregate arts programming in NYC by glossing over wide differences in contact hours and teacher qualifications/quality.

The 2015 AASR report claimed that 85% of kindergartens provided music and 89% of responding elementary schools provided music to any grades 1-5 (p. 27). Such reporting highlights the difficulty of presenting straightforward data on early childhood music instruction that accounts for differences between grades and wide differences in contact hours. For instance, the above statistics do not distinguish between schools that have students attend a one-hour music assembly once during the school year, and schools that provide music classes for one hour every week. Although the AASRs reported on the breakdown of certified teachers (certified, full-time or part-time), individual school reports made no distinction between instructional providers nor hours taught by school-based staff and by cultural arts organizations. School reports also failed to identify whether non-certified school-based staff were cluster teachers or classroom teachers, a potentially crucial distinction.

For these reasons, data provided by the NYCDOE on music instruction in TPS were refined and organized to delimit the incidence of a formalized music program, which I defined as
being taught by a certified teacher, either full-time or part-time, or by a cultural partnership for which annual instruction in at least one grade was at least 11-20 hours.\footnote{2} Formal music programs were kept distinct from the mere presence of non-programmatic \textit{sustained music instruction}, a more inclusive statistical category, expanded to account for music instruction of at least 11-20 annual hours by non-certified school-based staff in at least one grade K-3.

Schools that reported 1-10 annual hours of music by a cultural partnership or non-certified school based staff were not counted as having a formal program nor sustained instruction. This amount of instruction was deemed negligible. The 10-hour cutoff, admittedly low, was chosen to eliminate traditional public schools that clearly do not offer a sustained, sequential music program.\footnote{3}

\footnote{2} Though I was not able to procure data from charter schools regarding the number of instructional hours in music, some CS reported that their music classes met for only part of the year, and thus it was reasoned that music instruction in these CS may have totaled between 11 and 20 hours during the school year. Data collected by the researcher on music teacher certification in CS was deemed unreliable. Because it was impossible to uncover whether the non-certified school-based staff responsible for music instruction in TPS was a general classroom teacher or a cluster teacher, a separate category of school-based staff was established to differentiate formal music programs from sustained music instruction by non-certified teachers. This distinction is not meant to cast judgment on the quality of instruction by cultural partnerships or non-certified school-based staff. My own experiences testify to the fact that classroom and cluster teachers can be very effective implementing a robust music program. Anecdotal evidence from three TPS, whose school populations I have worked with, suggests that it is possible to offer sustained, sequential music instruction with non-certified school-based staff, but such classification would require observed data collected from TPS on a case-by-case basis, which was outside the scope of this study (and beyond the capacity of the NYCDOE). The two charter schools that reported sustained music instruction by non-certified school-based staff were for the most part aggregated with the 85 charter schools that reported a music program.

\footnote{3} For instance, 68 TPS (nine percent of the sample) cited K-3 music instruction from cultural partnerships that totaled 10 hours or less for the entire school year, an indication that there was not more than a couple of music assemblies or special guest visits. For the purposes of this study, these 68 TPS did not meet the threshold to count as having music.
Of the 552 schools (72% of TPS) that reported having a music program (with more than 11 annual hours of instructional time by certified teachers or cultural partnerships), 40 (five percent of the total sample of 772 schools) reported classes with between 11 and 20 hours of instructional time. Although 11 hours over the course of a 36-week school year accounts for a little less than 20 minutes per week, this amount of instructional time was deemed sufficiently substantive and sustained, and most closely aligned with the charter school data that were collected. In addition to the 552 TPS that reported a music program, 108 TPS reported sustained music instruction (of at least 11-20 annual hours in a K-3 class) by non-certified school-based staff. The 660 TPS with sustained music instruction accounted for 85% of the 772 school sample and will be referenced in Chapters 7 and 8. The decision to define and delimit formal music programs as separate from sustained music instruction accorded with the NYC Comptroller’s (2014) *State of the Arts* report and seemed to best align with the data collected by the researcher from charter schools.

**Quantitative data on charter schools (researcher constructed survey).** To find out more about charter school arts programming, a short survey questionnaire was administered to charter schools. This was necessary because the NYCDOE does not report on arts programming in charter schools. Survey questionnaires were administered via email to the principals of all 146 charter schools serving kindergarten through third grade in 2014-2015 to gauge the incidence of music. Only 16 principals responded to three rounds of email requests, so phone calls were made to each of the remaining 130 schools, asking administrators the same five questions that were posed to principals.4

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4 In addition, survey respondents were asked to forward the researcher’s contact information to music teachers who might be willing to participate in the qualitative phase of the study.
1) Does your school have a music program?

2) Is there a designated music teacher for grades K-3?

3) Is this teacher certified to teach music?

4) Are there any other arts featured in your school (visual arts, dance, drama)?

5) Is there anything you would like to add about the music program in your school?

Phone surveys yielded an additional 99 responses to question one, with various response rates for the other questions. Responses to question one on the survey questionnaire by a total of 115 charter schools accounted for a 79% response rate. Data on teacher certification collected from the survey (question three) were deemed invalid, since three teachers interviewed for the qualitative portion of this study disclosed the fact that they did not hold content area New York State certification in music, even though their schools reported in the affirmative (i.e., that the teacher was certified to teach music). The 79% response rate was supplemented by investigations of the websites of the 31 schools that did not respond to the survey questionnaire. This supplemental research revealed the presence of a music teacher or program in an additional eight CS, and the absence of music teacher or program in two CS. In tandem, survey responses from 115 schools and data gathered from 10 CS online yielded a sample of 125 CS (86% of the 146 CS) for which the presence or absence of K-3 music instruction was confirmed.

The high sample rate of charter schools (86%) exceeded that of prior studies on charter school music: 31% (Austin and Russell, 2008), 22% (AAERI, 2010), 41% (Elpus, 2012), and 79% (Kelley and Demorest, 2016). Data collected on CS music programs should be viewed cautiously given the possibility that some administrators may have exaggerated the extent of music in their school, or that a nonresponse bias may have existed among the 31 schools that did not respond to the survey questionnaire. There is reason to believe that schools that did not have
a music program were less inclined to respond to the survey—88% of the principals ($n = 13$) that responded to the voluntary round of email questionnaires reported a music program, but only 67% of the schools contacted by phone reported a music program. In addition, many administrators from the largest charter school network in NYC refused to respond to the survey. The 17 administrators from this network that did respond to the first question of survey reported a strikingly low incidence of music (29%) compared to the rest of sample. Nevertheless, the relatively narrow scope of the target sample (elementary schools serving K-3 in NYC) and the relatively high response rate indicated that the data collected on the presence of music instruction were likely reliable and valid.

**Qualitative Data: Interviews, Observations and Documents**

**Documents**

Official charter school documents (e.g., mission statements and academic communiqués) from all 146 charters schools serving K-3 in 2014-2015 were collected from the NYCDOE and official charter school websites. Special attention was paid to the discourse of the 125 schools in the quantitative sample and the 10 schools in which interviewees taught. These schools remain anonymous.

**Interviews**

Ten music teachers participated in the qualitative portion of this study. Nine research participants for the interview component of this project were self-identified with the help of principals/administrators who forwarded my contact information as requested in the survey questionnaire. One additional interview participant was identified during a professional development course.
Case profiles formed the theorizing basis of this narrative inquiry, as it is informed by interpretive phenomenology. Predicated on a model of (auto)biography, phenomenology studies the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first person. In focusing on intentionality and perceptions, phenomenology privileges the subjective and thus makes fewer assumptions about culture and belief. Phenomenology positions itself against positivism and the methods of natural science (i.e., detached observation, controlled experiment, and quantitative measurement) and proposes a human science predicated on description, interpretation, and reflection, which lends itself to a more holistic understanding of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). According to Seidman (1991), in in-depth interviews informed by phenomenology, “the researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (p. 51).

In-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 music teachers who taught grades K-3 during the 2014-15 school year. Seidman (1991) proposed a series of at least three interviews, the first to establish context/focused life history, the second to reconstruct details of experience, and the third to reflect on meaning (pp. 16-18). As this study minimized the attention to life history, the first two interviews proposed by Seidman (1991) were combined. There was definitely room for more elaboration and meaning making, but in the end, teachers were not readily available. Given time constraints, only one teacher agreed to a follow-up interview, a limitation of the study.

Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and took place in the location of the teacher’s choosing at a mutually agreed upon day and time, usually between classes in the music teacher’s schedule. The one follow-up interview took place one week following the first
interview. In each instance, I provided lunch or a light snack. Informed consent forms were distributed to interview participants prior to the first interview and were explained immediately before the first interview. Each interview was recorded on a digital recorder. Except for one Skype interview, all interviews were face-to-face. After each interview, a transcript of the interview was made available to participants so that they could confirm accuracy and understanding. These data were collected between the Winter of 2015 and the Fall of 2016. Participants were guaranteed anonymity throughout the process.

My questions were focused around specific “thematics developed by [me] the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of [the] investigation, the data… [and] political commitments” (Riessman, 2008, p. 54). Additionally, the open-ended format allowed for the emergence of new themes relating to personal, local, and societal contexts. (For an Interview Guide, see Appendix A.)

Observations

Seven of the 10 interview participants received written permission from their respective schools, and allowed me to observe their music teaching. My observations spanned 19 class periods ranging from 35 minutes to 50 minutes during the Winter and Spring of 2015. I observed seven kindergarten classes, four first-grade classes, four second-grade classes, and two third-grade classes. One elementary music teacher was only available to be observed during the trimester in which fourth- and fifth-graders had music in their schedule, so I observed his fourth- and fifth-grade music classes.

Field notes were compiled and coded with attention to specific songs; pedagogical practices (e.g., relating to musical genre, rhythm instruction, singing style, games, playing instruments, and music literacy); and general impressions of the classroom dynamics, in terms of
teacher talk, physical layout, atmosphere, and iconography. Unfortunately, it was unfeasible to audio or video record classrooms, given the strict requirements for parental permission imposed by the NYCDOE. Nevertheless, extensive data were collected during observations in the field.

Data Analysis

Data on the incidence of music in CS, collected through the survey questionnaire constructed by the researcher, were analyzed alongside data collected by NYCDOE AASR surveys on music education availability and resources in TPS. In addition, demographic data collected by the NYCDOE Demographic Snapshot data provided information on SES, race/ethnicity, disability, English learners, enrollment, PTA funding, and geographic (district/neighborhood) variables for both TPS and CS. Unfortunately PTA funding information was not available for Charter schools, so the analysis was only conducted with TPS. Descriptive statistics were derived from the quantitative analysis.

Official charter school documents were subjected to discourse analysis. I attempted to discover “How the naturalization of ideologies come[s] about? How is it sustained? What determines the degree of naturalization in a particular instance?” as well as the possibilities for change (Fairclough, 1995, p. 36). Discourse analysis was in turn used to create a typology of charter schools.

Interview transcripts were organized into categories as per the guidelines for thematic narrative analysis of teacher interviews set forth in in Riessman (2008) and Seidman (1991). I selected, interpreted, described, and analyzed material to “build upon and explore... participants’ responses” (Seidman, 1991, p. 22) and recognize their subjective understandings in order to interpret the ways that these subjective understandings resisted or aligned with institutional
norms and external structures. Special attention was paid to autobiographical points of interest (Seidman, 1991, p. 32).

In some instances, transcripts of interview testimonies were analyzed using critical discourse analysis (CDA) in a nod to the importance of texture in the form and organization of the text—to help uncover the “... ideological importance of the implicit, taken-for-granted assumptions (presuppositions) upon which the orderliness and coherence of texts depend” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 1). Again, the same questions were asked: “How does the naturalization of ideologies come about? How is it sustained? What determines the degree of naturalization in a particular instance?” What are the possibilities for change? (Fairclough, 1995, p. 36). These questions were ripe for interpretation, and proved sufficiently broad.

Thematic narrative analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data gathered in interviews with teachers, which yielded insights into the meaning that teachers made of the cognitive, cultural, and aesthetic experiences they sought or provided for their students. According to Seidman (1991), “The primary way a researcher can investigate an education organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the ‘others’ who make up the organization or carry out the process” (p. 10). Thematic analysis also applied to the songs, pedagogical practices, and important classroom moments that were observed. When possible, observations also provided the basis for interview questions about lesson objectives and classroom moments. Rather than present these data in isolation, observations are woven into teacher’s accounts to provide a thematic context for their discourse.

In analyzing teacher testimonies and practice alongside official charter school documents, this analysis hoped to fill the “need for discourse analyses to map systematic analysis of spoken or written texts onto systematic analyses of social contexts” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 187). What are
the “conventionalized practices” that are present among music teachers and the schools in which they work? Do these practices reflect the marketization of educational discourse noted by Fairclough (1995), or politics implicated in the teaching and learning (Gee, 1999). Gee’s (2011) toolkit for discourse analysis provided a frame of reference for the interwoven nature of grammar, semiotics, meaning making, and knowledge systems.

**Limitations of the Study**

Given this study’s wide conceptual breadth, disparate methods, and the limitations of a sole researcher, many sacrifices were made to present a coherent, multilevel portrait of early childhood music instruction in NYC charter schools. With respect to quantitative data and analysis, the most serious limitation was the inconsistency of data between and within traditional public schools and charter schools. Future studies would do well to follow the lead of Kelley and Demorest (2016), and administer the same 18-question survey to both TPS and CS in order to procure information on music programming. Considering this study’s goal to procure basic information from as many schools as possible, and granted the availability of comprehensive NYCDOE data on arts in TPS, it was deemed impractical to expect a high response rate from 146 CS with a detailed survey instrument, and unrealistic to expect a response rate from 791 TPS that would match the 98% that had already reported to the AASR. The choice was made to analyze survey responses from charter schools and compare them to secondary data collected by the NYCDOE. Overall, this study would have benefited from a higher response rate from charter schools, and data that was more consistent across school type (ie., TPS vs. CS).

Data on the presence of music was further complicated by the intricacies and inconsistencies in the AASR reports. Rather than report whether or not students participated in a
formal music program, the NYCDOE delineates music instructional hours based on the teacher’s status as certified, part-time, full-time, or uncertified and school-based. On the one hand, these details posed a limitation because they were too specific, and I was unable to procure comparable data from charter schools. On the other hand, the specificity of the data was flummoxing, forcing arbitrary choices about what constitutes a music program in TPS. In a perfect world, the AASR would report comprehensive, streamlined, accurate music instruction data for both TPS and CS, allowing for the alignment of statistical metrics.

Another limitation involved the arbitrary metrics that were used in discourse and document analysis to create a typology of charter schools. Although the typology revealed interesting and statistically significant patterns, there is still much need for further refinement, as evidenced by the overlap between categories in my classification system. A comprehensive typology would necessitate extensive data collected from charter school documents, principals, and/or classrooms. It was beyond the scope of this study to assess the degrees to which character education and behavior management suffused the curriculum and classroom practices of the 146 elementary charter schools serving grades K-3. Future research might survey charter schools and ask them to choose from a limited array of options pertaining to the school’s pedagogical and curricular orientation.

With respect to qualitative data gathered from interviews and observations, teachers’ lack of availability and unwillingness to participate limited the sampling frame to ten, and hampered efforts to conduct multiple interviews with each participant. Ideally, a larger corpus of data from more interviews and observations, across a larger time frame, and with access to more curriculum materials, would have provided much more depth. In addition, only one teacher from a progressive charter school agreed to participate in the study, limiting the representativeness of
the sample in terms of type. Finally, the unfeasibility of procuring permission to record observations was a serious limitation of this study, most notably with respect to accurate accounts of the time and tone of teacher talk.

Conclusion

The combination of quantitative data and qualitative data ensured the richness of my research design. In the end, despite the limitations described above, the mixed method approach yielded a rich data set from which to interpret my findings, which are the subject of Part III of this dissertation. Chapters 7 and 8 give the results of the quantitative analysis. Chapter 9 discusses the qualitative analysis of the types of charter schools derived from the document and discourse analysis. Finally, Chapters 10 and 11 give the results of the qualitative analysis, drawn from teacher interviews and observations. Together they paint a broad picture of the music landscape in New York City schools, both traditional public schools and charter schools.
PART III
Chapter 7

Introduction

This chapter compares the prevalence of music in charter schools (CS) and traditional public schools (TPS) in New York City serving kindergarten through third grade (K-3). On the whole, this chapter attempts to answer the first research question, along with the first sub-question, leaving geographic concerns for the following chapter:

Is there a difference in access to early childhood (K-3) music instruction between elementary traditional public schools (TPS) and charter schools (CS) in NYC?

- How do socio-demographic variables (SES, PTA funding, race/ethnicity, disability, English learners, enrollment/school size) relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction in NYC public schools serving K-3? Do these variables impact music offerings differently in TPS and CS?

Data on music programming in TPS, published in the Annual Arts in Schools Reports (AASR, 2015) were first compared to the data gathered through the researcher-conducted survey for charter schools. Then, the incidence of music in TPS and CS was analyzed alongside Demographic Snapshot data (NYCDOE, 2016) for all New York City public schools (NYCPS, both TPS and CS), which contained schools’ enrollment and demographic features—percentage of students in poverty, black and Hispanic students, special needs students (SPED), and emergent bilinguals/learners of English as a New Language (ENL). With respect to demographics, specific attention was paid to socioeconomic status (SES), as defined by the NYC DOE poverty metrics.1

1 In 2012, the NYCDOE instituted an Economic Need Index measure, which expanded school-level SES data beyond the number of students receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch to account for students living in, or eligible for, Human Resources Administration (HRA) housing assistance. Enrollment in Free or Reduced-Price Lunch failed to account the high cost of living in NYC as well as those students living in poverty who did not receive meal assistance. Current “NYC DOE poverty counts are based on the number of students with families who have qualified for free or reduced price lunch, or are eligible for Human Resources Administration
Descriptive statistics served as the basis for comparing access to music between TPS and CS, and within each group.

**Demographic Characteristics of Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools**

Using demographic data collected by the NYCDOE, Table 7.1, below, shows the number of students served by TPS and CS serving K-3 in New York City in 2014-2015.

**Table 7.1. Aggregate Enrollment Traditional Public Schools (TPS) and Charter Schools (CS) Serving Kindergarten through Third Grade in NYC, 2014-15.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TPS</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>499,860</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>51,060</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCPS</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>550,920</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Demographic Snapshot* (NYCDOE, 2016)

Table 7.1 shows that charter schools accounted for approximately 16% of the NYC public schools serving K-3 in NYC, and enrolled approximately 9% of the student population in these schools.

Table 7.2, below, profiles the demographic characteristics of the schools for which arts/music data was available. Note that the 897 NYCPS (772 TPS and 125 CS) in the sample comprised 96% of the total 938 total schools that served K-3 in NYC in 2014-2015 (see Table 7.1). The charter school sample (n = 125) represented 85% of the 147 charter schools serving K-3 in NYC. Demographic statistics for the schools in the sample of this study closely approximated statistics for the entire population, for both TPS and CS.

Consistent with data reported elsewhere (see Fine and Fabricant, 2012), charter schools in NYC in 2014-2015 maintained a disproportionately low enrollment of special education and (HRA) benefits” (NYCDOE, 2016). The new figure better accounts for the high cost of living in NYC.
ENL students. In addition, charter schools, in the main, target black and Hispanic communities and thus had a higher percentage of these populations than traditional public schools. As will be shown, NYC elementary charter schools are primarily located in high-poverty neighborhoods with higher concentrations of black and Hispanic students.

Table 7.2. Demographic Snapshot of Sampled TPS and CS, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Charter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NYCPS (K-3) n = 897 Schools</td>
<td>772 TPS</td>
<td>125 CS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 532,415 Students</td>
<td>488,900</td>
<td>43,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Poverty</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black &amp; Hispanic</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% SPED</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% ENL</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Demographic Snapshot* (NYCDOE, 2016)

It should be noted that poverty data for charter schools were skewed downward because roughly one quarter of NYC charter schools did not utilize DOE School Food in 2014-2015 (NYCDOE, 2016). The underreporting of eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch means that poverty indicators were likely lower for charter schools than actual poverty levels, especially given their geographic locations and high concentrations of black and Hispanic students.²

Music Education in Traditional Public Schools vs. Charter Schools

Table 7.3 reports on the presence of music programs in TPS and CS serving K-3 in New York City in 2014-2015. Although the NYCDOE reported the breakdown of certified music teachers in TPS—38% of elementary schools had at least one full-time certified music teacher,

² As expected, the correlation between poverty and the concentration of black and Hispanic students was moderately strong for both TPS and CS ($r = .67$ for both groups). This correlation was important to consider when addressing the association between poverty and incidence of music in TPS.
and 20% of elementary schools had at least one part-time certified music teacher in 2014-15 (AASR, 2015, pp. 86-87)—music instruction by non-certified teachers and cultural arts organizations remains difficult to parse. In order to differentiate music instruction by cultural organizations and non-certified school-based staff, it is important to reiterate the definitions I created for music program and sustained music instruction, which were established in the section on the AASR in the previous chapter (refer to pp. 82-84 for a more detailed explanation of the reasoning behind these definitions).

- **Music program:** music instruction by a certified teacher, either full-time or part-time, or by a cultural partnership for which annual instruction totaled at least 11-20 hours in at least one grade, K-3.3

- **Sustained music instruction,** a more inclusive statistical category, accounts for music programs as well as music instruction of at least 11-20 annual hours by non-certified school-based staff (non-cert. SBS) in at least one grade, K-3.

### Table 7.3. Number and Percentage of Schools with and without a Music Program, by Type of School, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th></th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL NYCPS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Music Program</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/o Music Program</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from AASR (2015) for TPS and from researcher-constructed survey for CS

As can be seen from the right column in Table 7.3, 71% of all public schools serving K-3 in New York City (NYCPS, both TPS and CS) had music programs, whereas 29% did not. The

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3 The AASRs report on annual music instructional hours in TPS in 10-hour ranges (ie., 1-10 hours, 11-20 hours, etc.). Although 11-20 hours may seem paltry, the decision to delimit formal music programs and sustained music instruction in TPS and include schools with 11-20 hours of annual instruction seemed to best align with the data collected by the researcher from charter schools.
proportion of traditional public schools vs. charter schools offering music programs was more or less the same, with 72% of TPS and 68% of charter schools having music programs.

Table 7.4 uses a more inclusive statistic, and looks at the proportion of schools that have any form of sustained music instruction; that is, either a music program, or music instruction of at least 11-20 hours by non-certified school-based staff.

Table 7.4. Number and Percentage of Schools with and without Sustained Music Instruction, by Type of School, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># (%)</td>
<td># (%)</td>
<td># (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Sustained</td>
<td>660 (85%)</td>
<td>87 (70%)</td>
<td>747 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Sustained</td>
<td>112 (15%)</td>
<td>38 (30%)</td>
<td>150 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>772 (100%)</td>
<td>125 (100%)</td>
<td>897 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from AASR (2015) for TPS and from researcher-constructed survey for CS

As Table 7.4 indicates, when accounting for the additional TPS that provided K-3 sustained music instruction by non-certified school-based staff (and the two additional CS that reported sustained music instruction by non-music teachers), traditional public schools showed a much higher proportion of sustained music instruction. Whereas close to 72% of TPS in the sample (n = 552/772) reported having a formal music program (see Table 7.3), 85% of TPS (n = 660/772) reported sustained music instruction. The difference of 108 TPS (that reported music instruction of at least 11-20 hours by non-certified school-based staff) accounted for almost half of the TPS without a music program. In total, 660 TPS (85%) had some form of sustained music instruction. In contrast, only 70% (n = 87/125) of charter schools reported sustained music instruction.

Although the difference in the proportion of TPS and CS with a music program was not great (72% vs. 68%, see Table 7.3), the difference in the proportion of TPS and CS that provided
sustained music instruction (with or without a certified music teacher) was significant (85% vs. 70%, see Table 7.4). Figure 7.1 presents this distinction in another form, with a stacked bar graph. The base of each bar shows the percentage of schools with a music program, and the dark grey section at the top section of each bar indicates includes sustained music instruction by non-certified school-based.

![Stacked Bar Graph]

**Figure 7.1.** Proportion of Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools with a Music Program and with Sustained Music Instruction, 2014-15. (Source: Data from AASR [2015] for TPS and from researcher-constructed survey for CS)

Citywide, traditional public schools were much more likely to provide K-3 music instruction than charter schools, but only when including music taught by non-certified school-based staff. It was thus necessary to distinguish between formal music programs, and instances of music instruction by non-certified school-based staff, which is included as sustained music instruction, since non-certified school-based staff accounted for almost all of the difference in the prevalence of sustained music instruction between TPS and CS.
These findings diverge from the two previously mentioned studies that compared music and arts offerings in TPS and CS in other geographic locations. An Arizona study (AAERI, 2010) showed that charter schools were significantly less likely to offer music and arts with highly qualified teachers. Conversely, a study of elementary schools in Chicago conducted by Kelley and Demorest (2016) showed that charter schools were more likely to offer music than their traditional public school counterparts, albeit at lower rates than national norms. Such differences highlight the importance of place and the imperative to contextualize school reform policies with respect to state and locality. In Chapter 8, I analyze the geographic distribution of access to music within New York City.

In the context of NYC, it should be noted that statewide (NYSED) arts requirements stipulate that 20% of weekly school hours in grades 1-3 should be devoted to the arts (music, dance, theater, and visual arts). To be clear, many TPS and CS do not comply with NYSED arts requirements—just 38% of responding elementary schools (TPS) provided instruction in music, dance, theater and visual arts to all grades 1-5 by any instructional provider in 2014-15 (NYCDOE, 2015, p. 27), and only two of the responding CS (2%) reported instruction in all four arts disciplines. Thirteen charter schools provided no arts instruction whatsoever (10% of sampled schools).

In spite of the documented flouting thereof, NYSED arts requirements constitute state law. And unlike other states, where charter schools might be entirely exempt from curriculum requirements, New York mandates that charter schools follow the state curriculum. It is possible that NYSED laws governing curriculum policies (vis-à-vis the arts and charter schools) create conditions in which charter schools in NYC might be more likely to offer early childhood music education than they would in other jurisdictions, even if those laws are not enforced. In other
words, because charter schools are mandated to comply with New York state curriculum, they are more inclined to follow guidelines for arts education requirements.

The following sections detail how size of school and social demographics related to the prevalence of music programs in NYC.

Size of School and Music Education in TPS and CS

Smaller schools, both TPS and CS, were less likely to have music than larger schools. Of the 36 charter schools without music that responded to the survey, four reported that their school was still expanding, and that the administration intended to institute a music program when enrollment became sufficient. One school administrator at the largest network charter school curiously stated, “We don’t do those things [arts] here because we’re elementary, but other schools in the network do.” The suggestion that arts education is more appropriate for higher grades echoed a sentiment expressed in this network’s discourse that student learning should be focused on mastery, an issue which will be discussed in the following chapters.

A significant difference in the proportion of small (less than 400 hundred students), medium (between 400 and 799 students), and large (800 or more students) schools with sustained music instruction was evident in the aggregate, and separately for TPS and CS. These findings corroborated Kelley and Demorest (2016), who reported a significantly higher incidence of music programs among large (72%) and medium (69%) schools as compared to small schools in Chicago. Figure 7.2, below shows the incidence of music in TPS and CS by school size.
Figure 7.2. Incidence of Music in TPS and CS by School Size, 2014-15. (Source: Data from NYCDOE [2016]; AASR [2015]; and from researcher-constructed survey)

Note the steady rise in the incidence of music as TPS increase in size, and the more drastic difference in the incidence of music among CS between small and medium schools. Quite simply, smaller schools receive less funding and were thus less likely to incur the costs of a music teacher.

Considering the absence of any large charter schools, school size was also analyzed with equal, trichotomous groupings. Trichotomous groupings of size for traditional public schools were formed (less than 471 students, 472-707 students, more than 707 students). Data for TPS in trichotomous groupings was comparable to the above findings, with 81% of the smallest 257 schools (36-470 students), 84% of mid-sized schools (472-707 students), and 91% of the largest 258 schools (708-2017 students) reporting the incidence of music instruction. Figure 7.3, below, shows the difference that size makes for charter schools when dividing the schools into three equal groups. Equalized trichotomous groupings more sharply defined the difference in
incidence of music between small-, medium-, and large-sized charter schools. Clearly the bigger the school, whether traditional public or charter, the more sustained music instruction.

![Figure 7.3](image)

**Figure 7.3.** Incidence of Music in Charter Schools by School Size (with Trichotomous Groupings), 2014-15. (Source: Data from NYCDOE [2016] and from researcher-constructed survey)

As previously mentioned, many of the smallest charter schools were still expanding in the 2014-2015 school year and intended to institute a music program when enrollment became sufficient (recall the four responding CS that gave small school size and pending expansion as a reason for lacking music). However, while low enrollment figures were the direct cause for the absence of music in a few of the smallest, still-expanding charter schools, the correspondence between small school size and absence of music, although significant, was not conclusively causal.

Of the 41 smallest CS in the sample, only 17 (41%) had music, and 24 (59%) lacked music. Of these 24 schools, 17 belonged to the three largest charter school networks in New York City, networks that accounted for 27% of all NYC CS serving K-3 in 2014-2015 (and 25% of the CS in the sample). These network charter schools offered disproportionately less music...
instruction, even when enrollment figures were higher. Schools from these three networks boasted mission statements that focused exclusively on core academic content and character skills. In contrast, of the 17 CS in the lowest enrollment tertile that offered music, 15 articulated a range of progressive orientations in their mission statements, whether that entailed constructivist pedagogy, a curricular focus on culture, arts, or language, or emphasis on the surrounding community. Thus, rather than school size, the absence of early childhood music in elementary charter schools seemed to most closely relate to pedagogical and philosophical orientation of the charter school/network (ie., school type). These issues will be addressed in Chapter 9. The following section analyzes evidence for correlations between socio-demographic variables and the incidence of music.

**Socioeconomic Status, Race, and Music in TPS and CS**

As discussed in the background chapter on public school music education in NYC (Chapter 4), since 2006, when the city began keeping track of arts instruction, public elementary schools with lower rates of poverty have been much more likely to employ a certified full-time music teacher than schools with higher concentrations of poverty. Much of this disparity results from the unequal distribution of PTA funding for the arts. The data presented herein, based on the 2014-2015 school year, were expanded to include all compulsory music programs in TPS ($n = 552$ school music programs led by full-time or part-time certified teachers, or cultural partnerships that entailed at least 11-20 annual hours of music instruction) and all sustained music instruction in CS ($n = 87$ schools). In other words, the ensuing analyses elide the difference between music programs and sustained music instruction for CS (since only two CS reported music instruction by non-certified school-based staff), and count only music programs.
for TPS.\textsuperscript{4} By maintaining a relatively similar prevalence of music between TPS and CS, demographic differences between and within groups proved more salient.

The following table compares the aggregate demographics of TPS and CS school populations with and without music programs. \textit{T}-tests were conducted to assess the extent to which the demographic characteristics of schools with music programs were comparable to the demographic characteristics of schools without music programs.

\textbf{Table 7.5. Demographic Means and \textit{T}-test for TPS and CS with and without a Music Program.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TPS</th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>\textit{t}-test</th>
<th>\textit{p} value</th>
<th>TPS</th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>\textit{t}-test</th>
<th>\textit{p} value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>\textit{n} = 552 Schools w/ Music Program</td>
<td>\textit{n} = 220 Schools w/o Music Program</td>
<td>\textit{t}-test</td>
<td>\textit{p} value</td>
<td>\textit{n} = 87 Schools w/ Music</td>
<td>\textit{n} = 38 Schools w/o Music</td>
<td>\textit{t}-test</td>
<td>\textit{p} value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Poverty Levels</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean % of Black and Hispanic Students</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean % ENL Students</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean % SPED Students</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from NYCDOE (2016); \textit{AASR} (2015); and from researcher-constructed survey.

As shown, the only two variables that proved a statistically significant difference in the means (between schools with and without music) were poverty and the percentage of black and Hispanic students in traditional public schools.\textsuperscript{5} In other words, with respect to SES and race,

\textsuperscript{4} The tables herein refer to music programs, but include the two CS that reported music instruction by non-certified school-based staff. Appendices B, C, D provide district-level data on the presence of music in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, respectively, distinguishing between program and sustained instruction.

\textsuperscript{5} The <.05 \textit{p}-value for the \textit{t}-test conducted on charter school special education populations, though statistically significant on the surface, proved spurious upon further investigation, given the relatively small number of CS without music, and the few CS with music that had relatively high percentages of SPED population. Given the small difference in the mean percentage of special education students between CS with and without music programs.
student populations in TPS with music were significantly different from student populations in TPS without music programs. The difference in mean poverty levels and mean percentage of black and Hispanic students between TPS populations with and without music programs were 10% and 15%, respectively. Expectedly, the correlation between poverty and the concentration of black and Hispanic students was moderately strong for both TPS and CS ($r = .67$ for both groups). The overlap of race and SES meant that poverty disproportionately affected black and Hispanic students. However, significantly, the effect of poverty on the incidence of music programs fell disproportionately on black and Hispanic students only in TPS.

Student populations in charter schools with and without music evinced no significant demographic differences with respect to SES or race. Part of the reason for this may be the fact that the vast majority of CS are concentrated in high-poverty, highly segregated neighborhoods. Thus, when considering the underreporting of poverty data for CS, there simply was not as much demographic variation between charter schools as there was between TPS. That students in TPS with music programs tended to be richer and whiter should come as no surprise. Even so, the skewed distribution of poverty among TPS without a music program revealed a stunning degree of inequity. Given the correspondence between race and social class, the following analyses focus on aspects of socioeconomic status related to poverty.

Figure 7.4 shows the percentage of TPS ($n = 552$) and CS ($n = 87$)\textsuperscript{6} with a music program in 2014-2015 by school poverty level in three fixed brackets (from the lowest level of poverty to the highest level in increments of 33.3%), with the number of TPS and CS listed for each bracket. Fixed brackets allowed for comparison between TPS and CS. The uneven distribution of

\textsuperscript{6} Note again that the two CS that reported music instruction by non-certified school-based staff were also included in this analysis.
schools between brackets underscores the high rates of poverty in NYC schools—the vast majority of TPS (79%, \( n = 610 \)) and CS (82%, \( n = 102 \)) had concentrations of poverty above 66.7%, a majority of TPS (56%) had intense concentrations of poverty of 90% or more, and the DOE reported a staggering 202 TPS (26%), where all students were classified as living in poverty. Only 21% of TPS (\( n = 162 \)) and 18% of CS (\( n = 23 \)) had poverty levels below 66.7%. It is hard to overstate how that level of economic (and racial) segregation can impact myriad facets of schooling, just as it is impossible to deny the manners in which access to music might mitigate some of the adverse academic, social, and emotional effects of poverty.

**Figure 7.4.** Percent of TPS and CS with Music Programs by School Poverty Level, 2014-15. (Source: Data from NYCDOE [2016]; AASR [2015]; and from researcher-constructed survey)

The high incidence of music programs among TPS in the lower two poverty brackets (ie., schools where poverty did not exceed 66.7%) contrasted significantly with the relatively lower incidence of music programs for all other schools, both CS and high-poverty TPS. Whereas 88% of TPS with poverty levels below 66.7% had a music program (\( n = 143/162 \) for lower two
brackets combined), only 67% of TPS with poverty levels higher than 66.7% maintained a music program \((n = 409/610)\). The incidence of music in high-poverty TPS was comparable to the incidence of music in all CS (68% maintained a music program). While CS with high levels of poverty (above 66.7%) were marginally more likely to have music program than comparable TPS, this difference disappeared when accounting for music instruction by non-certified school-based staff. The incidence of music programs in CS, both in the aggregate and within each poverty bracket, paled significantly in comparison to low-poverty TPS.

Notably, for charter schools, the relationship between poverty and music was the inverse. The prevalence of music was higher in CS with higher levels of poverty. Per Figure 7.4, 61% of CS with poverty levels below 66.7% reported music instruction \((n = 14/23)\), while 72% of CS with poverty levels higher than 66.7% had music \((n = 73/102)\). These findings were not conclusive, however. The inverted nature of the relationship between SES and incidence of music in CS could not be deemed significant since the low number of low-poverty CS did not provide a large enough sample. The few CS that presented lower levels of poverty and did not maintain a music program were outliers. Overall, the prevalence of early childhood music instruction in CS (70%) was comparable to the prevalence of music programs in high-poverty TPS (67%). To ensure that the poverty parameters established in Figure 7.4 were not too arbitrary, analysis was also conducted with equal sub-groupings by poverty level (ie., trichotomous data with low-, medium-, and high-poverty tertiles).
The variation that is seen among charter schools was inconsistent and insignificant, even with a larger \( n \) for the low-poverty tertile. As was the case with small-sized CS, the low incidence of music among CS in the low-poverty tertile owed more to network affiliation and enrollment than to the level of poverty of the school’s students. Interestingly, the high-poverty tertile of TPS exhibited a higher incidence of music (68%) than the mid-poverty tertile (65%). Thus, the association between incidence of music and SES was not linear. While low levels of poverty corresponded to a higher incidence of music programming, after a certain point, higher levels of poverty did not necessarily correspond with a lower incidence of music programming. This might be due to the wide variety of federal, state, city, and private foundation grants.

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7 Poverty ranges for the tertiles depicted in Figure 7.5 were as follows: low-poverty TPS (4-83%, \( n = 257 \)) and low-poverty CS (24-75%, \( n = 41 \)); mid-poverty TPS (83-97%, \( n = 257 \)) and mid-poverty CS (75-85%, \( n = 42 \)); high-poverty TPS (97-100%, \( n = 258 \)) and high-poverty CS (85-100%, \( n = 42 \)).
available to help schools with high levels of poverty fund arts programs. It might also be the case that the difference in prevalence of music programs between high- and mid-poverty TPS fell within the normal range of variation, while PTA funding fully accounted for the variance of the low-poverty group.

**Traditional public schools: Correlation between socioeconomic status and incidence of music in low-poverty schools.** All things being equal, one might assume school poverty levels to be fairly evenly distributed, regardless of the presence or absence of a music program. For charter schools, this was generally the case. Controlling for the high number of high-poverty schools, the distribution of poverty among CS with music mostly resembled the distribution of poverty among CS without music. According to Table 7.5, above, the mean poverty levels of CS with and without a music program were relatively similar, at 77% and 74%, respectively. In contrast, the mean poverty level for TPS with a music program was 78%, while the mean poverty level for TPS without a music program was 88% (the mean poverty level of schools without any sustained music instruction was even higher, at 92%).

To put the above data on the high rates of poverty among schools without music into perspective, 220 traditional public schools, serving a total of 127,246 elementary-age students, were without a formal music program in 2014-2015. Only 19 of those 220 TPS had poverty rates below 66.7% (and of those 19, 14 provided sustained music instruction by non-certified school-based staff). The other 201 schools without a music program enrolled 116,627 students (23% of the sample), and each presented high levels poverty, above 66.7%. Suppose that the 116,627

---

8 Just five of the 163 lowest poverty TPS lacked any sustained music instruction. Of the 201 TPS with poverty levels above 66.7% that lacked a music program, 93 provided music instruction by non-certified school-based staff. The 107 TPS without any sustained music instruction (no program nor instruction of more than 11 hours by SBS) served 57,608 students in 2014-15.
students in these 201 schools without a music program had instead attended a school where poverty did not exceed 66.7%. The data suggest that approximately 176 schools, serving more than 100,000 students, would have had a formal music program.

It cannot be assumed that high levels of poverty were the direct cause for the absence of music—other mitigating factors include school size and low student achievement, which disproportionately affects schools with high levels of poverty. However, given the significant association between low poverty levels and a higher prevalence of music, it stands to reason that if those 201 schools had not had such high concentrations of poverty, the clear majority of them would have had a music program. The number is purely conjectural, but to acknowledge the possibility that 100,000 young children—approximately one out of every four elementary age students in NYC—were denied access to a comprehensive music program because of their social class (and race and neighborhood) is to recognize that the devastating effects of inequality and inequity can be extreme and far-reaching in the realm of arts education.

**Traditional public schools: PTA funding for the arts.** As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, the high incidence of music programs among low-poverty TPS seems to result from the fact that schools serving more affluent communities were the disproportionate (if logical) beneficiaries of PTA funding for the arts. Of the 220 TPS without a music program, 175 did not have access to PTA funding.

Tables 7.6 and 7.7 report on the incidence of music programs in TPS by PTA funding. Both tables present the same data, but with inverted columns and rows, to highlight the features of schools without music programs, and schools that received PTA funding.
Table 7.6. PTA Funding for Arts in TPS with and without Music Programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Schools w/o Music Program</th>
<th>Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Mean Poverty Level of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received PTA Funding</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not Receive PTA</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AASR (2015)

Table 7.7. Incidence of Music Programs in TPS by PTA Funding for Arts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Schools w/ PTA Funding for Arts</th>
<th>Schools w/o PTA Funding for Arts</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Mean Poverty Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Program</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Music Program</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AASR (2015)

Thirty-eight percent of TPS (n = 296) received PTA funding for the arts in 2014-2015, and 62% did not receive funding (see Table 7.6). Of the 296 schools that received PTA funding, 251 (85%) had a music program (see Table 7.7). On the flip side, 80% of the schools without a music program did not receive PTA funding.

These data suggest that PTA funding operates on two interrelated levels. As Table 7.7 makes clear, schools with access to PTA funding are far more likely to provide music programs than those without PTA funding (85% compared to 63%), and schools without a music program are likely to lack access to PTA funding. Of relevance is the level of poverty in the school. The last columns in Tables 7.6 and 7.7 show the mean poverty level. The majority of TPS did not have access PTA funding for the arts (62%), had high levels of poverty (91%), and these schools accounted for 80% of TPS without a music program (see Table 7.6).
Notice that the mean poverty level of schools that received PTA funding (65% in Table 7.6) approximated the threshold at which poverty grouping became a significant corollary to the presence of music programs (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5). It is thus likely that the variation between TPS grouped by poverty level was largely attributable to the availability of PTA funds.

When looking specifically at music programs helmed by a certified teacher (either part-time or full-time), the disparity between schools that received PTA funding for the arts and those that did not was even wider.

Table 7.8. Percent of TPS with a Certified Music Teacher by PTA Funding, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Schools w/ PTA Funding for Arts</th>
<th>Schools w/o PTA Funding for Arts</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Least One Certified Music Teacher</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Certified Music Teacher</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AASR (2015)

Per Table 7.8, 72% of the 296 TPS that received PTA funding had a certified music teacher—these 212 schools represented just over half (52%) of all 406 K-3 TPS with a certified music teacher, and 85% of the 251 TPS with a music program that used PTA funding (see Tables 7.6 and 7.7). In contrast, only 41% of schools that did not benefit from PTA funding had a certified music teacher. Schools with higher concentrations of poverty, if they did have music, were thus more likely to offer music with alternative instructional providers, such as cultural partnerships or non-certified school-based staff.

The above data corroborate preliminary findings from the background section, which held that SES in conjunction with PTA funding are important predictors of music incidence in traditional public schools. The fact that the association between poverty and music only held for
schools with more affluent populations highlights the importance of PTA funding, which had a pronounced effect on low-poverty schools, but only a small effect on high-poverty schools.

Unfortunately, data on PTA funding and philanthropic donations were not available for charter schools, a glaring omission that can hopefully be addressed in future research. It is quite conceivable that charter schools receiving significant contributions from parents and/or corporations would provide access to music instruction at higher rates than charter schools without supplemental funding. However, evidence of outside funding for those charter school networks that had a lower proportion of music programs suggested no link.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has compared the music offerings in traditional public schools and charter schools. The incidence of music programs in traditional public schools was comparable to charter schools for the 2014-2015 school year. However, when including instruction by non-certified school-based staff, TPS were shown to have a significantly higher incidence of music instruction.

Social and demographic variables were analyzed alongside music data using descriptive statistics. Notably, the absence of music in TPS was correlated with higher levels of poverty and higher concentrations of black and Hispanic students. As such, I ended this chapter by focusing on traditional public schools to analyze how SES and PTA funding impacted music education offerings. There was no apparent link between charter school music access and social class or race, but this may reflect the relative lack of charter schools serving affluent populations. The level of access to early childhood music instruction in charter schools was comparable to that of
high-poverty traditional public schools. In other words, poverty limited music instruction for all New York City public schools, but had a pronounced effect on TPS in particular.

School size was shown to be related to the availability of music in both TPS and CS. Smaller schools in both types of schools had a lower proportion of sustained music instruction. For newer charter schools, size was a factor of expansion, and some administrators and principals made clear an intention to hire a music teacher once enrollment was sufficient. However, as we will see in Chapter 9, the absence of music in charter schools turned out to be more closely related to pedagogical orientation and network affiliation. The next chapter examines the geographic distribution of early childhood music access in NYC public schools, with reference to poverty and racial segregation.
Chapter 8
Geography of Music Access, Arts Funding, and SES in NYC

Introduction

Following the lead of the NYC Comptroller’s Office *State of the Arts* report (2014), which mapped the inequitable distribution of arts education onto census tract data for median household income, this chapter examines the geography of poverty and music access by borough and district for all New York City public schools, TPS and CS. The previous chapter discussed the strong correlation between poverty and prevalence of a music program in TPS, a correlation that followed geographic patterns almost identical to the ones established in the *State of the Arts* (NYC Comptroller, 2014).

The findings in this chapter are related to the geographic aspects of the sub-question of the first research question:

*How do geographic variables (district/neighborhood) relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction in NYC public schools serving K-3?*

Given the racial and socioeconomic lines along which NYC is segregated, school district and surrounding neighborhood necessarily reflect demographic patterns. The Comptroller’s *State of the Arts* (2014) study dealt with all arts disciplines and revealed “deep inequities in arts opportunities,” whereby poorer students had “disproportionately poorer access to arts resources than those in more affluent areas” (p. 4). The report (2014) cited a 47% decline in spending on arts and cultural partnerships between 2006-07 and 2012-13 and an 84% decrease in spending on arts supplies and musical equipment over the same period, reductions that could be attributed to the elimination of dedicated funding allocated specifically for the arts, as described in the background chapter (NYC Comptroller, 2014, p. 6).
Arts funding has picked up since the publication of the Comptroller’s report. A $23 million infusion of arts spending by the administration of Mayor Bill de Blasio helped spur a 13% increase in overall arts funding between the 2012-2013 school year examined in the Comptroller’s report (NYCDOE, 2015, p. 104) and the 2014-2015 school year examined in this study. The increase in arts spending over this two-year time frame included a 9% increase in funding for arts personnel, a 71% increase in funding for arts services (such as cultural partnerships), and a 350% increase in funding for arts supplies and equipment.

Despite the increase in funding for arts personnel, and an increase in the total number of certified arts teachers at the elementary level, the percentage of schools with at least one certified arts teacher remained relatively constant between 2012-2013 and 2014-2015. According to the AASR, between 2012-2013 and 2014-2015, the percentage of responding elementary schools with at least one full-time certified teacher actually declined for all arts disciplines except for dance (NYCDOE, 2015, pp. 86-87). Citing the loss of arts teachers brought about by the Great Recession of 2008-09,¹ and the vast reductions in spending on arts supplies and equipment, the Comptroller’s report (2014) concluded that “reductions in arts education [had] fallen disproportionately on the City’s lower income neighborhoods, especially the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn” (p. 1).

Mapping Music Access and SES

Figure 8.1, below, is a reproduction of a map from the State of the Arts Report which showed NYC schools with no part-time or full-time certified arts teacher (NYC Comptroller, 2014).

¹ The NYC DOE lost 112 certified school-based elementary arts teachers between 2008-09 and 2012-13 (including a net loss of 73 music teacher), but gained 93 certified school-based elementary arts teachers between 2012-13 and 2014-15 (NYCDOE, 2015, p. 85).
The dots represent schools without any certified arts teachers, and the different background colors show median household income by census tract. Census tracts depicted in red had median household incomes below $30,000.

**Figure 8.1.** NYC Schools with No Part-time or Full-time Certified Arts Teacher. (Source: NYC Comptroller, 2014; using data from the NYCDOE and U.S. Census Bureau)
With acute precision, most of the dots projected directly onto low-income areas and revealed a disproportionately high concentration of schools lacking certified arts teachers in Central Brooklyn (spanning districts 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 23, and 32), the South Bronx (districts 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12), as well as Upper Manhattan (districts 3, 4, 5, and 6). Not only are these areas socioeconomically distressed, they are extremely segregated, with high concentrations of black and Hispanic students (see Figure 8.2 for a map of the racial concentration of NYC Elementary TPS, 2013-2014). For readers that are not familiar with NYC school districts, I provide Figure 8.3, showing the different NYC school districts.

Although Upper Manhattan was not specifically highlighted in the Comptroller’s report of districts lacking certified arts teachers, Central Brooklyn, the South Bronx and Upper Manhattan provide the basis for the ensuing analysis. Not only do these areas disproportionately lack music and arts programs, they collectively house the vast majority of charter schools.\(^2\) Figure 8.4 plots all the NYC public schools, charter and traditional, that lacked a music program in 2014-2015. Notice how these same three areas—Central Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Upper Manhattan—formed highly concentrated clusters where there was no access to a formalized music program for K-3.

\(^2\) Interview participants for the qualitative portion of this study came from charter schools in these districts. See Figure 8.6 for a map of charter schools with and without music.
Figure 8.2. Diversity in NYC Schools: Racial Concentration of Elementary TPS, 2013-14. (Source: DNA Info, 2014; using data collected by the NYCDOE)
Schools lacking K-3 music were spread across the City in 2014-2015, but the map below (Figure 8.4) shows how Upper Manhattan, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx faced an acute shortage of music instruction. Black dots represent TPS without any sustained music instruction, and red dots represent CS without any sustained music instruction. Figure 8.4 reveals just how severe the absence of music was in Upper Manhattan, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx.
The sparseness of dots outside the three areas in question in the above map supplement findings from the previous chapter and demonstrate the extent to which poverty impacted the geography of music access. Refer back to Figures 8.1 and 8.2, and you will recognize the utter similarity between the maps—almost all the schools lacking music in Figure 8.4 project onto census tracts with a low median household incomes (depicted in Figure 8.1) and with high concentrations of black and/or Hispanic students (Figure 8.2). Interestingly, it was charter
schools lacking music (represented by red dots) that were outliers to this pattern. Outside of deep
Queens, CS in low-poverty areas were the only schools lacking music instruction. Figure 8.5,
below, maps the incidence of music in charter schools. Grey dots represent charter schools with
music (including the two schools reporting music instruction by non-certified school-based
staff), and red dots indicate charter schools that completely lacked music. The map has been
magnified to show only areas of NYC with charter schools.
First of all, notice the overall distribution of NYC charter schools in Figure 8.5. There simply were not many charter schools outside Upper Manhattan, Central Brooklyn, or the South Bronx, the same economically distressed areas with a concentration of traditional public schools.
that were disproportionately lacking music in 2014-2015. This map more pointedly displays the interesting phenomenon mentioned above—although charter schools provide access to music comparable to TPS in the underserved communities where they mostly reside, it is the charter schools in more affluent areas that lacked music. Most of these outlier schools belonged to the largest network of NYC charter school, an issue which will be addressed in the next chapter. The following section details the inter- and intra-borough distribution of music access in TPS and CS.

**Music Access in TPS and CS by Borough and District**

This section presents tables to detail the inter- and intra-borough distributions of music access in TPS and CS. Eight sample districts with more than five CS were chosen from Upper Manhattan, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx for further analysis. Table 8.1, below, shows the incidence of music programs in TPS and CS by borough alongside attendant demographic data. The borough and district breakdowns allowed for a more specific geographic comparison of music prevalence between TPS and CS. In the ensuing tables, the leftmost column displays the total number of TPS and CS in each borough/district, as well as the total number of all public schools (NYCPS). The first and third columns report on the respective the incidence of music programs and sustained music instruction (including instruction by non-certified school-based staff) for each category: TPS, CS, NYCPS.
Table 8.1. Incidence of K-3 Music Program and Demographic Snapshot of TPS and CS by Borough, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NYC Schools</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Black &amp; Hispanic</th>
<th>% ENL</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131 TPS</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 CS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158 Tot.</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 TPS</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 CS</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194 Tot.</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240 TPS</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 CS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 Tot.</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193 TPS</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 CS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205 Tot.</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staten Island:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 TPS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 CS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 Tot.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All NYCPS:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>772 TPS</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 CS</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>897 Tot.</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from NYCDOE (2016); AASR (2015); and from researcher-constructed survey

The above table expands on the maps in Figures 8.4 and 8.5 to show the unequal geographic distribution of music access across NYC. Note the last row’s correspondence to the data in the previous chapter. The prevalence of TPS and CS music programs was comparable in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Although Brooklyn TPS offered significantly more sustained music instruction, the prevalence of programs and sustained instruction paralleled overarching patterns for all NYCPS. In Queens, TPS offered an appreciably lower proportion of music programs than
their charter school counterparts (67% vs. 83%), but 45 TPS picked up the slack by employing non-certified school-based staff to teach K-3 music—in total, 90% of Queens TPS provided sustained music instruction. Though numbering only 10, CS offered more music in Queens, proportionally, than in any other borough.

Manhattan was the only borough with a higher incidence of music instruction than Queens, but this was only the case among traditional public schools—charter schools in the borough offered significantly fewer music programs and even less sustained music instruction. Much of this discrepancy can be attributed to issues of poverty and race and their intersection with geography, as brought forth in the previous sections. Borough-wide, there were a total of four sampled charter schools below 96th Street (i.e., not Upper Manhattan), a number that was dwarfed by the multitude of TPS in affluent Manhattan neighborhoods.

Given the relatively low number of CS in Queens (no district had more than five charter schools) and Staten Island, where there was only one charter school, the following analysis focuses on intra-borough differences in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. Although, the Bronx and Brooklyn presented aggregate levels of music program incidence that were comparable for TPS and CS, district-level discrepancies were evident. District-level analysis helped establish the association between geographic and demographic patterns and how this related to discrepancies between TPS and CS.

The tables that follow (Tables 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4) provide a deeper look into the intra-borough differences between TPS and CS and report on the demographic characteristics and respective incidence of music programs in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, by district. Analysis focused on districts with more than five charter schools to achieve a reasonably sized sample with which to compare CS and TPS. Special attention was paid to districts that presented
significant discrepancies between TPS and CS, or notable deviations from district and borough-wide norms. A total of eight districts (underlined in Tables 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 below) met these criteria: Manhattan Districts 3 and 5; Bronx Districts 7, 9, and 11; and Brooklyn Districts 14, 17, 18. For a complete account of all district breakdowns in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, see Appendices B, C, and D, respectively. Refer to Figure 8.3 for a map of NYCDOE district boundaries.

**Manhattan**

I start my analysis with Manhattan data, displayed in Table 8.2 below:

**Table 8.2.** Incidence of Music and Demographic Snapshot of TPS and CS in Manhattan, in the Aggregate and by District, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manhattan n = 158 Schools</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Black &amp; Hispanic</th>
<th>% ENL</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manhattan:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131 TPS</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 CS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>158 Tot.</strong></td>
<td>116</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District 3:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 TPS</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>26 Tot.</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District 5:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 TPS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21 Tot.</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Manhattan presented the starkest contrast between TPS and CS with regard to incidence of music. In contrast to the borough-wide diffusion of TPS, Manhattan CS were concentrated in low-income areas. Despite the underreporting of poverty in CS, Manhattan TPS nevertheless presented a lower rate of poverty, an indication that Manhattan TPS tended to serve more affluent populations. Borough-wide, TPS offered many more music programs relative to CS, and significantly more music instruction when including instruction by school-based staff. The dearth
of music in CS was most apparent in District 3, where only three out of seven CS reported the presence of music.

While the geography of District 3, which spans the west side of Manhattan from 59th street to 122nd street, seemed to have played a potential role in the unequal distribution of music offerings between TPS and CS, the concentration of poverty was only a factor for TPS. As previously stated, TPS in more-affluent lower and midtown Manhattan (below 96th street) were far more likely receive PTA funding for the arts, and thus more likely to maintain a music program.

The map in Figure 8.5 showed that there were only two TPS in the southern portion of District 3 that lacked a music program, and these two schools had music instruction by school-based staff. In contrast, six of the seven-sampled charter schools in District 3 were located above 96th street, in Harlem. Interestingly, the four District 3 CS that reported no music seemed likely candidates for a music program given their substantial enrollment and progressive mission statements. Three of the four CS in District 3 without music had a progressive orientation (around culture/language, pedagogy, or community), an issue which will be explored in the next chapter. Of these three schools, one reported a music program in the prior year and stated an intention to offer music in the following year. The other two schools reported fine arts in the extended day or afterschool program.

District 5 is an important focal point for this study because it was the epicenter of the NYC’s nascent charter school movement, where Harlem Children’s Zone and Success Academy, two of the City’s most prominent charter networks, originated. The statistics on music access in District 5 portray a wholly different picture than District 3. All seven of the charter schools in
District 5 reported the incidence of a music program, a potential bright spot if more well-established charter schools are to be considered a harbinger of the movement.

**The Bronx**

Table 8.3 moves the analysis to the Bronx.

**Table 8.3. Incidence of Music and Demographic Snapshot at TPS and CS in the Bronx, in the Aggregate and by District, 2014-15.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bronx</th>
<th>n = 194 Schools</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Black &amp; Hispanic</th>
<th>% ENL</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bronx:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 TPS</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 CS</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194 Tot.</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District 7:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 TPS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 CS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Tot.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District 9:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 TPS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Tot.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District 11:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 TPS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 CS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Tot.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from NYCDOE (2016); AASR (2015); and from researcher-constructed survey

Descriptive statistics for the Bronx underscore the depressed levels of music programming among TPS in districts with extreme levels of poverty. However, District 7, like District 5 in Manhattan, showed what appears to be a promising level of music access in charter schools—11 of 12 CS offered music. Nine of the 11 CS in District 7 with a music program were progressively inclined as per their mission statements. Conversely, three of the four CS in District 9, and all four of the CS in District 11 without music were discipline-based in their orientation. Despite the relatively small enrollment figures for the eight CS in Districts 9 and 11
without music, a more significant factor affecting the absence of music was network affiliation. Six of these eight schools were part of the third largest network of NYC charter schools, which did not offer any arts programs. Thus, for charter schools in Bronx, school type and network, rather than geography, SES and enrollment seem to have accounted for the absence of music. Again, this issue will be explored in depth in the following chapter on typology.

Brooklyn

Finally, I analyze the data for Brooklyn which I display in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4. Incidence of Music and Demographic Snapshot at TPS and CS in Brooklyn, in the Aggregate and by District, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brooklyn n = 291 Schools</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Black &amp; Hispanic</th>
<th>% ENL</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240 TPS</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 Tot.</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 14:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 TPS</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Tot.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 17:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 TPS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Tot.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 18:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 TPS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 CS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Tot.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from NYCDOE (2016); AASR (2015); and from researcher-constructed survey

As was the case in Bronx District 7, the relatively high incidence of music among CS in Brooklyn Districts 14 and 17 related to the school’s mission and philosophy, rather than SES. In both districts, five of the six charter schools reporting the incidence of music were progressively
inclined. In contrast, District 18, despite its lower level of poverty, was disproportionately lacking in music, for reasons similar to the lack of music evident in Bronx District 11. Despite their relatively low enrollment, three of the five CS without music in District 18 were from the same charter school network, which exclusively focuses on “academic and character skills” in its mission.

Conclusion

The data discussed thus far suggest that charter school music incidence depended on sufficient enrollment, not SES or geography, as was the case with TPS. District and borough level analysis confirmed the relationship between absence of music and high levels of poverty in TPS (both statistically and geographically). However, districts lacking charter school music exhibited one of two patterns—whereas progressive Manhattan CS without music maintained an interest in hiring a music teacher (as reported in their survey responses), CS in Brooklyn and the Bronx that lacked music tended to be part of networks that ascribed to more traditional, discipline-oriented curricula. The following chapter takes up these factors and presents a typology of NYC K-3 charter schools. I then analyze the incidence of music in relation to this typology to ascertain whether there was a relationship between charter school type and music instruction.
Chapter 9
Charter School Type and Access to Music

Prelude

When presenting charter schools as the topic of this study to professors and peers, the critical question, “Why charter schools?” frequently arose. “They are all different,” was one well-meaning and oft-repeated reason for concern, echoed by another question: “How can you generalize with such varied data?” The charter school movement is indeed a moving and multifarious target. With so many interests at play, and with their evolution transpiring at a precipitous clip, charter schools are naturally differentiated along many different lines. And, just like traditional public schools, each school contains within it a wide array of diversity, reflecting the different philosophical backgrounds and pedagogical practices of administrators and teachers. Nevertheless, charter schools expose in their discourses ideological and institutional tendencies that account for much of the content and practices of not only the curriculum, but also a school’s administrative, disciplinary, and bureaucratic/corporate functions. These discourses are often richer and more pointed than the limited text published by most traditional public schools. Whereas decisions about arts in traditional public schools are often made at the whim of a principal, we can assume that charter school principals are beholden to the published discourse of their school, their network, and/or the preferences of attending board of directors. Although we know that teachers and administrators do not necessarily follow the norms of an institution, the mere presence of charter school discourse allows us to chart potential patterns of pedagogy and curriculum that can help us understand how to group charter schools, how to further make sense of the present state of the movement in New York City, and perhaps even ascertain where it is going. As I will show, some of the discursive patterns correlate with the presence or absence of music education in early childhood charter school settings.
This chapter attempts to answer the second research question:

*With regards to charter schools serving K-3, how does charter school type relate to the presence of early childhood music instruction, if at all?*

To answer the question, I first had to devise a typology of charter schools. This chapter is organized into two main sections. The first section describes how the typology was constructed, using discourse analysis of charter school mission statements, with special attention to three main keywords that were identified in the corpus: character, community, and culture. The second section of this chapter analyzes the incidence of music in charter schools by type and by network affiliation, a characteristic associated with type.

**Creating a Typology: Discourse Analysis of Charter School Mission Statements**

Building on previous work by Carpenter (2005/2009; 2006; 2008; Carpenter & Kafer, 2009), this section develops a typology of NYC charter schools serving grades K-3. Although hardly non-partisan,¹ Carpenter’s (2005/2009; 2006; 2008; Carpenter & Kafer, 2009) comprehensive work developing a typology of Colorado, Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, and Texas charter schools remains some of the only published research on this topic, and presents a useful jumping-off point for this typology, even if certain aspects were not pertinent to New York City elementary schools.² Using self-descriptions of over 1,000 schools, Carpenter

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¹ Carpenter’s 2005 report was funded by the Fordham Institute and included a forward by Chester Finn.
² General/conversion schools (traditional public schools that have adopted charter status) no longer exist in New York City—the NYCDOE has not authorized a conversion since 2002; rather, traditional public schools are closed, to be replaced by an independent charter school. Nor do alternative delivery (virtual) schools exist in the City. Vocational schools are for higher grades, even if a few elementary charter schools claim to train students for “successful” careers in the 21st century global economy, with higher income careers as entrepreneurs, doctors, or lawyers. And open enrollment nor targeted student population adequately describe the
(2008) came up with seven types: traditional, progressive, vocational, general, alternate delivery, open enrollment, and targeted student population.

Proceeding from Carpenter’s (2008) typology, I divided charter schools into two major types, according to their own mission statements: 1) *academies* and 2) *progressive charter schools*. Official statements of mission, values, and philosophy on charter school websites were analyzed recursively for themes related to academies as traditional programs, as well as progressive schools. By focusing on the mission statement as the primary unit of analysis, this typology emphasized a crucial choice that schools made in representing themselves. The mission statement was used as a barometer of the school’s priorities, an important piece of branding that showed off a school’s focus. The mission statement was seen as a distillation of a school’s core beliefs about the goals of education, and suggested the means by which these goals were attained.

*Academies* are traditional in nature; they are focused on core academic curriculum and strict codes of behavior, priorities that encompassed school-governing philosophies variously described as “no excuses,” “back to basics,” and “high expectations, high support.” In contrast, *progressive* charter schools emphasize pedagogical, political, and/or curricular commitments distinct from core curriculum and character education. Confusing this neat dichotomy were academies that maintained a focus on core academic curriculum and strict codes of behavior, but also incorporated tolerant features or alternative curricular emphases into their missions. Because these schools were deemed only marginally progressive, and because their discourse aligned closely with other academies, they were defined as *tolerant academies*, a subtype of the admissions requirements for charter schools in the City (lottery and district priority, with only one school targeting a special needs population).
academies. This distinction was important to make given the extent to which traditionalist discourses have permeated the charter school movement at large.

Like Carpenter’s (2008) typology, the above framework was most in need of refinement when considering the two main categories, academy (ie., traditional) and progressive. Distinguishing between these two categories demanded intricate rubrics to account for a long history of pedagogical thought, drawing dichotomies that John Dewey (1938/2015) himself dismissed as false:

Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of Either-Ors, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities…. The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without; that it is based upon natural endowments and that education is a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure. (Dewey, 1938/2015, p. 17)

Charter schools, and any other school for that matter, can be much more fluid in their approach than traditional/progressive “Either-Or” categories would suggest. Well-balanced classrooms implement teacher-directed instruction while maintaining the imperative of student-centeredness; they consider generative curricula alongside the need for conventional subject matter instruction. And yet, at the risk of reinforcing arbitrary boundaries, this typology made elisions in ascribing a singular status to each school. It was beyond the scope of this study to develop the scales that would adequately assess the degree to which charter schools exhibited a given characteristic, especially since the most valid research would necessitate spending time in every school, observing the extent to which predominant teaching practices aligned with school discourse surrounding curriculum and pedagogy. Although reductive, this analysis hopes to elaborate on Carpenter’s (2008) typology by analyzing school type through the lens of discourse, with special attention to music and the arts, as well as concepts of character, community and
culture. Below I first analyze the discourse of the academies, followed by that of progressive charter schools.

**Discourse of the Academies**

Looking at discourse alone, one can chart the charter school landscape with a matrix comprising various vectors, each vector representing a specific characteristic or feature. For Carpenter, traditional schools:

… stress high standards in academics and behavior, rigorous classes, and other earmarks of a “back-to-basics” approach. Classes tend to be teacher-centered, students are supposed to be industrious and well-behaved, and the courses full of challenging, prescriptive content. Philosophically, traditionalists tend to subscribe to an objective view of knowledge and to see the teacher’s role as classroom expert and conveyor of information. (2008, p. 99)

This definition points to some very important features of most NYC charter schools, as well as the charter school movement in general. Charter schools that focus on core subjects, achievement test scores, character skills, and college readiness fit this bill from a curricular standpoint.

In many of the schools I visited, student behavior and discipline took on the guise of curriculum, to the extent that teacher directives and classroom practices were primarily concerned with issues of student compliance, composure, and classroom management rather than subject-matter (ie., music) content. These observations will be elaborated upon in the following chapters, but suffice it to say that strict behavioral expectations encompassing individual responsibility were embedded in the missions and core values that many charter schools espouse in both discourse and practice. Some teachers I interviewed resisted these expectations, but when highly-structured, standardized codes of conduct are imposed institutionally, it is naturally more difficult for a teacher to evade the norms to which a school ascribes. In this sense, charter school discourse can be a starting point from which to examine the convergence of teaching practice, curriculum and classroom management.
If core curriculum/college readiness and individual student behavior (character education) were central to the school mission, this school was deemed an academy. Traditional and future-oriented in their missions, academies’ goals tend to be enforced through behavior management and a very specific notion of character education. Although mention of alternative/progressive features may have appeared on a school’s website elsewhere, in its approach, or in specific classes, the mission statement denoted the extent to which progressive inclinations were ignored or absorbed into the school’s focus. For academies, you might imagine these dual vectors (core curriculum and character education) as comprising the central circle in a series of concentric circles, whereby outer circles represent supplement curricular emphases. I refer to a charter school as a discipline-based preparatory academy if core curriculum/college readiness and individual student behavior were so central to the mission the school put forth, that other goals and themes were left out of the mission statement entirely (ie., only one circle, with no rings around it; see Figure 9.1 below).

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Figure 9.1. Curriculum Orientation of Discipline-Based Preparatory Academies.

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3 For instance, the two largest networks made reference to progressive pedagogy on their websites, but they were deemed discipline-based preparatory academies because of the overarching theme of their discourses. Whether referencing project-based inquiry in its approach (as is the case with the elementary schools that are part of the largest network), or a constructivist math class in one of the nine mission statements of the second largest network, the network overviews stressed college readiness and character education and nothing else.
Discursively, the focus on core curriculum in mission statements was relatively straightforward and standardized, even if largely implicit. Literacy, math, and high-stakes tests were rarely named, but the evident linguistic uniformity surrounding core curriculum suggested a standardization best characterized by the mission statement of the most prominent charter school network in NYC, comprising 24 of the 146 (16%) K-3 schools operating in 2014-15:

The mission… is to provide students in New York City with an exceptionally high-quality education that gives them the knowledge, skills, character, and disposition to meet and exceed NY State Common Core Learning Standards, and the resources to lead and succeed in school, college, and a competitive global economy.

Seamlessly, academies, like the one above, conflated the “knowledge and skills” needed to “meet and exceed Common Core standards” (read English Language Arts and Mathematics) with the knowledge and skills needed to “succeed” in high school, college, and a competitive labor market.

Only one charter school mission statement explicitly referenced the weight of standardized assessments, promising to provide its students with “a solid foundation for academic success through achievement that… meets or exceeds New York State Standards and national norms in all curriculum areas tested (especially in mathematics and language arts).”

Rather than subject matter or tests, however, ideas about school and career readiness in mission statements consistently converged on a specific conceptualizations of character, community, and culture, which emerged as important keywords through discourse analysis of the different mission statements. Whether discipline-based or more tolerant, academies tended to talk about character, culture, community, in the same way, most often formulated to encompass and enforce a specific code of conduct, focused on non-cognitive skills associated with positive human capital outcomes. Below I describe the discourse around each of these elements in the academies—character, culture and community.
Character in the academies. The word character appears more than 60 times in the corpus of 146 charter school mission statements assembled for this study. Though the word was used in different and often implicit ways, character was generally employed to convey a specific, neoliberal ideology centered on personal responsibility, an important feature of discourse in both academies and charter schools at large. Some would argue that notions of individual character, comprised of personal responsibility, self-discipline, and “the central role of personal industry in defining rectitude and merit,” have formed the bedrock of American education since the inception of the common school in the mid-19th century, cohering with a broad ideology rooted in the mutually reinforcing features of “republicanism, Protestantism, and capitalism” (Kaestle, 1983, p. 76). However, critical scholars have adroitly taken note of a lexical turn towards a more hyper-individualized and marketized discourse (see Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2006, 2007, 2013; and Holborow, 2015). These scholars have located the language of the charter school movement and concomitant market-based reform policies within logic of neoliberal capitalism.

According to Harvey (2005), the neoliberal discourse surrounding personal success and failure has served to accentuate and circumscribe the role of individual character, while simultaneously de-emphasizing community and the public good, be it health care, welfare, or public education. Referencing the crystallization of neoliberal policies during the Thatcher years, Harvey noted that, “All forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in [favor] of individualism, private property, and personal responsibility” (2005, p. 23). Even though most charter schools have adopted “the neoliberal ideology and the logic of capital,” they can also
manifest “aspirations of communities for educational and cultural self-determination and teachers’ desire for greater professional autonomy” (Lipman, 2013). Discourse was analyzed to understand the extent to which neoliberal conceptions of the individual suffused charter school discourse, naturalizing as common sense the connotation of character to mean personal responsibility. Conversely, fissures in the discourse pointed to the ways that some schools resist taken-for-granted notions of character.

Character education might stand for social and emotional skills, civic virtues, or any host of interpersonal competencies, compassion and cooperation to name two, but charter school discourse, especially the discourse of academies, narrowly defined character for the individual, in terms of his/her ultimate labor market potential. What’s more, social and emotional skills and civics were subsumed under the neoliberal logic of personal responsibility, often confined to represent high expectations and leadership skills.

There were some exceptions to this phraseology—schools that articulated a notion of character based on a different set of ethics or concerns were assigned a school type distinct from discipline-based preparatory academy. But by and large, the neoliberal framing of character was standardized in charter school discourse, no doubt owing to the real and perceived successes of the six largest networks (CMOs operating five or more K-3 charter schools in NYC), which accounted for 38% of the sample (n = 56 schools) and presented uniform mission statements for all schools within the network. The extent of linguistic uniformity can be seen below.

Consider again the mission statement from the largest network, a discipline-based preparatory academy, in which “…character, and disposition” would propel students to “meet and exceed” standards and “lead and succeed in school, college, and a competitive global
economy.” Now compare this to the mention of *character* and personal responsibility in the five other large networks, all academies, whose mission was:

… to provide all of our students with the academic and *character* skills they need to graduate from top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world and to serve as the next generation of leaders for our communities.

… to use the Core Knowledge curriculum, developed by E. D. Hirsch, to provide students with a rigorous academic program offered in an extended day/year setting. Students will graduate armed with the skills and knowledge to participate successfully in the most rigorous academic environments, and will have a sense of personal and community responsibility.

… to prepare students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. We cultivate in our young (wo)men the knowledge, skills, and *character* necessary to succeed academically, embrace responsibility, and become honorable citizens and courageous leaders.

… to equip every student with the knowledge, confidence, and *character* to succeed in college and beyond. Students will, from the earliest grades, steadily build a strong foundation of learning habits, critical thinking skills, and knowledge; excel academically as they progress through the program, mastering high-level math and science; and graduate as confident young adults, prepared to succeed as college students, citizens, and leaders in their chosen fields.

… to teach our students to develop the *character* and academic skills necessary to succeed in high school and college, to be self-sufficient, successful, and happy in the competitive world, and to build a better tomorrow for themselves and us all.

In the above examples, *character* was for the most part reduced to a set of self-directed, discrete skills that should be competitively applied towards “leadership” and “success,” and “from the earliest grades.” Even the mention of “community responsibility,” civic “honor,” and notes of grandeur toward “a better tomorrow for… us all,” subsumed collective and cooperative goals under the ethic of personal responsibility, whereby social and emotional skills consist of an individual’s perseverance and adherence to rigor. Note how this notion of *character* took shape and maintained its presumed significance in other discipline-based preparatory academies, where the mission was:
… to provide our students an academically rigorous and well-rounded education, along with strong character development, that will enable them to prosper in top middle schools and beyond.

… to develop the academic skills and character necessary for success in selective colleges and universities, and the career of their choice.

… to challenge each child to achieve by offering a challenging, character-based education through a rigorous curriculum with high academic expectations.

… [to prepare] students to thrive in competitive high schools and four year colleges…. [and] provide the children of Brooklyn with a rigorous academic program and a school community built on the school’s core values of Perseverance, Achievement, Vibrance [ad sic] and Excellent Character.

… [to prepare] students with the academic skills, strength of character and social and emotional well-being to excel in high school and college, to lead in their communities and to realize their best possible selves.

… to provide high quality, standards-based academic programs for students, grades K-12, from underserved communities and underperforming school districts, and to provide students with the skills they need to be accepted by and succeed in college. [This] Academy promotes high achievement in all subjects through a demanding curriculum, extensive supportive services and the use of data-driven teaching methods. [This] Academy is committed to promoting academic accomplishment, positive character development, healthy lifestyles and leadership skills.

… to develop students into young men and women of good character and spirit by fostering their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical excellence.

… to empower each student to build strong character, demonstrate critical thinking, possess a core body of knowledge, and be on a predictive path to earn a degree from a four-year university.

… [to prepare] students in the South Bronx to excel in college preparatory high schools. Through a classical curriculum and highly structured setting, students become liberated scholars and citizens of impeccable character who achieve proficiency in and advanced mastery of New York State Performance Standards.

Results from the survey questionnaire administered to charter school personnel indicated that discipline-based preparatory academies were significantly less likely to offer a music program than other charter schools in the sample. This finding will be discussed in the following section, and was especially noteworthy (if expected) because discipline-based preparatory
academies comprise the largest type of charter schools, and because prevailing trends showed a tendency towards isomorphism. (Recall the phenomenon described in Chapter 5, whereby charter schools, to an ever increasing extent, cohere around the forms, relations, tenets of a dominant, “no excuses” model.) Data collected through observations and interviews and presented in the following chapters provide a glimpse into what character education means in practice for music classrooms in academies. Though not the initial focus of this study, character education proved to be a salient feature of music instruction in both discipline-based preparatory academies and more tolerant academies.

*Character in tolerant academies.* Distinct from discipline-based preparatory academies were academies that focused on core curriculum and individual student behavior, but also incorporated alternative features into their mission statements, like civics, collaborative project-based learning, arts enrichment, or curricular attention to subjects outside the common core (e.g., foreign language(s), multicultural literacies, the environment, and/or the surrounding community). These schools were considered a subtype of the academies, but had some features in common with progressive charter schools, the second type. To differentiate them from progressive charter schools, I call these tolerant academies—their goals were still mainly core academic and behavioral, but they articulated some progressive tendencies, not so marginalized as to be left out of mission statements, but clearly in the service of core curriculum and individual student behavior goals (progressive tendencies would reside in an outer concentric circle—see Figure 9.2). Many of these schools made direct allusions to civics and “critical thinking” in order to distance themselves from the drill-based learning implied by exclusive attention to core curriculum and behavioral standards.
In this subtype of academies, the tolerant academies, the more progressive features of the discourse of the mission statement coalesced around a neoliberal framework of personal responsibility. Tolerant academies were apt to equate citizenship and civics with notion of character outlined above, consistent throughout all academies. Note how the missions of civics-oriented tolerant academies adhered to the same conceptions of character and discipline prescribed by the discipline-based preparatory academies:

… to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. [This school] believes in more time to learn, data-driven instruction, rigorous curricula, a safe and structured school environment and exemplary educators. The core values of Democracy… are DREAM (Discipline, Respect, Enthusiasm, Accountability and Maturity). [This school] challenges all scholars to Work Hard, Go To College and Change the World!

… to prepare students for high-performing high schools, colleges and beyond through a rigorous academic program that develops critical thinkers who demonstrate a love of
learning, strong character, and a commitment to wellness and active citizenship. [This] Charter School inspires all students to recognize their potential and realize their dreams.

In the above discourse of civics-oriented tolerant academies, a school may have adopted a seemingly progressive term like “democracy,” even if its practices were not very democratic.

**Culture and community in academies.** In addition to character, two terms that proved revealing through discourse analysis were culture and community. Culture and community provided a lens with which to discern whether and how schools reinforced the subtext of character outlined by academies. It was imperative to decode these two catchwords because they often were used differently in more traditional academies than in progressive schools. Charter schools employed the term community in reference to both the surrounding community and to the school community. Within these different usages were differences in presumed meaning that uncovered the precise dynamic through which students’ communities and cultural backgrounds were taken into account, exhorted, or ignored, with profound implications for curriculum practices. One use, consistent with the discourse of academies, positioned the school as a community, enforcing a culture of personal responsibility.⁴

**Culture and community in tolerant academies.** Schools that established community as distinct from the surrounding neighborhood often set a culture discursively opposed to what the students and their families might bring to the classroom, and were considered academies. Culture

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⁴ It should be noted that many families are attracted to this idea of a school. They don’t want to become the subjects of the curriculum; rather, they gravitate towards academies because they want their children to go to a school where their children are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and cultural capital to become successful workers in the global economy. Only a few elementary charter schools spoke directly to this idea in their mission statements, but as shown, human capital theory was embedded within the logic of the academies—college readiness seemed less about the joy and wonder of a college education than the higher-paying job that one would presumably get after attending and completing college.
here was “implemented” or “communicated,” rather than acknowledged or recognized. The “strong,” “adult”-nature of the school culture was evident in the “rigorous” high standards and molding of students to reach academic and behavioral standards.

Our school culture communicates high academic and behavioral expectations for all learners. Parents, students, faculty, staff, and our Board of Trustees collaborate to provide an environment in which each learner is able to continuously improve.... the school is focused on the following three priorities to lead to high student outcomes: high quality reading instruction and dramatic reading achievement, consistent implementation of strong school-wide culture systems in order to maximize student learning, and building an adult culture of Team and Family.

We want students to become intellectually sophisticated, wholesome in character, avid readers, independent thinkers and compassionate individuals who make a meaningful contribution to society. Cultures of teamwork, ownership, and learning.

[We] will provide a positive, nurturing environment along with an exciting, rigorous, academic and cultural program where boys learn to become responsible citizens, life-long learners, and community leaders. They will develop a sense of self by knowing who they are, and what they are expected to become, thus, allowing them to be confident and prepared to face the challenges in a competitive world. We believe that a strong school culture is essential for our young leaders of tomorrow.

...the cornerstone of the school culture is the value of team and family as embodied by the ‘wolf pack’ (the school’s mascot is the wolf). Students earn their way into the pack by demonstrating citizenship, hard work and achievement.

[Our] model transforms the fundamental structures of schooling to promote a culture of learning and innovation for both students and teachers.

The academy will... offer cultural enrichment character education and a broad academic program to build higher order thinking skills.

In the above examples, culture, “cultural enrichment” and a “culture of learning” were tied to conceptualizations of character, morality and discipline associated with academies. Even discourse that referenced concepts of “teamwork” and “family” as part of a school’s culture seem to have utilized those concepts to reinforce the academic and behavioral standards of the individual student (ie., a lack of personal responsibility is detrimental to the team/community).
Similarly, discursive constructions of community-as-school often prescribed (rather than integrated) students’ experiences of *community*:

> We believe that every member of our school *community* is responsible for student success. [...] [Our] Charter School has a high bar for expectations for all members of our *community*. [...] Scholars are expected to work hard daily and model the school core values.

> Students realize success through a rigorous academic program, with a strong focus on writing, in a supportive and structured school *community*.

> [... our] program is designed to produce a *community* of smart, responsible, creative citizens.

> [... our] *community* is built on the school’s core values of Perseverance, Achievement, Vibrance and Excellent Character.

> [Our] *community* lives by four core values: scholarship, merit, sisterhood, and responsibility.

There is no doubt that schools can be conceived as a *community* of teachers, learners, and administrators, and there are cultural dispositions manifest in the institutional procedures and practices of a given school, but when charter schools stand for a *community* unto themselves, or imply in that their vision community is superior, they can negate the communities and cultural backgrounds that their students are coming from. Still, many charter schools referred to the community or communities that their students come from.

A second use of the term *community* acknowledged students’ communities, but viewed them as lacking. Within this deficit model, a student would gain the knowledge and skills to lead and help transform her community. Distinct from sociocultural theories surrounding cultural competence and communities’ funds of knowledge (outlined in the literature review), the community-improvement paradigm implied that the community was in need of repair, and that the school would sufficiently mold a child to go out into the community and change it for the better. This view of community seemed to align with the neoliberal brand of civics promoted by
tolerant academies, centered on personal responsibility. To varying degrees, discourse from the following tolerant academies positioned surrounding communities as deficient in terms of the very qualities that constitute good character in most charter schools.

… students develop and use G.R.I.T. (Good Judgment, Resilience, Integrity, and Teamwork) for personal and community improvement.

Our vision is to develop scholars who have the intellectual capacity, the emotional strength of character and the social capital to be individually successful, and to act as effective change-makers in their communities.

… our graduates will be equipped with the necessary skills to lead fulfilling personal and professional lives, including a developed sense of self, the ability to think in innovative and flexible ways, and the inspiration to make a positive impact on their community.

… boys learn to become responsible citizens, life-long learners, and community leaders. They will develop a sense of self by knowing who they are, and what they are expected to become, thus, allowing them to be confident and prepared to face the challenges in a competitive world.

Our school… develops each student’s abilities, confidence, and sense of responsibility for themselves and their community.

Though these schools often echoed the language of success and personal responsibility articulated by academies, this discourse was supplemented by nods to diversity, culture, and the arts. It is important to note that the arts were more widely available in tolerant academies that stressed community impact. Culture took on a different meaning in these schools, often coupled with the arts as a form of enrichment, not altogether extraneous, but in the sidelined service of academic and behavioral goals. Notice how the arts are infused into, rather than the basis of the curriculum. “Traditional subjects” might provide a foundation for the addition of “art and other cultural studies.”

The School will instruct all students using the Core Knowledge curriculum and will supplement all instruction with the classical study of the Greek and Latin languages, as well as history, art and other cultural studies.
… we prepare our scholars through rigorous programs that provide them with a foundation that will allow them to succeed in and graduate from college. Our unique arts-infused curriculum, emphasis on social development and integration of diverse cultural opportunities augments learning and broadens horizons.

Students will participate in a variety of local cultural and educational adventures. Through their exploration of the sights, sounds, and tastes of Brooklyn, they’ll develop curiosity and a connection to their community as they develop their own voices and identities.

In the above, culture and the arts were conflated, valued as supplemental to the core curriculum by broadening “horizons” and offering opportunities for “adventure.” Therein lay an intriguing paradox—culture and the arts were deemed inessential but empowering, outside the scope of the core curriculum, but in the service of college and career success. One school made this equation plain: “Academic Excellence + Multi Language + Cultural Heritage = Global Competent Edge.”

Diversity here was more a marketable asset than a pedagogical resource. Like the school that “celebrates the cultural heritage of students and families with a yearly multicultural showcase and potluck dinner,” diversity might be superficially attended to or accommodated, but not so much absorbed and utilized. These mentions of arts and culture confused efforts to make neat delineations between what was truly progressive and what was only marginally progressive. Based on discourse alone, it was nearly impossible to definitively state the role of the arts in a school’s curriculum, much as it was difficult to objectively judge how superficial a cultural “adventure” might be.

Within the academy type, structure provided a crucial way in which to categorize charter schools, and will be briefly discussed here because of the way that network discourses converged on the tenets of the academies and related to the issues of isomorphism and community described previously. A network school is a charter school managed by an organization (CMO) that runs two or more schools. It makes sense that a management organization attempting to run multiple
schools would need to coalesce around a discourse that supports standardized goals and procedures and would thus pay less attention to the needs, backgrounds, and experiences of individual students. Network charter schools were far less likely to incorporate students’ cultural backgrounds and communities into their curricula precisely because the variance within and between schools’ surrounding communities inhibited the uniformity and conformity that many networks are intent on imposing. Just as discipline-based preparatory academies are constrained to focus on core curriculum and behavior goals, networks tended to brand themselves as custodians of high academic standards and character development. Such curricular goals contrasted with progressive charter schools, which will be discussed in a later section.

Sub-types of tolerant academies. Differences were found in the mission statements of charter schools considered tolerant academies. Within tolerant academies four different subtypes were noted: arts-infused, civics-oriented, community-oriented and constructivist pedagogy.

We now turn to those charter schools deemed progressive whose discourse stands in sharp contrast to academies.

Discourse in Progressive Charter Schools

According to Carpenter:

[Progressive] schools subscribe to educational philosophies and/or practices aligned with ‘progressivism,’ which places a premium on individual development. Learning is approached holistically and includes paying attention to students’ emotional, spiritual, physical, social, and intellectual needs. Classroom activities are often student-centered, hands-on, project-based, and cooperative in nature. (2008, p. 99)

Carpenter (2008) went on to state that progressive schools may include a range of orientations, from “ethnocentric to Montessori to environmentally focused charters,” and related to me that arts-focused schools would also be considered progressive (Carpenter, personal communication, January 3, 2015). Whereas tolerant academies keep progressive features at the margins, charter
schools that put progressive features at the center were simply referred to as *progressive* charter schools (see Figure 9.3 below).

![Diagram: Progressive: Constructivist; Community-Based; or Alternative Curriculum]

**Figure 9.3.** Curriculum Orientation of Progressive Charter Schools.

**Culture, community, and the arts in progressive charter schools.** Unlike academies, many progressive charter schools mentioned arts instruction in their missions and made arts part of the core curriculum. Arts proficiency was vital, elevated to the status of core subjects, and likely woven into the daily, interdisciplinary curriculum, rather than simply enriching or augmenting.

[Our] mission is to provide an exemplary, K-12 standards-based *arts education program* that promotes superior scholarship and strong cultural arts proficiency.

Our school provides students with a sophisticated core curriculum in English Language Arts, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, *art, music*, technology and physical education. We incorporate Hebrew language instruction across the curriculum through a partial immersion proficiency model.

Our program of performance-based instruction in choral *singing* will guide students through the development of creative and critical thinking and learning skills that they will learn to apply to daily living and the core academic subject areas.

[Our school] will prepare its students to achieve high academic levels in the four core academic subject areas and *music*, to communicate effectively in verbal, mathematical and musical languages, and to apply critical thinking processes and ethical standards to learning, living and problem solving.
students learn from TEP’s master teachers in 6 core subjects - English, Math, Music, Social Studies, Science, and Physical Education. TEP’s curriculum emphasizes language development and interdisciplinary learning.

A truly progressive school would not just pay homage to “critical thinking,” or “civics,” nor would it view the arts as less important; a truly progressive school should embody the spirit of democracy, acknowledging students for who they are while seeking to create environments where children can meaningfully participate in art-making processes on their own terms. While John Dewey would not advocate abandoning traditional subjects or methods, he, along with sociocultural theorists and culturally-relevant pedagogues, would probably argue that conceptions of community and culture are central to a teacher’s understanding of her students, and that this understanding is integral to the development of the curriculum.

From this theoretical perspective, it was only natural that keywords like community and culture wound up becoming major fault lines for progressivism. Only a few charter schools departed from the normalized discourse and positioned their students’ communities and/or cultural backgrounds as resources. But it is important to acknowledge their work resisting the conformity of charter school discourse.

All subtypes of progressive schools, not only attended to the surrounding community and appreciated diversity explicitly, but emerged from the community through partnerships and mutual support. One particular sub-type of progressive school can be called community-based/social justice focus progressive charter schools. In these schools, cultures of “community, collaboration, and cooperation,” were made “nurturing, caring, and supportive by enlisting family support.”

Progressive charter schools also acknowledged culture as an object of study or a resource that their students brought to the classroom, providing “opportunities for cross-cultural
enrichment…. [and] community service,” “reflect[ing] the abundant socioeconomic, racial and
cultural diversity of its surroundings,” or “teach[ing] students and their families to work
successfully together across differences.” Notice how these schools articulated a more broad and
humanistic code of ethics; how communities and families in the discourse below were involved,
engaged, embraced, and integrated; and how service learning provided a vital connection
between school and community:

[Our] Charter School serves the communities of West Harlem by providing students in
grades K through 8 with an education that is rigorous, inquiry-based, and that teaches
students and their families to work successfully together across differences in language,
culture, economic background, age, and nationality.

We focus on educating the whole child with a proven approach that combines a model core
academic curriculum with strong programs in the visual arts, music and dance. Based on
the latest research in effective education, our program uses both ‘traditional teacher-
directed’ and ‘student-centered’ or ‘project-based’ learning to effectively address the needs
of all learners in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. Our program is tailored to
each student and designed to raise each individual’s academic achievement levels as well
as cultural knowledge—and social conscience. And, we’re consistently succeeding. We
prepare students to meet educational standards with both basic and enriched academic
skills, help them learn a cultural vocabulary in the Arts—and how to become good citizens.
We hold Harambee daily, providing an opportunity for teachers and students to create a
positive community and to deal with problem-solving and conflict resolution. This
opportunity extends beyond our school building. We focus on strengthening the
relationships between home and school, family and faculty, neighborhood leaders and our
administration. The result… a community of learners that is informed, creative and
confident, capable of succeeding in highly-rated middle and high schools – and in life.
Won’t you join us?

[Our mission] is based on the conviction that a change in the destiny of a single individual
can lead to a change in the destiny of a community, nation, and ultimately humankind. Its
mission as a K-12 school is to foster educated, responsible, humanistic young leaders who
will through their own personal growth spark a renaissance in New York. Its graduates will
be global citizens with an abiding respect for peace, human rights, the environment, and
sustainable development. With these goals in mind, [we] built a culture of community,
cooperation, and collaboration. The school’s core belief is that a dynamic learning
environment which prizes friendship and deep respect will open both the hearts and minds
of students. In this type of environment, students will meet all standards and exceed them
to become leaders in their own right. The study of New York is the central curricular
theme…. Traditional subjects such as math, science, language arts and social studies are
related to the study of the geography, history, economics, culture, and people of New York.
Rooted in this study of their communities, students engage in community involvement activities and work on individual and small group projects to prepare them for the work of the 21st century. Since the arts are so central to New York, students take classes in dance, music, fine arts, chorus, and drama.

The mission of [our] Charter Schools is to create community-based public schools that reflect the abundant socioeconomic, racial and cultural diversity of their surroundings. Our schools exemplify an intellectually challenging, experiential learning environment that develops each student’s abilities, confidence, and sense of responsibility for themselves and their community. In this spirit, we work conscientiously to build strong communities both within and outside the classroom.

The school will also feature a set of student and family supports to reinforce learning and eliminate barriers to success…. the best instructional practices including opportunities for hands-on learning and exploration; school-wide and classroom-based community building to advance students’ physical, emotional, and social needs; positive, supportive relationships between students, staff and parents; extended days and years to serve as a safe and engaging community hub; parent advisory groups to support planning of community school programs and services; life coaching services to help link families to community-based resources.

At [our] Charter School, families, educators and community members join to create a learning environment that fosters high academic achievement which exceeds the New York State Learning Standards. An enriched curriculum and dynamic partnerships between the school, families and community enable all students to become lifelong learners and active citizens who value kindness and respect.

Even in some instances where the school was discursively positioned as community, the central focus was not on personal character and success, but rather, about engaging the world:

… a small learning community founded on the principle that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning. Our students raise questions about the world around them, engage with a wide range of materials, and learn through their interactions with each other and all of the adults in the school community.

… a rigorous K-8 learning community where learning is embedded in meaningful real world context, where children are deliberately taught to see the connections between school and the world.

… a diverse, caring and nurturing learning community that fosters high academic achievement and the development of ethical character for elementary and middle school students. An enriched curriculum and dynamic partnerships between the school, families and community enable all students to excel.

… a safe and caring community where ethics, service, and social justice are the principles that inform every aspect of school life; where teachers lead and collaborate with students
in a culture of rigorous academics and mutual respect; where analytical thinking and creativity are prized over learning by repetition; where children become individuals of integrity, insight, autonomy – and socially productive citizens, workers, leaders.

… a nurturing and supportive community where all students feel secure, recognize their own potential, respect others regardless of race, religion, or culture, and are instilled with the desire to learn and achieve. It is our aim to provide a rigorous academic program, supported by the arts and technology, that cultivates the whole child.

Some of these progressive schools likely enlisted parents to help enforce behavioral codes of conduct—the above examples show that charter schools that conceptualized their school community as something more than prescriptive were not necessarily precluded from articulating a school mission around the same standards of success that defined academies. But the sentiments surrounding community in the above were palpably more progressive, both pedagogically and politically. Pedagogically, the above schools presented a vision of an actively engaged student, making meaningful connections with the outside world. Politically, these schools sought to involve and engage communities through service and social justice.

Many of the above mission statements overlapped with related subtypes of progressive charter schools, such as those oriented around language and culture, that put certain linguistic and cultural practices at the center of their curriculum while also integrating students’ communities. Carpenter (2008) defines this subtype as “ethnocentric,” with schools that coalesce around a specific community, such as the school that integrated the study of “Spanish…. world culture…. arts and music.”

It is the mission of Our… Neighborhood Charter School to educate our students to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. The founders and Board of Trustees have set these goals for the school: Rigorous academic curriculum Spanish beginning in Kindergarten. Integrated study of world culture. Integrated study of history of ideas. Arts & music integrated in curriculum. Individualized learning plans. Computers in all classrooms. We are committed to an educational philosophy based on inquiry, active and experiential learning, and social justice. Through a literacy-based, integrated and standards-driven curriculum that encourages community and honors diversity… students receive the broad education they will need to meet the academic and social challenges of
the best New York City High Schools, and indeed, to thrive in today's world. [Our] Charter School is located in the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the United States. We celebrate this by integrating the cultural richness of our community with the lessons of the classroom and the governance of the school. All members of the [our] community—students, teachers, and administration—are expected to reflect on the nature and quality of their work and interactions, and to strive to reach their full potential as learners and as citizens.

The mission of [our] Charter School is to develop bilingual, biliterate global citizens who will be the leaders of tomorrow. We achieve this in the following ways: Allowing students to learn a true appreciation, respect for and understanding of diversity through the example of the adults who work with them. Teaching students the foundations of respect and responsibility, first for themselves, and then for their community. Providing students with opportunities for cross-cultural enrichment. Providing students with opportunities for community service. Educating students with a global perspective using critical thinking and resources from other cultures and countries. Providing students with the language, vocabulary and contexts that will enable them to create open dialogues with others. Equipping students for the 21st century by means of a rigorous and well-rounded biliterate and bilingual education. Hiring a diverse team of teachers, interns and administrators both from the U.S. and other countries who provide a variety of viewpoints and experiences.

... a nurturing yet rigorous K-5 dual language school committed to academic excellence as well as to fostering a high degree of Hebrew language proficiency. This rich and innovative curriculum will be enhanced by art, music, technology and physical education, all of which will incorporate Hebrew language instruction, using a partial immersion proficiency model. Students... will develop a strong sense of social and civic responsibility through the integration of community service and service learning into their classroom studies.

Our mission is to provide an exceptional educational solution through an integrated educational design with high expectations, extensive academic and social-emotional support, and a high level of family and community engagement. [Our school] was born out of a desire to honor [Taíno] heritage and embrace the power of multilingual literacy and reading skills for success and leadership.... [and] has a singular focus that integrates families, school staff, and community members all invested and united in building a community focused on achievement.

Note how these community-based charter schools heaped praise on the contexts that shaped their students out-of-school lives, and included participatory action and engagement with surrounding communities.
Besides community-based/social justice focus schools, progressive schools were further categorized by subtype based on their pedagogy and curricular focus. *Constructivist* schools were pedagogically progressive in that they focused on the whole child through inquiry, discovery or project-based learning and tended to acknowledge the importance of collaboration and teamwork. This *constructivist* type was related to schools that implement curricula with an alternative focus, and use a particular theme or subject to permeate the academic goals.

As we have seen above, progressive charter schools also have *alternative curricular foci*. In the above, *culture/language focused* progressive schools and *arts-based* progressive schools (two of which focused on music) were considered. Similarly, *environmental* progressive schools use the environmental sciences as a lens to explore multiple aspects of the curriculum, engaging students with a “green culture.” Finally, in examining mission statements there was at least one progressive charter school focusing on STEM and one with a target population of students with disabilities.

In reality, schools lie on a spectrum of progressivism. Some classrooms and some moments will be more student-centered than others, different themes and subjects will infuse the broader curriculum to varying degrees. It was deemed important to distinguish between a school that makes alternative features central to its mission, and one that places these features in service of something else because of the ways that music relates to broader curricular issues. There is a freedom—which lends itself to acts of movement, creativity, improvisation, and public displays of vulnerability—that is surely hampered or denied when strict codes of character are in place. If music and arts teachers must enact the core curriculum and behavior models that proved so prominent in the discourse of academies, what does that do to the music instruction? These
questions will be addressed in the following chapters. The next section details access to early childhood music instruction by charter school type.

**Quantitative Analysis of Charter School Music by Type**

Using parameters established by the discourse analysis in the preceding sections, all 146 NYC charter schools serving K-3 in the 2014-2015 school year were divided into types and subtypes based on their mission statements. Tables 9.1 and 9.2, below, show the breakdown of NYC charter schools by type and subtype. As indicated above, the broad grouping schema exhibits two main types: academy and progressive.

**Table 9.1. Typology and Breakdown of NYC K-3 Charter Schools, 2014-15.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Academies (73%)</strong></th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th><strong>Progressive (27%)</strong></th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academies</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Community-Based / Social Justice Focus</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant Academies</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Constructivist Pedagogy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative Curricular Focus</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9.2. Subtypes of Tolerant Academies and Progressive Charter Schools with Alternative Curricular Focus, 2014-15.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtypes of Tolerant Academies:</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Subtypes of Progressive Alternative Curricular Focus:</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>→ Arts-Infused</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>→ Arts-Focused</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Civics-Oriented</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>→ Culture/Language</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Community-Oriented</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>→ Environment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Constructivist Pedagogy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>-→ STEM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>→ Target Population: SPED</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1 shows that the majority of K-3 charter schools in NYC (73%, or 107 out of the total 146 charter schools) could be defined as academies, more traditional in their pedagogical approach, and that a majority of these academies (60%) were discipline-based. This finding provides stark contrast to the typologies created by Carpenter (2008), which classified a plurality
of schools as progressive. Of the 107 schools classified as academies in this study, 64 (60% of the 107 academies and 44% of the 146 total) were deemed discipline-based preparatory academies. The remaining 41 schools were deemed tolerant academies. Within tolerant academies, charter schools emphasizing civics made up the majority (53%).

The progressive type of charter schools only accounted for 27% of all charter schools. Progressive charter schools that emphasized community and social justice were more numerous, closely followed by progressive charter schools that had an alternative curricular focus. The following figure streamlines the above data and presents the three most prevalent types/subtypes in a pie chart.

![Figure 9.4](image)

**Figure 9.4.** Main K-3 Charter School Types in NYC, 2014-15.

Note that discipline-based preparatory academies accounted for a plurality of charter schools serving K-3 in 2014-2015, and that the remaining charter schools were split relatively evenly between tolerant academies and progressive schools. Charter schools in the sample ($n = 125$) approximated the above proportions (40% were discipline-based preparatory academies 30% were tolerant academies, and 30% were progressive).

In the ensuing analysis, the presence of music education in different types of charter schools was assessed for the 125-school sample (data on music instruction was not available for
As previously reported, 87 of these 125 schools (70%) reported having music instruction. Table 9.3, below shows the presence of music within each charter school type.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charter School Type</th>
<th>Schools with Music (n = 87)</th>
<th>Schools without Music (n = 38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academies</td>
<td>n = 50</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant Academies</td>
<td>n = 38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtypes of Tolerant Academies:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Arts-Infused</td>
<td>n = 8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Civics-Oriented</td>
<td>n = 20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Community-Oriented</td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Constructivist Pedagogy</td>
<td>n = 3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Charter Schools</td>
<td>n = 37</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Based / Social Justice Focus</td>
<td>n = 16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Pedagogy</td>
<td>n = 5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Curricular Focus:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Arts-Focused</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Culture/Language</td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Environment</td>
<td>n = 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ STEM</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>n = 125</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 88 schools that were categorized as academies, 55 (63%) were found to have music, while 33 (38%) did not have any sustained music instruction. The prevalence of music in academies (63%) approached the norm for charter schools overall (70%), but paled in comparison to the 86% of progressive charter schools that were found to have music, and the 85% of traditional public schools that reported music instruction. The prevalence of music

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5 The two CS that reported sustained music instruction (but not a music program) are included in this analysis.
instruction in academies was almost entirely depressed by a specific subtype, the discipline-based preparatory academies.

Of the 50 sampled charter schools defined as discipline-based preparatory academies, only 22 (44%) were found to have music, making them almost half as likely to have music as progressive charter schools (86%), tolerant academies (87%), and traditional public schools (85%). This finding was significant because discipline-based preparatory academies represented almost half of all K-3 charter schools in 2014-2015, and because the isomorphic tendencies associated with charter school growth and discourse make it likely that this type of charter school will be increasingly prevalent.

There was significant overlap between discipline-based preparatory academies and network affiliation. Forty-two of the 50 discipline-based preparatory academies in the sample were network affiliated, and most of these schools were associated with three large-scale networks (34 schools run by CMOs operating more than four K-3 schools in the City). Even when discounting the largest network (n = 17), of the remaining 33 discipline-based preparatory academies in the sample, only 17 (52%) had K-3 music, significantly less than both charter schools in the aggregate (70%), and tolerant academies (87%). Table 9.4, below, shows the presence of music in the six largest charter schools networks serving K-3 and lists their type.

When attempting to access basic information about music education from the City’s most prolific network, consisting of 24 elementary charter schools, seven schools denied my request outright, and only five of the 17 responding schools (30%) reported having a music program for K-3. It is important to make note of this reticence. Some administrators at this network answered only the first question (and for fear of breaking protocol did not proceed), and others refused to answer any questions, referring me to the network headquarters. Network headquarters was repeatedly unwilling to provide data on basic information regarding the presence or absence of music programs. That the City’s largest charter school network refused multiple requests for data and was generally less receptive to my requests for research was troubling and noteworthy, if understandable—the lack of transparency evinced by such caginess suggested an unwillingness to be held accountable to certain standards, at least when approached by a researcher. Despite the network’s consistently high academic achievement, rational efforts to protect its image seemed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Largest Charter School Networks (&gt; 4 schools)</th>
<th>Charter School Type</th>
<th>% of Sampled Network Schools with Music</th>
<th>Sampled Network Schools % of Sample</th>
<th>n Schools Not Responding to Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Largest Network</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>29% (n = 5/17)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Largest</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>43% (n = 3/7)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Largest</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>0% (n = 0/7)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Largest</td>
<td>Tolerant Academy</td>
<td>67% (n = 4/6)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Largest</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>100% (n = 3/3)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Largest</td>
<td>Tolerant Academy</td>
<td>100% (n = 3/3)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to supersede the very ideals of transparency and accountability that charter schools have been assumed to uphold. Data were not just harder to collect from this one network, though.

Networks and academies in general were less likely to present data. Whereas only one progressive school (of 39 total) did not provide data for this study, 13 discipline-based preparatory academies (of 63), and six tolerant academies (of 44) did not present data. I noticed a trend: the more progressive a school, the more likely administrators were up front about their music curriculum.

The lower incidence of music among academies may have created a non-response bias (as discussed in the previous chapter). Academies, especially discipline-based preparatory academies, were generally less transparent about their music curricular practices, a bad omen for those who believe that charter schools assure more transparency and accountability. The depressed data yield held true even when discounting the outsize effect of the largest network.

In the second largest network, consisting of nine schools that each published their own unique mission statements, only three out of seven reporting schools (43%) had a music program. The third largest network, situated in the Bronx, adopted E.D. Hirsch’s Core Knowledge curriculum and was comprised of seven schools, none of which reported having a music program, with only three offering any arts at all. The schools in this network that reported arts programming conceded that these arts classes were not part of the regular curriculum, they were only offered as afterschool clubs, or during the six-week span at the end of the year after tests had been administered. These data show that the trend in charter school expansion towards large networks and discipline-based preparatory academies might be concomitant to a lower incidence of music. Although music education should be a valued component of any early childhood curriculum, networks and discipline-based preparatory academies seem intent on other
priorities during the early elementary years. For the networks that offered a more progressive approach and fell into the category of tolerant academy, music was provided at a rate comparable to progressive charter schools.

Despite the meaningful discursive differences that emerged between progressive schools and tolerant academies, there was no significant difference in the provision of music education between the two. This similarity is perhaps an indication of how impossible it is to pinpoint “progressive education,” but also implies a need for further refinement of the typology—perhaps tolerant academies and progressive charter schools are more similar than the above typology would suggest. The comparability of incidence of music in progressive schools and tolerant academies was an indication that access to music was not different for schools that assert any progressive orientation, regardless of the extent to which they made progressive features central to the core mission—33 of the 38 (87%) charter schools defined as tolerant academies, and 32 of the 37 (86%) schools defined as progressive provided music instruction (see Table 9.3). Charter school type did correlate with the absence of music in the more extreme cases of the discipline-based preparatory academies, where curricula were more circumscribed, but charter school type did not appear to affect music access for any other type of schools.

Nor did subtype seem to correlate with music access. Looking at the schools that responded in the negative to having a music program, aside from networks and discipline-based preparatory academies, there were no noteworthy deviations from the norms of music incidence. In fact, the prevalence of music in tolerant academies and progressive charter schools (87%) resembled the statistics for low-poverty traditional public schools. Of the five tolerant academies and five progressive schools that reported not having a music program, school administrators were quick to mention other arts programming, the presence of music in prior years, plans to
have music in the future, integration of music and drama in performing arts classes, interdisciplinary integration of the arts during the school day, or extended day programs that provided arts enrichment opportunities to students.

**Coda**

The findings in this chapter relate to Elpus’ (2012) study, which reported the incidence of music in NYC charter schools by academic focus. During the 2010-2011 school year, three of the five responding schools without music were in the “College Preparation” category (which seemed to overlap with the “‘Back to Basics,’” “‘No Excuses,’” and “‘Test Prep’”); the other two schools were deemed “Experiential” (Elpus, 2012, p. 89). Elpus’ (2012) study suffered from a low response rate (possibly the result of a non-response bias), and since schools self-reported their curricular focus (Elpus, personal communication, March 22, 2017), there was no effort to collapse overlapping categories.

With its large sample and comprehensive, streamlined typology, this study has filled in some of the gaps of Elpus’ research; in collapsing many of the overlapping categories for academic focus/emphasis that Elpus (2012) employed, the above analysis presented a clear picture of what type of charter school is more likely to lack music: discipline-based preparatory academies. This finding should be viewed with some caution, since a few charter schools without music were still expanding, and expecting to add music. More consequentially, this finding cautions us to consider the direction of the charter school movement in NYC, and fret the fact that the most lauded type of charter school—discipline-based preparatory academies, accounting for a plurality—offer significantly less music than traditional public schools and other types of charter schools. Using data collected from interviews and observations of music teachers, the
following two chapters discuss the role of music in charter school curricula, and academies in particular, to see how music teachers incorporated character- and community-based aspects of the mission statements into their music instruction.
Chapter 10
Management, Movement, Synergy, and Support in Charter Schools and Music Classrooms

“Structure isn’t everything, but without it, you can’t do anything.” – Academy teacher

Overture

For the qualitative portion of this study, I interviewed ten music teachers in NYC charter schools and observed seven of them. Four of the teachers interviewed were from discipline-based preparatory academies, five were from tolerant academies, and one was from a progressive charter school, focused on community. Eight of the schools from which the teacher sample was drawn were affiliated with charter networks. Of the seven teachers who were observed, two were from discipline-based preparatory academies, four were from tolerant academies, and one was from the progressive charter school. Observational data are woven into discussions of teacher testimony to give a general sense of the pedagogical goals and practices.

The main goal of this chapter is to explore how the developmental responsiveness of music teachers might be circumscribed by conceptions of character, culture and community manifested in the school’s official discourse. Based on the literature review in Chapter 3, I consider developmental appropriateness and responsiveness in early childhood music to stipulate movement and play. Since a preponderance of interview participants came from academies (both discipline-based and tolerant), it was necessary to uncover how behavior standards centered on personal responsibility—as articulated by the school—permeated teacher discourse and music classroom practices.

The findings in this chapter attempt to answer research questions three and four:

In different types of charter schools with K-3 music instruction, is the music instruction culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate?
How do charter school music teachers conceptualize the cultural responsiveness and developmental appropriateness of their practice, and how does this relate, if at all, to the discourse and the context of the schools in which they work?

The above research questions were refined to consider this chapter’s thematic frame, which emerged inductively from the research: whether and how teachers’ conceptions of classroom management and school support aligned with school discourse surrounding personal responsibility, character, and behavior.

In many ways, the compliance curriculum figured prominently in teachers’ praxis, and explicitly coalesced around aspects of the school’s discourse. Pointedly, behavior management took on overt significance in the music classroom, most notably in relation to movement and student composure. Behavior and classroom management were not initially essential to the research questions of this study, but proved significant over the course of observations and interviews. As a result, much of the teacher testimony cited in this chapter focuses on teachers’ conceptualizations of classroom management as a salient feature of both their practice and charter-affiliated teacher education programs. Special attention will be paid in the second section of this chapter to ways that teacher education figured prominently in teacher discourse surrounding classroom management.

Musical styles and skills are mentioned in the following accounts to provide context for the teachers and classrooms under investigation, but will be elaborated upon in the next chapter. Whereas the thematic focus of this chapter focuses on developmental appropriateness in the context of music classroom management and structure, the next chapter takes up music-specific issues related to curriculum and repertoire, with increased attention to cultural responsiveness.
Discipline as Curriculum

The strictness of discipline and classroom management protocol instituted by schools and adopted by music teachers related to issues of developmental appropriateness, namely the limitations placed on movement and play. It is important to note, in light of the critiques of teachers that follows, that I observed a diverse array teaching practices, and that each participating teacher was dedicated to her students and to the promise of music education as a vehicle for cognitive enhancement and aesthetic enrichment. However, each of these teachers operated within the constraints of the institutions in which they operated. Nowhere were these constraints more visible than in the constriction of movement and attention to directives that arose from what this author viewed as a preoccupation with classroom management and student behavior.

During some of my observations, directives and correctives responding to student behavior were so prevalent that discipline comprised the curriculum itself, in some cases occupying more than half the instructional time. This finding replicated Ferguson’s (2005) finding from three for-profit Ohio charter schools, that teacher’s talk giving instructions exceeded the time spent engaged in music activities. Instead of musical skills, I observed teachers whose instruction and assessments were in many cases predicated on the ability of students to follow directions and control their bodies. School mottos and approaches to behavior were reinforced through teacher directives and through the behavior-based messages adorning the music classroom walls and hallways. Six of the seven teachers that I observed participated in a school-wide system of checks that were used to document and assess student behavior. This
form of assessment became a primary responsibility of the music teacher and was regularly observed and enforced to a greater extent than musical skill formation in most cases.

The theme of discipline-as-curriculum relates to Anyon’s (1981) and Apple’s (1980) concept of the hidden curriculum—those features of pedagogical interaction that convey implicit messages about the way that lower-class students learn, with concomitant assumptions about the job opportunities and cultural experiences that will be afforded to these students later in life. This critical standpoint asserts that working class students and students of color are more likely to receive didactic instruction that compels them to follow orders, since they will enter the labor market in positions that demand the same. In contrast to more affluent students, who are afforded opportunities for self-directed, cooperative, experiential, and inquiry-based learning befitting the arts, poorer students and students of color are confined to classroom experiences that demand strict obedience to directives. What’s more, the methods of discipline in teacher-controlled, compliance-oriented classrooms are rendered irreconcilable with humanistic educational goals attached to self-actualization, lifelong learning, and true self-discipline (Kohn, 2001). According to Kohn (2001), the compliance curriculum will always be “inimical to our ultimate objectives”:

... the more we “manage” students’ behavior and try to make them do what we say, the more difficult it is for them to become the morally sophisticated people who think for themselves and care about others. This proposition immediately leads some people to ask: Aren’t there times when we simply need students to do what we tell them?...the need for compliance is less a function of some objective feature of the situation than of the teacher’s personality and background—or of the pressures brought to bear by others (for example, to have one's classroom “under control”). Thus, we ought to examine our preferences rather than take them for granted. (p. 69)

In citing these theories, I do not mean to imply that classroom management is an insignificant feature of pedagogy, or that didactic modes of instruction are characteristically oppressive, developmentally inappropriate, and culturally unresponsive. To the contrary, examples of traditional, discipline-based pedagogy found in a wide variety of communities
across the U.S. show substantial evidence of moralistic, teacher-directed instruction. Rather, the theoretical lens adopted here views behavior-based classroom practice in charter schools as part of an agenda that too often perpetuates the marginalization and objectification of students of color. Sociocultural theory promotes liberating and responsive pedagogies that would seek to socially unite subjects, empowered in their own learning. If the ways that “knowledge is expressed, transmitted, and confirmed remains ensconced in the singular, rational, and individualized conception of what it means to know…” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2015, p. 8), liberation and solidarity will remain out of reach. From this perspective, knowing, for the children of more militaristic charter schools, takes the form of the individual knowing to obey and conform to behavioral expectations—a set of skills ancillary to many of the developmentally appropriate music making practices that one would hope to find in early childhood music classes.

In thinking about how discipline presided over charter school music classroom practices, one must acknowledge that Gaztambide-Fernández’s above reading of classroom practice fails to account for certain realities that most teachers would take for granted and find utterly apparent—namely, the aforementioned systems of control and extrinsic motivation effectively encourage many students. Far from “inimical,” for many teachers, getting “control of the classroom” was the objective (Kohn, 2001).

As one teacher put it, “Structure isn’t everything, but without out it, you can’t do anything.” In interviews and observations, classroom management and structure featured prominently; thus, analyzing classroom management techniques, although not an initial focus of this study, came to preoccupy much of my analysis. Whether in service of school-wide behavior protocols, or a teacher’s own attempts to manage a smoothly-run classroom, behavior management posed acute challenges, especially in music rooms, where movement and
instruments can demand strict boundaries. No matter how naturalized they have become in both charter school discourse and broader education policy, we must still ask why these imperatives do not apply uniformly to students across socioeconomic and racial lines (why. The following discussions consider how charter school and music teachers’ discourse surrounding discipline and obedience manifested in music instruction. For reference, Table 10.1, below, lists the participants (pseudonyms), school type, network affiliation, and teacher training preparatory program.

Table 10.1. Interview Participants and Charter School Type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Charter School Type/Network</th>
<th>Teacher Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>Progressive (Community-Based)</td>
<td>MEP/Kodaly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caty</td>
<td>Tolerant Academy Network (Constructivist)</td>
<td>MEP/PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Tolerant Academy Network (Civics)</td>
<td>CUNY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy Network</td>
<td>Network/Out-of-state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Tolerant Academy Network (Civics)</td>
<td>MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loretta</td>
<td>Tolerant Academy (Civics)</td>
<td>MEP/Out-of-state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy Network</td>
<td>MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paige*</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy Network</td>
<td>Network/MLT/PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raphael*</td>
<td>Tolerant Academy Network (Civics)</td>
<td>Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy*</td>
<td>Discipline-Based Preparatory Academy Network</td>
<td>MEP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teacher was interviewed but not observed.

**Classroom management in Dan’s keyboard lab.**

In Dan’s classroom, the decidedly funky repertoire of popular music, drawn from classic soul and RnB, could have undoubtedly contributed to a communal music-making atmosphere. But, despite the civics orientation of the tolerant academy, the strictures of Dan’s school’s “no excuses” approach to behavior made for an uneasy and at times exasperated nod to African American artists and traditions. Classroom time was almost exclusively devoted to independent piano work, with each student at a keyboard wearing headphones when not listening to the

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22 Including Bill Withers’ “Lovely Day” and the Jackson 5’s “I’ll Be There.”
teacher. Dan sought out “songs that the kids are gonna know, that relate to keyboard well,” and music with which students’ parents might identify. With these songs, Dan’s main goal for his students was to develop practical musicianship skills on keyboard. However, to the extent that the structure of the keyboard lab supported the school’s behavioral goals, this structure contradicted both the spirit of the music and important tenets of developmentally appropriate early childhood music instruction relating to singing, movement, and community. Encouraging piano/keyboard skills may be considered both developmentally appropriate and laudable in early childhood, but the keyboard lab imposed limiting spatial and structural parameters in Dan’s classroom.

Instead of movement and communal music making, Dan was primarily concerned with classroom management and individual students’ adherence to the rules, regulations, and procedures—when to turn their keyboards on and off, sitting still, not talking, and full attentiveness during teacher talk and independent work assignments. Aside from some praise, sizable allotments of time were set aside for admonishments and behavioral corrections, a practice that reflected the school’s core values, distilled in the acronym “DREAM”—Discipline, Respect, Enthusiasm, Accountability and Maturity—and brandished in a quotation from the New York Post on the school’s website: “The mantra here is ‘no excuses.’ It’s brutal. Unreasonable. And it works.” The overriding message here is that a student’s most important characteristic is her behavior, and that good behavior is defined by a disciplined self-regulation.

Although the classroom music mostly referenced black popular styles of the past 40 years, almost all the posters in the room reiterated prescriptions for student conduct in the classroom and hallways. The emphasis on individual discipline was so profound that it, in effect, spatially structured the relations between students in the room, as different levels were set up to
track student behavior. “Leaders” were on the highest tier, literally. The next level of students was seated adjacently, a step below the leaders and towards the front. Lowest achieving students sat closer to the back, were mostly ignored, and were often recipients of the teacher’s chastisement.

According to Dan, differentiation was a means to align his music class with the schoolwide approach to reading groups, a structure to which the keyboard lab proved amenable:

It was always something that I wanted to do, but in the format I was doing it—chorus, percussion—I couldn’t really do it, because you can’t put headphones in a drum, you know? But… that’s why I love this format too, is it allows for it a lot. So in all my classes now, I’m going for three distinct levels of: these are kids that are completely ready, even in kindergarten, to work on their own, so I might have five kids in a kindergarten class that can sit for 15 minutes and work with two chords going back and forth, play them to a steady beat, add the left hand in when they’re ready…. I might have five other kids that can do that, but they might need me checking in more frequently. And then there’s other kids where I really have to hold their hand every step of the way, you know… and kinda guide them along.

Hands-on experiences, though couched in the language of progressive pedagogy, took on the limited and limiting form of self-directed accountability in independent work, as promoted throughout the school network. Dan’s receptiveness to his school’s vision and conventions was quite apparent, and was consistently used to justify and support the decisions and structure of his classroom.

As Dan noted, “I find that a lot of the times, however the school is run determines how you can do your job, you know?” Dan, who by that time had already worked for years as a music teacher in the same building, under multiple principals, expressed gratitude for the stability and consistency finally in place:

I think every [school] leader that I knew believed that the kids could get there, and that they were capable of great things, but the organization wasn’t there. The… knowledge of… how to do it and how to support that belief wasn’t there…. [T]here were so many different leaders coming in over the ten years that it existed that, you know, you had this person doing it their way, the next person doing it their way, and it was a total culture shift
every single time so what you ended up with was an inconsistent culture that couldn’t support what the beliefs were…. Now, I think we have the systems better in place, a lot better in place.

When I asked Dan whether he developed his classroom management style in conjunction with his school network, he responded, “Yeah, that’s not really an option. [W]e basically have to do it so that it’s the same. So the kids know that whatever happens upstairs is also gonna happen down here.” Some teachers I interviewed talked about the support and vision that their principals committed to the arts and a robust music program. But, like Dan, most interviewees discussed school support and compatibility in terms of disciplinary policies, and expressed great appreciation for the systematization of behavior management policies across the school. Dan continued:

I think the biggest thing in common [between my classroom and the school] is the rigor that we ask [of] kindergarteners, first graders, second graders, [and] all the way up…. It’s a core philosophy of our network that they’re capable of… of more. Basically, we’re gonna hold them to high standards behaviorally, we’re gonna hold them to high standards with the content we give them, and we’re gonna support them…. We are gonna push them, and if support isn’t there at the moment, then we’re gonna find a way to make it there, or else we’re not gonna push them anymore…. I just think it’s so important to challenge kids more than they have been challenged…. I think that’s where a lot of the behavior, the misbehavior, and where schools are failing… they’re not challenging their kids enough. They don’t believe that it’s possible. I do and the network does.

Interestingly, rigor, the thread unifying Dan’s practice and his school network’s discourse, is first identified as a feature of behavior, and then with respect to musical content and skills. When asked about the most important skills he seeks to cultivate in his students, Dan talked at length about stage presence as it related to certain behaviors. Notice, in the following, how Dan rationalizes student composure as a feature of musical performance, and then makes a discursive turn to teamwork, before circling back to personal responsibility:

Stage presence…. Being able to walk… like understanding that when you prepare something, you are walking in a certain way onto the stage. You’re carrying yourself… as a performer would carry themselves. That you’re proud of what you’re doing. And because
you’re proud of what you’re doing, there’s a certain way that you’re going to present what you’re doing. And that goes from sitting down at the keyboards, to walking on the risers, to singing the first notes, to singing the last notes. When the song is done, it’s not time for you to clap for yourselves, it’s time to present it. You’re still presenting it until you walk off the stage. Letting the audience appreciate what you’ve given them. So those bigger ideas about what is a performance, what are we really saying, and what is… how are we communicating who we are through how we present everything. Not just the fingers on the keyboard, not just singing the notes, but, like… how are we really making this a team effort that we can be proud of, and… getting the audience to feel something because of that. … So there’s definitely the team building, there’s definitely the stage presentation, communication… you know… building confidence and playing something loud or singing something loud… and getting over the inhibition… that everyone has. You know, especially at that age of, just, opening your voice, or… not being afraid to play a note, and play it loud, and make a mistake. It’s okay, you know?…. I guess from there, also, just listening. On the wall I have this about leader musicians, where it says… first one is, “Follow directions the first time,” second one is, “Work harder at listening than I do at playing.” So, you’re listening to the director, but you’re also listening to your part. You’re listening to, “is what I’m playing really sounding like music?” Or if it sounds like it’s wrong, it probably is wrong. How do I go back to my paper now and look at the notes and see what might be wrong. So it’s not just kinda following the paper, and putting the finger in the right spot, but it’s also hearing what’s happening and knowing when to adjust. … it’s a very performance-based program.

In the above, schoolwide behavior protocols and discourse were integrated into the music classroom as a curricular goal, couched in the language of teamwork and musical performance—specifically stage presence. Both of these goals centered on notions of personal responsibility discussed in the previous chapter, articulated in the school’s discourse, and posted in the classroom and halls. When Dan referenced the school’s mission to balance rigor and joy, he cited “giving the kids the opportunity… to work on their own, to play independently.” Play is conceived as solitary, and joy is tempered by one’s ability to consistently meet high behavioral standards.

Behavior expectations were reaffirmed on five, prominently featured classroom signs, which outnumbered and seemed to supersede the three music-specific posters that displayed string instruments, directions for the fingerings of chord inversions, and the choreography of small movement warm-ups. The poster that Dan alluded to in the above testimony that described
the four essential qualities of “Leader Musicians” (ie., “follow directions; more listening than playing; doing the right thing; never stop grappling”) shows how the learning of musical skills and concepts was subsumed by classroom management. Achievement, here, referred not to keyboard skills as much as the related ability of students to abide by the code of discipline, the purpose of which, in Dan’s class, was to instill what the school conceived as the requisite confidence and self-regulatory skills for enabling students to become leaders in the “no excuses” mold of the school. Dan encouraged his kindergarteners to echo him, and chant, “I’m a leader!”

Differentiation in Dan’s class served the interests of multipart musical performance matched to students’ capabilities, but also served as a public display of the students’ achievement status. Although the highest group was assigned more complex material, and evidently more adept at piano playing, differentiation appeared to be based on students’ behavior, and was manifest in the physical layout of the classroom. Leaders had amassed merit points that the teacher was giving out for good behavior, just as low achievers more readily racked up “checks” (behavior-based demerits, where three checks resulted in a demotion or “color change”). Students at the higher levels, seated higher, were consistently offered more praise and directed to expand on their instrumental technique, in class, or during the afterschool keyboard club, an extracurricular program made available only to “cream of the crop leaders” (Dan’s words). I was not able to assess the malleability of differentiated groupings in Dan’s classroom, but seating arrangements seemed entrenched—most students at the lowest level, seated near the back, did not seem to engage any prospects of mobility, even though Dan articulated a desire to see certain students become leaders. The differentiation and individuation of student work clearly served the school-imposed structure that stressed individual character, rewards and punishments. The juxtaposition of fun, funky songs from the 1970s with a listless, competitive, and disciplinarian
environment stark.

Not all of my observations in Dan’s classroom were as oppressive as the general picture painted above. In Dan’s commitment to hands-on, active experiences practicing keyboard, there were fleeting moments of communal bliss, like when the third graders unplugged their headphones to perform three different parts in three different synthesizer groups out loud. And all the kindergarteners smiled when they took the final moments of class to sit together on the classroom bleachers and sing a song from the film *Frozen* that they all knew.

Dan’s demeanor was rather jovial and compassionate throughout the lessons I observed, sitting down, as he sat down and sensitively conversed with students whom he had reprimanded, resisting the urge to immediately apply consequences to problematic behavior (despite numerous threats), frequently checking in to see if students had understood him, or gently reminding students, “If you’re slouching back, I can’t help you.”

Dan made sincere attempts to avoid confrontation with his students, at times strategically ignoring inattentive students rather than reprimanding them. As well, Dan made consistent use of imagery to explain technical concepts related to piano fingering and dynamics. He found creative, musical ways to bring attention to the teacher, teach note names and fingerings, and reinforce piano technique.

Given my own musical sensibilities, I thought Dan’s choice of repertoire and original arrangements were both superb and inspiring. And despite the spatial limitations of the keyboard lab, Dan found ways to incorporate movement, like the warm-up choreography that included body percussion moves (lean, dip, snap, clap). It should also be noted that his colleagues went out of their way to praise the work he was doing in class and for the performances.

It is possible that I observed Dan on a day when he was mostly introducing newer
material, so there was less time to practice together as a large group. But overall, I got the sense, which Dan confirmed, that the classes I observed were typical in terms of their structure and the teacher talk.

Given that Dan’s classroom was the first that I observed, my observations were most startling: I had simply not expected to see a keyboard lab in kindergarten and first grade. The physical set-up of the class and the structure of the learning strategies ensured that there would be little small movement, no large movement activities, few opportunities for communal music making, and that the 20 or so African drums stacked on one side of the room would remain decorative, rather than played. I had simply not considered the possibility that significant amounts of class time would be devoted to the silent, repetitive, independent practice of short bass lines, brief melodic phrases, and four bar chord progressions, drilled in discrete isolation from their musical context, and introduced with the recitation of note names, either monotone or pitched. Finally, I must say that I did not anticipate hearing such a substantial amount of teacher talk to be devoted to correctives, technical directives, and classroom management protocols chanted as mantras.

**Structuring Movement in Loretta’s Kodaly classroom.**

None of the other teachers I observed or interviewed maintained a keyboard lab for their general music class or devoted so little time to communal musicking and students’ voices as in Dan’s did, but most of them evinced a comparable, if slightly more open, treatment of student bodies, still marked by the inhibition and constriction of movement. Except for Dan, the nine other teachers I interviewed all acknowledged the importance of large movement in the early childhood music classroom, but also conveyed that movement was a tense site of negotiation, where classroom boundaries for behavior were set.
Three teachers were notably more relaxed about these boundaries, and pressed for the need for students to collaborate freely during large movement, despite the perceived risks, as a way to learn self-control. As Wendy, a veteran teacher in a small-network, discipline-based preparatory academy explained:

I think you shouldn’t exclude group work just because you’re afraid to do it. It’s like the same thing about movement activities. Like yeah, some kids don’t know how to move. There’s the real possibility that kids can get hurt…. It’s one of those things that it’s compounded over time, like well, they’re just not going to get better at it. They don’t learn those social skills or they don’t learn how to talk to other people, how to collaborate. So it might not always be successful but you have to keep doing it so that eventually it will be. So you’ve got to tough it out.

Loretta and Beatrice, two teachers working in more progressive settings (one a community-based progressive charter school, and one a community-oriented tolerant academy) were both unequivocal and unabashed in their embrace of large movement and free forms of expression, allowing their students to move about the rug freely, in imaginative ways. Beatrice exhibited a lot of flexibility in her willingness to let children engage in games, large movement and partner dance activities. Loretta was the only teacher I observed who implemented a large movement activity in which students could creatively explore throughout the room, “toughing it out” (ie., negotiating space), uninhibited by requirements that they remain on a spot, in a line or circle, or within tightly defined spatial parameters. Loretta defended movement as imperative for young children:

My bigger kids—see, they don’t like to move as much. They want to, but they want to move on their own terms, they don’t want to move in a structured way. Whereas… the little ones, they like the folk dancing, they love the turns, and … they need it, especially for their little bodies… What is the rule?… a child shouldn’t sit longer than their age plus one. And so like, if they’re five, they shouldn’t be sitting more than six minutes. And so… I try to do that…. stand up, sit down, let’s go to the rug, let’s do this, sit up, stand up. And then it makes them move a lot more. The brain breaks is something that my school does.

Rather than constrain movement, Loretta viewed the classroom as a constraint on movement,
and, in line with her school, sought to provide frequent “brain breaks,” which in her early childhood music classroom took the form of small and large movement wiggling. Large movement figured so prominently in Loretta’s teaching practice that she proclaimed “open space” to be the “one thing I fight for” in terms of classroom accommodations.

Loretta explained that, during her job interview, she conveyed to the principal that she would be there to “teach music,” not simply enforce rules like a glorified “babysitter.” She boasted about the support she felt for her music class: “The principal loves what I’m doing… if she comes [in] and sees the literacy, and she sees them creating, and she sees them moving… she really likes that Kodaly says you should do things like 20 times before a kid can really be assessed on something.” Loretta remarked on how she aligned her instruction with the school’s mission:

The mission of [our school] is to prepare us to—we have to, like, memorize it—so… lifelong success, and being change to represent a vision, and so, just my humanity section, being able to work with other people and understand that everyone is not like you, but we all have a lot of similarities…. Lifelong success, and just being able to… enjoy music and be able to read and be able to write and be able to create. Because creating is a big part of life, so… I have them create some… rhythmic chants and stuff… like, write a chant about an apple using “ta” and “ta-ti”…. I feel like charter schools, especially, can really make kids, like, stay in this box…. I’m not against structure. I love structure. But there also has to be a time when there’s a little bit less structure and there’s a time for the child to just kind of use their brain and do things. And I feel like specials kind of give them that space to… be creative and be successful, and be a change-maker, and do things like that. My unit that I want to do with 5th grade is hip-hop: is it bad or not? And then have them at the end of the unit, create a hip hop or rap song, or chant, that speaks to something that they want to change in their community. So it could be trash, it could be gun violence, it could be whatever they want to do, they need to make a hip hop song about it. So just using music to kind of push that vision.

Interestingly, Loretta selectively adopted aspects of her school’s culture and discourse to suit her classroom. Here, progressive tendencies towards creation revolved around literacy as means of self-help, in which students become change-agents “to represent a vision,” or “act as effective change-makers in their communities.” Notice how Loretta’s statements regarding
community improvement and literacy are reflected in the school’s vision and curriculum:

Our vision is to develop students who have intellectual capacity, social capital and emotional strength of character to be personally successful and to act as effective change-makers in their communities.

[Our] curriculum is rooted in developing strong literacy and problem solving skills while empowering students to engage in critical analyses of history, community, political institutions and current events. Each curriculum area has a clear scope and sequence that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and includes consistent points of assessment to drive instruction. [Our] core curriculum areas are English Language Arts, Math, Humanities, Science, Spanish and Technology.

There was a noteworthy balance in the way that Loretta negotiated the tensions inherent in her attempts to manage movement and embed creativity into literacy activities. Loretta identified movement as a cornerstone of developmentally appropriate practice for young students in both her classroom and school, and yet, character education was the chief form of assessment in her classroom. Loretta consistently monitored students’ self-regulation, stillness of body during teacher-centered instruction, and adherence to loosely defined codes of conduct (as articulated in the “Rules Rap” that she would have students recite, or communicated by the school at large). That the principal appreciated the movement, but also appreciated the literacy and the repetition was a small indication of the ways that schoolwide classroom management practices and policies filtered down into the music classroom.

It is important to note the schoolwide protocols that were enforced during music class. Loretta ended each music class by having every student submit a self-reported score for their own behavior. Loretta then adjudged these, based on her observations of their movement and conduct. She then put these scores into a spreadsheet that was projected onto the smartboard. The public merit system based on these scores and the behavior intervention system of token boards instituted at her school—as opposed to anything pertaining to music—seemed to be the primary mode of assessing student achievement in Loretta’s music classroom.
Every teacher I interviewed articulated the need to be extra vigilant enforcing boundaries, especially during movement activities. Aside from Beatrice and Loretta, the other teachers I interviewed felt compelled to deal with large movement in a much more structured way: one teacher insisted students needed to stay on their spots, sitting or dancing upon an assigned small plastic disc; for others, students were expected stay in their places in a large group circle or in tight rows; one other teacher allowed her students to roam the rug as animals, but they moved about on their knees, seemingly regulating their behavior so as not to risk any transgression.

In contrast to Loretta, who offered one-minute “wiggle intervals,” and Beatrice, Raphael, and Frank, who, like Loretta, viewed movement as a break from the sedentary classroom norm, other teachers realized body comportment and posture were salient expectations set by the school, to be enforced during music class, and reinforced in the form of sung or chanted instructions. In a very visual and most acute way, movement allowed music teachers to judge their students’ conformity to behavioral standards and to assess them accordingly—movement was also often a fault line in the regulation of student bodies and enforcement of discipline.

Fiona’s jazz listening map cut short.

Nowhere was the enforcement of discipline more apparent than in the discipline-based preparatory academy that boasted a “highly structured setting,” where lesson plans were scripted, and classroom structure took on a mandated format. Ironically and disconcertingly, the script for Fiona’s music classes included ample opportunity for frequent admonishments, more than any other teacher I observed. Students were regularly instructed to write their names on the board and apply a color demotion (from green to yellow, or yellow to red) for infractions or disobedience, as part of a schoolwide “traffic light” behavior code.
Fiona’s first-grade and kindergarten classes were disciplined collectively with long stretches of enforced silence. The first-grade jazz lesson, which had been scripted by another teacher in the network, included more discipline than the two classes I observed that Fiona had scripted, and was abandoned towards the end of the session because students did not meet certain behavioral standards. Although I found the power dynamic rather oppressive for five, six, and seven-year olds, I must give Fiona the benefit of the doubt (it could have been a trying day; first grade might have been an especially challenging group), and acknowledge her nods to developmental appropriateness (see below), the diverse musical content she employed (which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter), and the clarity of her learning goals, behavior-based as they may have been.

Cooperation figured prominently in Fiona’s learning goals, a social/emotional skill set absent from most students’ experiences by her estimation:

One big goal of mine is really just having them work well together…. And our school—they don’t get recess or time to work things out, so specials team [ie., art, music and gym]… kind of… owns the responsibility of forming that teamwork/work-together element. So that’s what we try to do.

Unfortunately, in the classroom that I observed, the teamwork activity proved to be a point of contention. Fiona started her first-grade class with a vocal warm-up, with “pitch fingers,” instructing her students to echo “Stand up / Move your feet / I’m ready to sing” before having them match the direction of pitch in their singing by drawing in the air with their fingers, following a yellow ball that the teacher was manipulating up (higher), down (lower), and laterally (for students to maintain their pitch). Fiona had developed this technique to make the concept of pitch more “tangible” for her students, but also to align with the schoolwide practice of “silent teaching”:

… what you see in the music room you’re gonna see in… math. They want everything
very the same. So [in] my first year here, they were like, “Okay, the singing is going fine, but let’s break down the process of singing, cause that’s Common Core. Everything has a process. So I really thought about it and I was like, well I guess for little kids… it’s pitch, and listening for their pitch and if it can go up and down…. they can still imagine their voice. And I feel like, a lot of what I do I guess is trying to make something more tangible for them. Something more tangible. So doing the pitch finger just kind of came up, and the first time I used it, it helped so much.

The finger pitch activity seemed to achieve the latent intent of getting students to visualize and embody pitch on a vertical axis with small movement. The first graders hewed to their tightly-knit and prescribed spatial boundaries, dutifully following Fiona’s lead, before the whimsical lead part was given to a few choice students. As Fiona chanted in rhythm, “Student, come up,” the students responded in unison: “Go, student!” After the vocal warm-up, Fiona checked in with the needs of a few individuals, and then asked her students, “We started our unit on what?” They replied, “Jazz,” in unison. The lesson plan script featured a heavy dose of call-and-response like the above examples.

After singing “Good Mornin’ Blues,” students were asked to physically mime trumpeting, saxophone playing, and drumming along with a recorded version of the song. As children’s expressiveness became more open and outward, the rate of disciplinary actions began to increase. Fiona sternly counted down, “three-two-one,” for students to “sit back in scholar,” and then threatened twice to preemptively withdraw the “team activity” from the lesson docket. The lesson closed and culminated with a listening map activity, in which students grouped in small teams were to place pictures of instruments in a sequence to dissect the form and instrumentation in a jazz tune.

Beyond acquainting them with the instruments typically associated with jazz, it may have been slightly beyond the capacity of most first graders to collaboratively meet the main objective: to critically analyze the form of a jazz piece in real time. At each step of the way,
students failed to meet the high behavioral expectations in place: they were reprimanded for lacking a certain composure while Fiona distributed the activity cards, or simply because they laughed, creatively danced, or sang while the music played. Before the students could finish carrying out the task, the teacher became “so disappointed” with and “embarrassed” by their behavior that she shut down the activity and had the students sit in silence. The last five minutes were spent with the penalized students sitting on the floor. During this time, the teacher continued to enforce the silence, and for the last couple of minutes, chatted with a colleague at the door. Finally, when the students’ first-grade classroom teacher arrived to pick them up, Fiona publicly reported students’ misbehaviors, as the general teacher proceeded to notate which students were “on red.” This same practice was enforced for the kindergarten class, which also had its share of tears and demerits, and was likewise prevented from completing an activity involving instruments when Fiona became dismayed by their conduct.

It is useful here to turn to the school discourse to understand how behavior management was discursively configured, and how a school’s approach might suffuse (and, to an extent, overwhelm) the direction and format of a music class:

Our purposeful structure frees teachers and scholars from distraction…. “Structure” is not merely a discipline policy and schedule, but rather a core value that profoundly impacts the entire organization’s choreography. Scholars, teachers, and administrators maintain a high degree of order so teachers can focus on teaching and scholars can focus on learning. This order is achieved through consistent implementation of routines, instructional best practices, and behavior policies. Curriculum and instruction are highly structured to foster scholar achievement.

In addition to academic growth, our structure supports character growth. Positive behavior is modeled and vigorously reinforced by all staff and taught explicitly through weekly Character Education classes. “We’re not strict just to be strict,” explains [the] instructional coach. “It’s about character…. You look at the person who’s speaking because that’s what respectful adults do. You wait your turn to talk because that’s what’s fair to the others in the conversation. Insults are a ‘no excuse’ behavior because we need to be caring to others.” Rooted in a culture of fierce dedication to our scholars’ future, we require our scholars to meet the high behavioral standards required for both their continuing academic success and
their growth into citizens of impeccable character.

The school supplemented the above “approach” with an additional document, further explaining how “structure” supports the mission:

… scholars are held to extremely high standards that are strictly enforced. Teachers invest time imparting to their scholars both the expectations and the rationale behind these standards, which are enforced throughout the day using a consistent system of rewards/incentives and penalties/consequences.

“Structure” here implies a strict and stringent mode of authority standardized across the school, where young children are held to adult, professional standards of conduct and character. The above discourse makes the case that “structure frees teachers and scholars from distraction,” but in reality, the teacher was highly sensitive to student distractions. The extensive amount of attention paid to classroom management in school discourse was unquestionably evident in music classroom practice, its script (highly structured), its rewards (character pins accumulated for music game parties), and punishments (traffic light discipline systems that publicly chart student behavior as green/good, yellow/warned, and red/in trouble), not to mention the walls, which were adorned with posters about “No Excuses Behavior,” “Scholar Position,” and core character values in the school.

**Synergistic classroom supports devoid of music.**

Teachers like Dan, Loretta, and Fiona, who adhered to the behavior-based assessment strategies and consequences outlined by the school and reinforced in classroom iconography, expressed a strong affinity for the support they felt they had from their respective schools in terms of classroom management, whether that took the form of teaching aids, paraprofessionals, roaming guidance counselors, or simply by virtue of a smooth operation, characterized by consistency among administrators and teachers in following through on schoolwide protocols. Of import was
the fact that school support and synergy were rarely music specific, and instead conceived by teachers in terms of the consistency of behavior expectations outlined by the school.

Raphael, a first-year teacher in an all-boys tolerant academy network, made a connection between composure, leadership, and teamwork that echoed Dan’s discourse when discussing his attempts to regulate movement:

… the classroom management definitely has to come right back into it. I have to do a quick reset, or I give them the whole [gestures] and that means stop…. And we have to do a little reset, because obviously, and I tell them this all the time… “It’s ok to move.” Sometimes I feel like they feel they don’t know how to move or what they should be doing…. obviously, a kindergartener would take that inch, and take a damn yard. So argh, and like no! So I modeled this [claps a steady beat] … and the words I use, I use “professional” and “band.” So this is what a professional does, when I’m clapping to the music. This is how you… work together in a band. So I try to give them these things, because obviously they’ve seen me play, and they view me as professional, and, you know, as a band leader, so I’m like, “If you’re gonna be a band leader, you have to do this” [claps]. So obviously, they want these roles, right, band leaders, things like that. So that’s the way that I manage … when they get a little bit off-kilter, you know? So I do quick resets… but for the most part I try not to be too hard on that, cause again, it’s music that needs to move. I’m not gonna tell a kid who’s feeling the music, to not move. Obviously it needs to be in a manner that’s acceptable in the class. They can’t be—like I said, they have to be on their floor spots. And another thing, while they’re dancing to the “Just Dance” video [a fun activity to close class, rewarded for good behavior], they’re standing, they’re dancing, but the number one rule is make sure your feet are on that floor spot, which is very challenging. So obviously, [I] give incentives, like the guy who does the best job, I give incentives …. [like] the djembe drum. So I say …. “whoever does the best job of staying on their floor spot gets the djembe drum.” So obviously, they all want to stay on their floor spots.

Raphael’s restricted flexibility in terms of movement was restricted by his notions of acceptability that tied his classroom management to the school and its network. This network sought to cultivate in its young students the “character necessary to succeed academically, embrace responsibility, and become honorable citizens and courageous leaders.” When I first asked Raphael about his curriculum, he noted that it was “movement-based,” then immediately referenced his school’s network affiliation, and the network teacher in New Jersey who provided his curriculum. Without elaborating on the movement-based components of the curriculum,
Raphael went on to describe the “setup of the class”:

… the terminology and taxonomy and all those things, they have a set system. So I definitely have to use the taxonomy that they want to use, cause that’s in the whole entire network they use the same taxonomy.… So for example, basic stuff, STAR, just have your hands folded, eyes tracking the speaker… back straight. Then they also have something called HALLS, like this is the way we go transition. Halls is just: hands at your sides, back straight, eyes tracking forward. So these are all acronyms for things I’m not sure I could ever do, quite honestly…. So we use that a lot. And yeah, we use a system of tallies where there are negative consequences. And yeah, so it’s a lot of that, a lot of cold calls, call-and-response type techniques that they use a lot. So, yeah that’s pretty much I would say the gist of that on the basic level.

Raphael could not escape the fact that the curriculum was centered on behavior tracking and management. Yet, he attempted to chart a nuanced balance in his adoption of the school’s classroom management norms. Like Frank, another teacher in a tolerant academy network who attested that in his music classes, “no one’s getting sent out, no one’s getting in trouble,” Raphael acknowledged that the music class could be a respite from the stricter policies that take precedence in core subjects:

I do have to stick by—and I think it works—the system of classroom management. I think it works. I think it’s a little bit too strong and too authoritative, but it does work. But I try to… since I’m teaching music, I want them to feel that, not that it’s extra-curricular, but as somewhat of a mental break from their rigorous classroom.

For both Raphael and Frank, despite a slight reluctance to enforce school rules as strictly as possible, their schools’ focus on classroom management manifested in the behavior expectations in the music class. This convergence was reinforced by the fact that feedback from principals and administrators would focus on classroom management, and never address musical skills in the curriculum. Frank, who helped found his school, “built [the music] program up” around its “core values”—“act with integrity” and “achieve with greatness”—but remained unsure about how these values could “align with [his class] in a “musical way”: “…there [are] expectations and stuff… but in a musical way, I don’t think I’ve thought much about it.”
Frank felt strong support from his school leadership for “the specials” (extra-curricular and arts classes), and noted their commitment to arts as outlined in the network’s core values:

By providing our students a rich, well-rounded course of study from kindergarten through high school that develops children’s full academic, social, artistic, and ethical potentials, we are offering them the world. A liberal arts education develops students’ myriad curiosities and capabilities and prepares them for a life of meaning, purpose, fulfilment, and success.

Frank admitted that while he “always gets glows on… behavior or management, [there’s] nothing about [music] content.” The lack of feedback on music led Frank to seek out a partnership with Education Through Music (ETM), a cultural organization, to advise him on matters of music curriculum development and content, “because… I don’t want to go to guided reading P.D. I don’t do this…. I don’t want to go to this P.D. about math. It’s not going to help me.”

Raphael, the first-year teacher, similarly found himself with scant music content support, and noted that his school’s classroom management feedback came at its expense:

… a lot of the … feedback is mostly on classroom management, things of that nature. So as far as the content, I don’t get too much feedback on content, which, obviously, is sorely missed, because that’s why I’m trying to get into a music ed. program, to get better on my content knowledge, and what’s appropriate to teach at different grade levels.

It is interesting to note that one master’s degree option that Raphael was considering didn’t involve music pedagogy at all, but was rather offered through the network as way to certify teachers to become master teachers within three years, providing professional development and training to new network recruits. Raphael felt ambivalent about this course of study because he would not receive an education in music curriculum development and methods, but also considered how valuable it might be for his career possibilities within the network.

Of significance here is a trend that I noticed in other charter schools. Eight of the ten teachers I interviewed worked in network-affiliated schools, and four of these eight teachers
were the music coordinators for their network. It seems that once a school was confident in the classroom management skills possessed by a teacher, that teacher could then be given the responsibility of creating and coordinating the curriculum for other music teachers in the network. For Fiona, this meant scripting lessons; for Nicole, it meant collaborating with other music teachers in the network to conceptualize the scope and sequence of a K-8 music program; and for Frank it meant seeking out a partnership with ETM.

Paige, a music teacher and network content coordinator in a discipline-based preparatory academy, discussed how, like most other new teachers in the network, her first year was spent as teacher’s assistant, learning classroom management protocols and literacy methods. Like Raphael, Paige recounted how in her first year of teaching music in the network, there was a lot of training and feedback in classroom management. Paige decried the fact that by third grade, music is an elective, and that her students were consistently pulled out of music class and rehearsal for test prep, but she expressed appreciation for the availability of resources (she can get whatever she asks for), and, most notably, the “great feedback” she gets from her principal and administrators. Free to choose her own musical content, and now charged with overseeing musical content across the network, Paige saw feedback on classroom management as integral to her growth as a teacher, and, like many other teachers, infused music into behavior instruction by chanting directives and singing narrations. In the following extended excerpt, Paige describes, explains, and rationalizes the strict schoolwide expectations surrounding composure and how she enforced them in her playful but rigorous classroom:

… our classroom management style is very strict. The idea is that, they call it “joyful rigor” and the no-nonsense support system…. the way that I understand it is: “I love you so much that I’m not going to let you do less than your best.” And that’s kind of like at the heart of it and that’s where I can be on board with it. When all else fails, that’s what I try to keep in mind is that I care about you too much to not let you do your best. And so the idea is that you are giving extremely specific expectations and… if I give a direction,
I’m like, you know “Put down your instrument, lock your hands.” And it has to be like “lock your hands,” it can’t just be “put down your instrument,” it’s like you have to tell them exactly what to do with their bodies. And then I will call out three kids, it’s called “narrating” and so I’ll say, “So-and-so’s hands are locked, so-and-so’s hands are locked, so-and-so’s hands are locked.” And so… if you didn’t hear my direction, now you’ve heard it three more times, and if you still haven’t heard my direction, it’s called a “correction”… different schools call it different things. And so we have the checklist that the homeroom teachers hold and depending on the grade… the hierarchy of consequences is different. So, like, for kindergarten I think it’s three green, it’s a color system, so first one is a warning, second one warning, third one warning. Fourth one you’re on yellow and you take a three-minute time-out. And the idea is that these are supposed to be very neutral. So it’s not a “Haha, I caught you,” it’s just that’s a correction fix to what you’re doing. And so in theory, like, it should train the kids to just be like “Oops, that’s not what I’m supposed to be doing. I’m fixing it. Not a big deal.” What happens sometimes is that kids get really upset about it and that takes it to a different level, and it triggers kids I think sometimes. So it works for some kids, it doesn’t work for other kids. But that’s like at the heart of our management system, just very specific, the idea of getting 100%. So if I give a direction, it’s expected that 100% of my kids are following that direction, which goes back to the “lock your hands” or “put your eyes right on me” so if their eyes are like over here, that’s a correction, you didn’t have your eyes on me. It’s very, very specific. And then the idea of sweating the small stuff. If I’m picky about those little things, then the bigger ones won’t happen. It doesn’t always work that way, so we still have a lot of big behaviors in our classroom and we still have a lot of kids that I have to figure out other things to do with them. … that’s the basis of the program, then you like talk about rewards and things like that and it ends up being a lot of bribing, is kind of the other side of where that goes. So like I was saying with 100%, every class will have a 100% jar and so every time every single scholar follows the direction, we go “Oh, put marbles in the jar towards your party.” Or like they’ll ask us to do individual incentives so like I have points for individual scholars in every class, so like five points you get to take a five-minute keyboard time in, so things like that. So we do have a lot of incentives, which I also think kind of ends up being bribery at some point.

Notice the attention to detail that Paige provided regarding student composure, the parallels with zero tolerance policies like broken windows policing, and how the expectations surrounding etiquette are ascribed to the collective classroom management style of the school. I didn’t observe Paige teach a music class, but I think it is safe to assume that the narrations and correctives took up an abundance of time, time that would otherwise be spent making music. Paige expressed some unease about her adoption of a “compliance curriculum,” and added that she sometimes keeps a separate consequence hierarchy for certain classrooms, so as to minimize
the reporting of problematic behavior to homeroom teachers. Although she acknowledged “tracking student [musical] growth” through “informal assessments” of students singing back a melody or repeating a short rhythmic phrase, the measure of achievement and assessment in Paige’s classroom seemed to revolve around behavior more than music.

To varying degrees and in various ways, Dan, Fiona, Frank, Raphael, and Paige all expressed gratitude for the consistent school support they received in terms of classroom management. And except for Frank and Beatrice, all of the teachers I observed formally assessed students on their behavior and composure, sometimes more comprehensively than any music-based assessments. Numerous teachers, especially those who lauded the structure of discipline in their schools, cited classroom management as a glaring deficiency in their teacher training experiences, one that was filled in by their respective schools. In the next section, I discuss classroom management as a focal point of teachers’ beliefs relating to the inadequacy of their preparation to work urban settings.

Classroom Management in Music Teacher Education: Disjunction with Charter Schools

Just as student behavior was central to the music teaching practices observed in both discourse and reality, it was also a focal point of interviewees’ discussion of their musical educational backgrounds, the main influences on their educational beliefs, and the evolution of their pedagogy. Many teachers credited their student teaching supervisor or cooperating teacher with showing them the proverbial ropes, but still more discussed classroom management in relation to their training to be music educators. In particular, a coincidentally large (and unrepresentative) group of interview participants attended one teacher training institution, and described how their experiences there fomented a view of classroom management in tension with
developmentally appropriate efforts to sustain movement, creativity, and joy. Aside from one teacher who attended a Music Master’s program out of state, and one who completed a Master’s program in Music Education at a CUNY school, five other teachers with Master’s degrees in Music and Music Education—half of the sample of teachers—went to the same prominent, private university in NYC, an institution that I have attended and admire. For the purposes of this study, this institution will remain anonymous, and I will refer to it as Music Educator Prep (MEP).

Faculty in Music Education at MEP publish and teach required courses on democracy in the music classroom, creativity and problem solving in music education, and the artistic lives of young children, all evidence of the very progressive disposition of the program. All the teachers I interviewed told me that no experience could have prepared them to be a teacher quite like those formative, baptism-by-fire interactions with students, where fledgling teachers gained independence in the classroom for the first time. But the five interviewees who received their master’s degrees from MEP, while praising aspects of the program, were to varying degrees pointed in their criticism that courses at MEP focused too much on creativity, and lacked sufficient attention to classroom management and basic skill development. Although the progressive tendencies I observed among Caty, Nicole, Frank, and Beatrice (and that were articulated by Wendy) no doubt owed to their inculcation into a constructivist paradigm, exhaustively explored at MEP, teachers’ praise for the program was tempered by the sense that it was not practical enough. In the following, I discuss how the experiences and perspectives gained from teacher training permeated classroom practice.
Traditional and “radical” approaches to improvisation in Caty’s music class.

Based on level of praise, I gathered that Caty, a jazz-trained singer working in a network-affiliated tolerant academy, probably benefitted most broadly from her education at Music Educator Prep, where she was first exposed to the wonder of infinite improvisational possibilities in jazz, and to student-centered models of teaching and learning. Her jazz voice teacher implored her, “‘You need to not be such a singer, and really think about the kinds of sounds you can create when you sing.’… He pushed me to listen to different people and do different things.” Caty viewed her freedom and discoveries at MEP in contrast to her more “traditional” education at Queens College, in classical music, musical theater, and music education:

… Queens is… very traditional, like, “this is what we do in school.” And MEP is way more radical… like… do we even need to teach kids how to write down music?… How do we get everybody involved in the ensemble?... We never talked about writing lesson plans or anything like that. …[F]or me it was eye-opening because it was so [laughs] different than what I had learned, but I still think that there’s important things, that I’m so glad that I had very different educations, because that way there’s so many things for me to pull from, because there are really great things that come from the traditional, but there’s a lot of really great things that come from the radical. So I think I learned about… what being a teacher is… and at MEP it was, like, more about being a compassionate teacher, like these people’s needs. But it’s hard, that balance—striking that balance. Like, I have to keep moving, but I also know, like, yesterday that girl that was pulling my puppets off my shelf [laughs]… She was so tired, she was crying because she was so tired. But… even if you’re tired you shouldn’t be doing that.

Caty’s reflection on her own education and teaching was remarkable for its candor and for the fact that, irrespective of my interview, the tensions between classroom management and creativity (and between traditional and progressive pedagogical approaches) seemed to be at the forefront of her mind as she critically considered her own practice. Many teachers attested to their apprehensiveness adapting progressive practices to classroom realities, but Caty avoided the trap of assessing students solely on their behavior by methodically keeping track of students’ musical participation—her rubrics were designed to evaluate students’ tone and tone choice in
vocal and instrumental improvisation. It was clear that Caty contemplated this dynamic in her daily praxis, where instead of being problematic, the intersection of “traditional” and “radical”/progressive pedagogies was filled with possibility. Still, despite Caty’s own adeptness negotiating tensions between freedom and structure, she saw this conflict playing out in her school, and saw fit to keep some philosophical distance from the school leadership.

When I asked Caty how her music program aligned with the school’s mission and vision, she was noticeably ambivalent, and cited mixed messages from her administration. Caty took issue with the disjunction between the school’s discourse/brand and its practices:

So, I’m not really sure how to answer that question right now because we are in a period of transition…. I tried to align with what we’re doing, but I’m not sure where we’re going… In one of your emails [you] said… “this is a progressive school.” So, I don’t really know if that’s true…. if that’s really the case. I mean, honestly, I don’t know how progressive I am. So, I feel like in some ways I am and in some ways I’m not…. you have to provide boundaries to kids…. think that this school is trying to find its voice, and I’m not really sure if that in the end is what it’s going to be…. We were more progressive last year, and I see us becoming less and less progressive as we go on, [with] less teacher freedom…. I feel like we’re definitely more progressive than other charter networks, but maybe not all charter schools, because like, the smaller schools are doing their own thing. But like as far as like major networks you may have read about in the Times recently, we are more progressive…. [But] I don’t know how long we’ll be progressive. I think test scores sort of influence what happens in the school…. We’ll see.

Amidst considerations of the increasing emphasis on tests, mandated uniforms, and deans that would roam the hallways and enter the music class to reinforce behavior consequences, Caty rightly questioned the progressive credentials of her school. On the other hand, perceiving mixed messages from her leadership and administration about the overall direction and philosophical orientation of the school, Caty expressed a disdain for the lack of consistency of structure in the school. Caty deftly negotiated these tensions within her classroom on the basis of her own pedagogical instincts and commitment to ongoing professional development, but, skeptical of the school’s vision, she did not feel supported. Caty’s voracious dedication to professional
development (reading journals, collecting materials, and attending conferences and workshops on music education and inclusive curriculum design) was a testament to her continuous efforts to improve her craft. This, and the positive influences of her MEP education, seemed to stanch some of the dissatisfaction Caty felt with her school’s diffuse approach.

Inspired by MEP, Caty brought improvisation and compassion to the forefront of her classroom in developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive ways. The songs and activities she incorporated into her music classes reflected a synergy between her own enthusiasm and sensibilities, the surrounding Harlem community, and her students’ West African backgrounds (this synergy will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter). More pertinent here is the extent to which her classroom structure remained sensitive to the dispositions of most young children—her lessons entailed a lot of movement, they moved fast, there was variety, and she was not preoccupied with insubordination. There were, to be sure, frequent, gentle classroom reminders, and she sent one misbehaving student out of the classroom to sit with a dean in the cafeteria. But these actions served the structure and sequence of the lesson plan, which covered a lot of ground and engaged the vast majority of students. Discipline was more carrot than stick, with instrument-playing dangled as a reward:

... kids love instruments. They will do about anything for an instrument, and last year I was like, I don't think we play instruments enough, so that's been an effort of mine, to play instruments as much as possible, so I look for that. Basically, in a 45 minute period, I’m looking for instrument playing, there has to be movement, there has to be exposure to different kinds of music.

Caty’s compassion also manifested in her relation to her students, which was marked by sensitivity, and consistency with flexibility:

... sometimes I try things, I don’t know if it’s gonna be the right thing, I try not to hurt anyone…. [With one non-participating student] I said something about how like, “Oh, I didn’t even want to come here myself today. Let’s just find something to make you
happy. And then she was like, oh, the keyboard makes me happy. And I’m like, [snaps]
“Darn it! That's the thing you choose? We’re not doing that today…

Caty consciously embraced aspects of MEP’s “radical” side in terms of both musical content and aspects of behavior management. She sought ways to adapt jazz improvisation to a class structure that would musically engage and assess students, while attuned to their developmental needs. My impression from observations of other teachers who attended MEP was that they had all internalized the developmental importance of movement, creativity, and joy. But whereas Caty simply acknowledged MEP to be lacking in structure, other teachers deemed their education much more wanting. They labeled classroom management an essential skill for working with their students that was crucially missing from their experience at MEP, owing to its philosophical preoccupation with creativity.

Urban music education advocacy in Nicole’s well-tempered classroom. Nicole, a network music coordinator at an all-girls discipline-based preparatory academy, explicitly alluded to MEP’s inability to grapple with the realities of an “urban environment,” meant to connote the behavioral challenges that are presumably more likely to arise in schools serving economically distressed populations. Nicole, a classically trained opera and oratorio singer, saw herself as a steadfast advocate of music education for disadvantaged youth in low-income communities. But she reflected on an experience at MEP bereft of practical instruction in how to work in such communities:

I grew up in a low-income… mixed-income community… and one thing that I felt was very important for my community was a strong music education program. Band, choir, experiences like that. And it was a way for students to identify through hard times. And I saw that that didn’t happen very often … in low-income communities. And that was being… silenced, or just didn’t exist anymore. And I felt like that was always the population I wanted to be working in, is low-income communities… and… something I was very passionate about—the equity… there should be arts education no matter how much a person makes… or no matter where a person lives. You should have the experience. And it might not be what you love and it doesn’t have to be what you love,
but you should be able to know about and you should have the experience of it… and have that opportunity to be able to express yourselves or be part of the artistic medium no matter where you come from.

Nicole’s social, political, and moral commitments to music education made her “very adamant” about procuring a student-teaching placement in a low-income school, and building on what she already considered to be her already “pretty strong music teacher” practice, but felt that MEP met neither of these needs:

There was a lot of great stuff in terms of philosophy… very little in terms of urban education…. I took some classes in the Peace Ed. department in non-violent education, and I found that… some of the courses I took with them were incredibly interesting… about race and identity… so incredibly fascinating…. [But] I don’t feel that the MEP education really prepared me for working in an urban environment…. I have to say… the practical experience…. the student-teaching experience I had…. it was a struggle to find a student teaching experience in a low-income school…. Teaching in the inner-city schools, in the urban schools, is hard work…. Teaching about creativity is great, but … if you don’t have strong management, you’re done. And all that is talked about at MEP is creativity, and letting people express themselves, and… I don’t think you can express yourself until there’s a really strong structure in place.

Nicole cited structure as a prerequisite for creative expression. On her own volition, Nicole found a good teacher in a low-income school who would help her further develop a management style suited to the needs of her students in the South Bronx. Rather than stressing consequences, Nicole focused her attention on the organization of time and space, integrating movement and music literacy into the structure of every class:

… we have this very strict routine, and part of the beginning routine is… we do walking to different rhythms, or moving to different rhythms, so that they… walk… the quarter-note rhythm; tip-toe is the eighth-note rhythm; they have a rest, right; we just put in a slide, which is the half note rhythm. And so one thing we just started with K and 1 is, okay, “Here’s my rhythm, you dictate it for me. What is my… what rhythm did I just play?”… And having them be able to, like, come up with, like, “Oh, that was tip-toe, tip-toe, walk, walk.” … this is dictation. It’s rhythm dictation. It’s nothing, but [they're] totally engaged in figuring out the rhythm dictation… because it has movement. So it’s like… “What is most engaging to my students?”
Nicole’s well-tempered classes included large movement, singing, performing, and practicing different notated rhythmic patterns with xylophones in small groups. Most remarkable was that even for activities that did include explicit directions, all the students rigidly adhered to expectations surrounding movement. Nicole did not have to provide many directives or correctives because her students were so immersed in the class’ structure that they knew exactly what to do, and what was coming next. This structure owed to facets of the school that Nicole praised, like the “organizational stability” outlined in the school mission and core character values of “merit” and personal “responsibility,” but, more crucially, it was Nicole’s sequencing that set the tone and pace.

The sequence started with a requirement for lines to be straight and quiet before students entered. As students set foot in the class, they were greeted by a collection of movement activities, songs (many from John Feirerabend), and notation exercises. Whether on a rotating basis or through full participation, every student was given an opportunity to sing hello, lead her peers in a motion, wiggle when her birthday month was named, propose an animal to emulate in movement, identify a solfege pattern, create a “rhythmic sentence” using printouts of quarter- and eighth-notes, suggest a theme for a bilingual song about community, and play percussion instruments (both pitched and unpitched). While the specific songs and activities would change over the course of the year (Nicole stated that songs would remain in a unit anywhere from a few weeks to a full season), the structure and sequence of the class was kept intact, a process fixed from the first days of school. In contrast to the open-ended, abstract, musical exploration that MEP might have recommended, Nicole set specific parameters for each activity. Nicole explained how she methodically instituted guidelines for movement early on:

…at the beginning of the year we create our bubble space… I spend a few lessons [where] we blow up our bubble and we talk about a bubble and … how bubbles look and
how they feel and how they break, you know, and words that describe bubbles, they float, you know. And then we blow up our bubbles and we move in our bubbles in space, and we learn that if we bang into somebody, we break their bubble. And we don’t want to pop anybody’s bubble, we don’t want to pop our own bubble, you know, we get hurt when we pop our bubbles. So when we move through space, we need to keep that bubble, and we practice that. And actually I’ve been working with a teacher at our boy’s school who [is] afraid to have the boys move because they’re so, like, volatile, and I was, like, you need to spend several lessons on… your bubble space… She’s like, “Oh, your girls are so good!” And it’s like, “No, my girls are trained… they know that’s what’s expected, right? And so, so it’s like as soon as I say it’s bubble space, they know what that means, and… it means I have to kind of back away from the other kids and make sure I have my own space, right? … we don’t hold hands in our bubbles, because you know, if one person falls the other person falls. So it has to be that we’re in our own separate bubbles. And you know, if they’re being unsafe in their bubble, they need to sit out. So yeah, I think that’s, for the most part, I mean there’s always moments where I have kids like running and I’m like, oh… But if it gets to the point where it’s going to be dangerous… then that kid needs to sit out for a while, right?

Through the metaphor of a bubble, Nicole set extensive, detailed parameters for student movement. It was no wonder, then, that all her students chose to kneel for their free animal exploration—they had been conditioned in such a way that more sweeping movements would be considered inappropriate. Movement was circumscribed so as to instill in students a structure that could set boundaries as well as foundations for exploration, a creativity moderated by self-regulation. Over the course of two observed classes, one student had her drum taken away, and another student was warned about her behavior and the possibility that she might have to leave the class and sit with the teacher’s aid. Aside from these interventions, though, there was very little teacher talk about student behavior, and lots of movement, singing, and independent practice. Nicole aligned the structure of class with the structure of her musical objectives, so that she maintained order while also assessing musical competence (ie., using simple choreography to assess whether “they know the difference between quarter notes and eighth notes”). This nitty-gritty structure—setting limits on student movement and dictating the pace, transitions, and flow of a lesson—was the ever-important framework within which Nicole could develop appropriate
and responsive instructional strategies to teach children to read music and to get them singing, her two main goals. And it was precisely that sense of structure that was missing from her experience at MEP.

**Creativity and classroom management in tension at Music Educator Prep.**

For Wendy, Frank, and Beatrice, opinions about MEP were decidedly more mixed. Wendy admired the interdisciplinary aspects of the program and its integration of technology and the other arts:

… involving dance and art and storytelling… I thought that was very applicable to what I was doing to try to tie in—you know, multiple areas into music, which… is what you [have to] do now because a lot of programs don’t even have… art … in the schedule, so it’s fallen to you to sort of expose kids to almost anything related to the arts.

However, Wendy remembered feeling prepared to teach in a Bronx school, not because of MEP, but because of her undergraduate training in education. She expressed concern for her peers who had not received the “practical classroom stuff”:

There were a couple of courses that I took that I thought were great information and more practical than others…. At the time I was working, but there was a hiring freeze in the city; a lot of the… music majors… had no education experience…. I had an education background with my undergrad, so I was a little more prepared than they were. And I was thinking, “Man, they’re going to throw these other guys [and] gals in the schools with no experience and no real … practical classroom stuff. So I felt bad for them…. It’s going to be a real wakeup call when they’re actually in a school, because … it was sort of Ivory Tower. They were talking about a lot of these big concepts but not talking about the day-to-day what’s going on in a classroom or what to expect… how specifically would you work with that [challenging] student; or not talking about how you have a lot of kids with special needs in your classes and how you need to accommodate those students and differentiate. It was more these larger concepts, you know, talking about a child-centered classroom, and you know, that’s great and those things are really important, but you also need to know about classroom management.

Like Wendy and Caty, Frank praised aspects of his MEP education, but understood that a basic component of teacher preparation was missing. He built rapport with his students by listening for their tastes in music and incorporating choice songs (sometimes adapted for lyrical
appropriateness). He invested trust in his students by letting them explore the listening and keyboard stations independently on a rotating basis, but did not think that it would be appropriate to allow his students total freedom. Overall, Frank diverged from traditional teacher-centered paradigms, but within certain limits. In the following extended narrative, Frank explains both the promise and limitations of MEP’s approach:

MEP was really great. It was a great school. I’m sure the name got me way farther than anything else. I definitely learned a good amount of stuff. I think the biggest thing I learned… was [that] concepts within music are fluid. Like, tempo is the concept but music can get fast and get slow…. And that’s what we want to teach the students, that music can be this and it can be that…. At the same time, Columbia was like really research-based. I don’t think I walked away with as much behavior management techniques as I would have liked. Although I’m not sure anybody there could really teach you that… I’m not sure at all if they can really teach you that anywhere—how to… deal with certain situations or… stubborn kids…. [T]hey had this very like, “let’s just let the kids figure out”…. We put a bunch of instruments in the middle of a carpet and kids would come in and then a bunch (20 grad students) would sit around and watch these kids, like, play with these instruments. And it was… totally hippy dippy and, like, not concrete enough, because that would not fly here. How could I make that work? Really cool, like really awesome for discovering sound… with… a few kids. But no way can I apply that anywhere forward here. Even if I wanted to. And I probably would like it. It would be great to let these kids explore marimba for 15 minutes, but they didn’t talk about how to make it happen…. I mean 30 kids exploring like that. I think it would be, as long as you had enough resources, it would be cool. But then it would be a noise thing…. It would be a lot of noise and it might get a little crazy, and then, you know, cleaning all that up, packing it all up, probably take you most of the class. You know, it’s just not worth the time. And we’re not really getting anything out of it either. Cool for them to play, cool for them to explore. I’m all for it. But when it comes down to it, I really need to give them something that they can like actually do and actually play. So MEP was good. I don’t remember too much of the pedagogy we learned…. it was very… adult focused. It wasn’t very kid focused. That’s what I felt.

In the above, Frank reiterated that his contexts, both the school and its student population, would not allow for the types of activities promoted by MEP. Frank’s technology-rich classroom demanded consistent, attentive monitoring and although he handled this task quite deftly, he alerted me to the fact that he was still making a conscious effort to reorganize the space and instruments. The main thrust of his class that I observed, aside from some fun student-
centered rhythm exercises and games, was to facilitate the rehearsal and eventual performance of various pop songs, with six or so students on pitched and unpitched percussion instruments, one on a keyboard, one on an iPad, one on a computer, and the rest singing. Frank sought to improve on the way he was leading, structuring, and preparing these performances, especially with regard to important details that were missing from MEP’s procedures, like procuring and putting away instruments. Despite the fact that almost all his students were actively engaged, and that he commanded a mutual and congenial respect from them, Frank still knew that there were limits to his ability to conduct a large group of students on many different instruments, and so he was skeptical of the prospect that young children might creatively, respectfully, and dutifully explore instruments as adults might, and as MEP proposed. Like Nicole, Frank thought that MEP’s creative approach was ill-suited to his urban student population, in particular: “I’m not sure the kids in this neighborhood could get into that as much as I’d like them to…. [It’s] not something that we’re going to take too much time for because [the] stuff [we’re doing] is just so much more fun. You know, let’s have fun, let’s make this fun.”

A common theme among MEP critics was that its pedagogy might work seamlessly inspiring joyful engagement and creativity in adults trained in music; however, these teachers believed that children would not be able to access this creativity because they were not given the tools to facilitate freeform musical exploration in young children. Without concrete goals, solid background knowledge, or clear logistical procedures, exploration-based activities, instead of creating opportunities for joy and creativity, would fall prey to disorganization and chaos. Moreover, such activities would not likely go over well with charter school administrations intent on structure, composure, order, and standardized objectives. Frank’s students were exceptionally engaged in games and popular music performance, and joy and creativity were
prominent features of his classroom practice. But for Frank, MEP’s process-driven approach offered too much freedom and not enough “fun” for classroom contexts.

As a musician, Beatrice was excited to experience a new measure of creative freedom at MEP, but like Nicole, was dismayed by the “limited” student-teaching placements, and, like Frank, saw instruction as more adult-focused than child-focused. According to Beatrice, Music Educator Prep:

… had a way of grounding music education in creativity and improvisation and composition that was very, very effective with a bunch of highly trained grad students, but didn’t really equip you to teach children… It only worked on us… as grad students because we had skills. So to ask… a group of kids with very little… really limited music making experience, and so to say to them, like, “Create a rhythm,” which in the context of school and a classroom, they couldn’t really do… it turned out that some of these kids… might beat box or start tapping on their own… it just didn’t translate to the classroom. They hadn’t had that built in… I think kids need musical experiences—to learn how to make music you need to know some—you need to know some music. And so MEP didn’t teach us how to… build a foundation [on] which you could do all these cool things.

Nicole, Frank, and Wendy all critiqued MEP’s philosophy as somewhat contrived, lacking clear and explicit instruction in classroom management techniques. On the other hand, Beatrice, the only progressive charter school teacher in the sample, positioned creativity and improvisation as out of reach not because children lacked social/emotional skills like self-discipline and impulse control, but because children lacked certain musical skills. This position melded with the mission of Beatrice’s school, to ensure a progressive education “embedded in meaningful real-world contexts.”

It is important to note that Frank and Beatrice were the only interviewees who did not discuss or exhibit behavior management as a prominent feature of their teaching practice. Beatrice seemed to blame MEP for not acknowledging that young children need a musical foundation of skills and songs, and for not providing an understanding of how to bridge or
“translate” children’s nascent musical skills (e.g., tapping, beat boxing) to the classroom context (i.e., “do all these cool things”). Students’ lack of specific background knowledge in tandem with an inability to connect with the musical lives students led outside the classroom would no doubt hamper instruction, but they would also lead to behavioral issues, since students would not be able to appropriately engage in activities. Conceptions of musical skill development and repertoire were very important considerations for this study and will be discussed in the following chapter.

Cadenza

For the most part, the above testimonies and observations point to the fact that classroom management and student behavior were of fundamental concern to most of the music teachers who participated in this study. In interesting and mostly positive ways, music teachers managed their classrooms by intricately melding their teaching practice with their school’s conventions, codes, and discourse surrounding behavior management and character education. Except for Caty, all the teachers in the study noted a significant level of compatibility between their classrooms and schools in terms of behavior management. Classroom management constituted the chief form of support that music teachers felt they received from their schools, but these supports never included pedagogical concerns specific to music. Conversely, teachers made known their profound disappointment with the acute dissonance they felt between their teacher education and the behavior management protocols that were instituted in their schools and adopted for the sake of effective and efficient instruction. While classroom management techniques were notably absent from Music Education Master’s programs, they were the primary focus of teacher education programs affiliated with charter school academy networks.
The three teachers in this study who did not have a Master’s degree in Music Education received their teaching credential through their charter school and held (or were under consideration for) a curriculum coordinator position. For Raphael, Fiona, and Paige who underwent school-sanctioned training without any music pedagogy, their networks entrusted them to train new teachers or coordinate a curriculum, irrespective of content, because these teachers had presumably adopted and internalized the school disciplinary codes. This precedent, unique to charter schools, indicated the status of music in the broader curriculum, clearly below character education and compliance in the hierarchy of importance.

In the stricter settings of discipline-based preparatory academies, and in three of the five tolerant academies, there was little apparent distinction between the disciplinary code enforced by the school and the teacher. In the few cases where obedience and composure seemed so salient as to outweigh music learning, it was not only the students who were expected to comply, but also the teachers, mandated to systematically adhere to their school’s procedures, rewards and punishments. Although, music teachers were generally free to choose their own content, music instruction in academies was, to various extents, subsumed under the rubric of behavior management, and became a synergistic vehicle for promoting the character education goals of the school.

One would be hard-pressed to begrudge heavy-handed approaches to discipline and restrictions on movement as developmentally inappropriate without acknowledging real world classroom contexts, and teachers’ effectiveness executing schoolwide behavior protocols. From the vantage point of educators, well-established disciplinary structures that were consistently enforced by the school were seen as positive supports, and willingly adopted to meet the challenges of music classroom management. From a developmental perspective, this author
viewed harsher modes of instruction and draconian dance restrictions to be inappropriate in early childhood, especially with respect to movement, creativity, and joy. However, given teachers’ overall efficacy, not to mention general parental support for discipline, aspects of the compliance curriculum could be constructed as culturally responsive—charter schools take on more militaristic forms in communities where there is a perceived need for more order and structure. That said, the lack of awareness amongst most music teachers regarding students’ cultural competence and communities’ funds of knowledge indicated that cultural responsiveness was not an organizing principle for school discipline in the music curriculum.

Whether singing directives, reinforcing behavior mantras through rap, enforcing correctives, limiting large movement, praising their school’s support structure, or by articulating the disjunction between teacher preparation and experience as a teacher in a NYC charter school, interviewees responded in tangible ways to the discourse of their schools’ missions regarding character education, even when their testimony expressed a degree of resistance. It was not my initial intention to rehash longstanding debates about classroom control and the methods of discipline, but these factors proved salient, if subtextual, in discourses articulated by both schools and music teachers. Before being able to investigate musical practices and repertoire from a sociocultural lens, this study had to reckon with the assertive discipline and expectations of compliance imposed by many charter schools, academies and networks in particular. The next chapter investigates musical features of teachers’ practice and discourse.
Chapter 11
Repertoire, Praxis, and Repertoires of Practice

“It don’t mean a thing, if it ain’t got that swing.” – Duke Ellington / Irving Mills

Sonata

In this chapter, I discuss the ways that teachers conceptualized their repertoire choices—the compositions, skills, and activities that prevailed in their music classrooms. Beyond mere song selections, repertoire is conceived broadly here, encompassing 1) the content and genre of the music; 2) the musical goals embedded in teachers’ practice; and 3) the student/community repertoires of practice acknowledged or ignored by educators. Interviews were analyzed, and, where possible, triangulated with observations in an effort to investigate the extent to which these three repertoires—genre/canon, teacher praxis, and students’ cultural practices—revealed elements of developmental appropriateness and cultural responsiveness. In their practice and discourse, teachers articulated and delineated notions of musical and cultural literacy that swayed the curricular disposition of their classroom repertoires in subtle and sometimes taken for granted ways, thereby reinforcing standard, status quo conceptions of curriculum.

Just as the last chapter sought to answer research questions three and four, this chapter approaches the same questions, but from a different thematic perspective:

In different types of charter schools with K-3 music instruction, is the music instruction culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate?

How do charter school music teachers conceptualize the cultural responsiveness and developmental appropriateness of their practice, and how does this relate, if at all, to the discourse and the context of the schools in which they work?

While the previous chapter’s analysis focused on classroom management, this chapter focuses on the musical features of pedagogy and curriculum, and, given teachers’ different ideas about cultural responsiveness and developmental appropriateness, responds to the following sub-
questions:

- What are the different ways that charter school music teachers musicalize their students?
- What does the music curriculum consist of? How diverse is the repertoire?
- How do music teachers in charter schools conceptualize the musical features of their educational practice?
- What is the teacher’s philosophy towards music, music literacy, and music education?
- How important are rhythm, movement, play, and playing and reading music within this philosophy?

In contrast to findings from the previous chapter, there was not much evidence that the musical content selected and curated by teachers correlated with the discourse or pedagogical orientation of the schools in which they worked. Some teachers admitted that their principals were especially supportive of literacy goals that aligned with the schoolwide literacy program, but in general, music teachers were afforded complete freedom to decide on musical aspects of their curriculum. Even when affiliated with a network, teachers in the sample like Fiona (who implemented scripted lessons, wrote approximately 75% of the scripts, and oversaw curriculum) were either encouraged or formally enlisted to supply their musical content to other music teachers in their network. What mattered to charter school leadership was not the genre, or whether kids were learning to play instruments, sing songs, or read music; what mattered most to them seemed to be whether the music teacher was engaging students in ways consistent with the behavioral expectations set forth by the school. Nevertheless, these were music classes, and music was the subject.

Although generally bound by their schools’ prescriptions for classroom management structure, teachers brought their own musical backgrounds and preferences to bear as they considered philosophical, historical, developmental, and cultural aspects of music curriculum development and lesson planning. A wide variety of musical backgrounds amongst teachers in
the sample evinced a wide array of musical sensibilities, pedagogical dispositions, and attitudes about cultural and musical literacy. Most teachers couched their content goals in terms of exposure, hoping to reveal to students a world of music and diversity of genres that they would not otherwise be able to encounter or access. Despite variation, the very notion of exposure was tied to teachers’ musical backgrounds and preferences, and tempered by an underlying conformity. That is to say, most teachers accommodated and grappled with the standards and canons of more conventional modes of music education, even when allowing for more culturally responsive content.

Music teachers validated their curricular choices on the basis of presumed, shared ideas about the appropriateness of instruction in a particular host of skills and set of songs. Teachers used similar rationalizations for their philosophies and repertoires, even though the skills and songs taught by different teachers could be qualitatively different. Teachers who resisted standard conceptions of music literacy and sought to further expand the musical canon in their classrooms nevertheless incorporated these conventions in their praxis. Whether teachers focused on singing technique, improvisation, or musicianship, there was a collective understanding that encounters with literacy and a steadily widening, but relatively set, “multicultural” variety of music were integral, if conflicting, components of a culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate curriculum. It was often the case that African American musical traditions, namely jazz and blues, accounted for this variety, additively attached to extant precepts of canon, with teachers relying on a standard repertoire for both classical and non-classical music.

The three main sections of this chapter recursively correspond to the three interconnected repertoires outlined above—canon, teacher praxis, student/community cultural practice. I report on deductive themes that emerged from interview questions on the intersections of genre
diversity, conceptions of music literacy, developmental appropriateness, and cultural responsiveness. In two significant ways, teacher praxis revealed notable dissonance with the theoretical lens of this study: 1) jazz seemed additively appended to curricula, and was often approached reductively in comparison to other content; 2) most teachers in the sample did not consider the musical backgrounds and cultural competence of their students as a potential site for content selection and curriculum development. Not all teachers provided evidence of the two above findings—teachers conceptions of musical and cultural literacy, as well as their praxis, revealed a wide variety of beliefs and approaches—but their discourse nevertheless revealed patterns of thought and action.

The following section deals with genre, and details the fraught and limited, yet established, place of jazz in Caty, Nicole, Loretta, Fiona, Paige, Raphael, and Frank’s early childhood music curricula. Although jazz was not a focal point of interest for all of these teachers, their discourse and praxis revealed the ways in which they sought to accommodate and acculturate jazz to larger learning goals. The subsequent discussion delves more deeply into some of the specific tensions and aesthetic considerations regarding rhythm and vocal intonation that arose for various teachers as they adapted jazz features to their objectives surrounding music literacy, musicianship, and singing. Although the main sections herein are organized according to canon, teacher praxis, and cultural responsiveness, the interrelated nature of these themes demanded an integrated discussion. As a result, the section on jazz canon that follows integrates relevant facets of teacher discourse related to their conceptualizations of music literacy and their students’ cultural competence, themes that provide the respective and recursive focus for the second and third sections of this chapter.
Exposition – The Jazz Unit: Enduring Forms of Marginalization

The findings reported in the previous chapter, at the nexus of student movement and classroom management issues, were unexpected because the initial goals of my study were to focus on repertoire and pedagogy—specifically, how teachers spoke about these two features of classroom practice, and how these features modulated one another. I had expected academies to maintain an overt predilection for European musical practices by rigorously focusing on music literacy and classical music, to the exclusion of African American musical styles. To my surprise, all the classes I observed made explicit reference to black musical forms—many were either commencing or in the throes of a jazz unit, evidence of the relatively secure place of jazz in the early childhood curriculum for these NYC teachers. However, in form and function, these jazz units revealed the curious manners in which marginalization endures. Although jazz and blues were recognized as significant contributions to American culture, the different ways that they were taken up in the classroom reflected various forms of consolidation, in which the music was understood in reductive or transmuted ways, or isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Both substantively, and in its orientation to larger curricular goals, the appropriation of black musics for classroom use exposed perceptions about cultural literacy and assumptions about the normative goals of music education that in some cases obliquely but firmly positioned inherited canonical conventions over the black forms under consideration. In contrast to teachers who were somewhat resistant to melding early childhood music literacy skills with jazz rhythms (ie., Nicole, Fiona, Raphael, and Loretta), were teachers who sought to integrate them (ie., Paige and Caty), as well as teachers who largely avoided conventional literacy norms (Dan and Frank).
Caty: Jazz improvisation, swing, and syncopation.

For many teachers, jazz instruction presented a quandary in its relation to music literacy goals and desired vocal technique. Nicole and Caty, two of the teachers that I interviewed and observed, were dedicated to intimate engagement with black musical forms—from circle and handclapping games to vocal and instrumental jazz improvisation. These white teachers sought to use black musics as a vehicle to inspire their students, who were mostly of color, to develop their cultural identities alongside musical skills. Nicole placed images of iconic women musicians around her classroom. Though Billie Holliday and Carmen Miranda were not studied as part of the musical curriculum, Nicole wanted to make sure that her all-girls classroom in the Bronx had female composers and performers to look up to. Caty lined her walls with a plethora of posters on big musical concepts, vocabulary, diverse musical icons, and featured a map of the world, with pins representing all the different places from which musical content was derived.

Nicole and Caty were also committed to teaching their students how to read and write in staff notation, seeing the achievement of this goal as most crucial to developing the musicianship skills that would ideally carry over into a middle school band program. However, Nicole and Caty handled these goals differently—despite clear objectives, a tight structure, and effective teaching, musical content and literacy skills could, at times, be in conflict. The syncopated, swinging rhythms and swooping, sliding singing that students performed during jazz improvisation activities were often kept distinct from literacy skill development and seemed to be at odds with the teachers’ conceptions of proper vocal technique.

Caty’s pedagogical and genre choices most authentically related to her background in jazz and her goal of promoting improvisation skills. While elaborating on her main goals for
kindergarten and first grade, Caty went beyond steady beat competency and music literacy, as she explained:

I [want them] be able to scat sing with freedom; I want them to improvise; I want them to compose. And [since everybody wants to sing with the puppets…. I have the puppets for the scat, [be]cause I know, any kid who’s shy, even if they’re shy, they’re like, ‘Uh there's a puppet up there, I have to do that’

Caty recounted the impact of one of her inspiring teachers at MEP:

… he was very much like, ‘Anybody can improvise. Anybody can do this. You just have to set parameters’.… he was the first person who said that to me…. he was like, ‘It’’s what you’re making them sing, right?’ And I was like, ‘Oh my goodness, those are the melodies floating around in their heads.’ So.. basically, everything I learned from him I bring to the classroom. ... I probably have read close to a hundred different articles on teaching improvisation. So I feel very strongly about it. I think it’s something you can teach. But you have to set those parameters. Like, only play the keys that have the green dots. Only play the bars that are flat. So, you want kids to feel really comfortable. And you want them to feel really successful.

Caty found imaginative ways to engage her students in jazz improvisation, and concrete ways to scaffold various skills needed to improvise vocally and on instruments. Caty allowed her students rhythmic freedom to improvise on xylophones or with their voices, but within explicitly set pitch parameters (e.g., a pentatonic scale)—rhythmic parameters were set on the basic level of meter and feel, but Caty trusted her students to explore these features. Caty knew that she would be hard pressed to teach young students to notate or read the pre-composed syncopated rhythms that they performed during non-literacy-based activities, that were so vital to her jazz repertoire. However, she saw fit to sing these rhythms often since they could be readily learned by ear. Caty nevertheless included complex notation in her instruction:

Syncopation is really hard. And I’ve only really tried to teach it a couple of times. Not singing-wise. Singing-wise… I think you can learn it by ear. But reading it, it’s super hard. So I feel like I haven’t done enough of it and I need to do more reading on it.

One blues melody that Caty had taught to her first and second grade classes was notated up on the smartboard, to be performed swung (ie., articulated with a jazz triplet swing, as
opposed straight), but Caty didn’t feel the need to explain this distinction, and assumed that her students would simply pick it up by osmosis, on account of their nascent musical abilities and cultural practices/sensibilities. Like some other teachers, Caty intuited that certain jazz features could be readily adopted by students in ways that made the music notation supplemental and incidental to the learning of the music. Caty specifically tied this skill to the cultural competence of her students:

I just wanna say my kids get swing. I have to teach them straight, not swing. So, like, it’s just like a part of the music they listen to. Pop music, and like, the dance party. The music that was out there. So…. I just kinda say… “Jazz has to swing, and you improvise in jazz.” So... I’ll say something cute like, “It don’t mean a thing, if it ain’t got that swing.” But, like, honestly, I don’t really know how to explain swing, I just know how to do it. And that’s just from… years of listening. So, I don’t really talk about it…. I realize, I was like, “Oh, oops. This is kind of a classical feel that I’m teaching this [in], but it is swung with the music.” But like, it’s interesting that they got the swing better than they got the straight.

When swung rhythms appeared notated on the smartboard, those melodies were learned aurally. That said, Caty was the only teacher I observed who integrated notation reading and improvisation with recorded music playing in the background—chord changes accompanied students as they played along with the music. According to Caty:

Well, I focus on it like a math exercise… when you’re teaching those things, that’s like the mini lesson, right? … I would never teach music in a vacuum…. there has to be something that we’re working towards, like something more exciting, like, “Oh, we’re gonna play with Louis Armstrong, awesome!”

Caty’s idea of a “math exercise” was not isolated drills, but rather skills in the context of meaningful musical activities. Although syncopated and swung rhythms could be included in singing activities or games, they were often left out of explicit teacher instruction, so that more attention could be paid to the music literacy and attendant vocabulary. Jazz singing and games from West Africa were construed as integral learning experiences. However, despite Caty’s own background, they were counterpoints to learning objectives involving music literacy, activities
that could interfere with more important goals. Caty admitted that she felt “behind” because, instead of literacy, she had started the year with a unit on salsa and Celia Cruz.

I’m a little bit behind with first grade and eighth notes because I spent, like, the first month of this year... I did a unit on... we were celebrating salsa music, and the life and music of Celia Cruz, which I’m really glad I did. But I planned that before I found out that I would only be seeing them two times a week or one time a week. So it kind of put me a little bit behind. But I catch up.

Despite Caty’s acknowledgement that she felt a deficit in her music literacy instruction, the fact that jazz and salsa were so up front in her early childhood curriculum was a testament to her willingness to place these genres on par with conventional content, like classical or traditional children’s folk music.

Every single activity that I observed Caty implement was firmly grounded in jazz and blues in both song and style. For the most part, her students joyfully took advantage of the creative opportunities that were offered. In addition to literacy, jazz, and improvisation, Caty cited singing as important to her overarching goals: “I want everybody to sing in tune... with good tone quality, and with good technique.” When pressed about her conception of “good tone quality,” Caty revealed some ambivalence in her treatment (and cultural disposition towards) music that doesn’t readily adhere to classical stylistic conventions or exacting readings of music notation. In contrast to the rhythmic freedom she allowed her students, Caty clearly articulated her sense “proper” vocal technique:

… I kind of get on [my students] about slides sometimes, but like, other things, I’m kind of like, they’re enjoying singing… part of this is I want them to want to do music for the rest of their lives. If it was a concert piece, and I was being really strict, I wouldn’t let slides in. Or... maybe I’m letting slides in and can’t hear them. But... if I noticed it, it would be fixed, or something that I felt was important, so.... I think you have to choose your battles.
The reality was that Caty was singing sliding pitches when (more authentically) referencing blues and teaching various songs, yet she could not conceive of this practice as fully appropriate for classroom or performance. However, more than any other teacher, Caty overtly confronted the uneasy manner in which swing, syncopation, and vocal sliding might be adopted to fit literacy goals.

**Nicole:** “We’re getting some jazz… we’re getting the classical.”

Like Caty, Nicole attempted to meaningfully incorporate musical styles that would otherwise reside on the periphery, but in Nicole’s case, literacy and classical music seemed to take precedence. Regarding students’ voices, Nicole drew a line similar to Caty’s, except instead of sliding, Nicole felt a strong responsibility to get kids to transition from chest voice (seen as prevalent in their community) to head voice.

I do find that singing traditions are different among different communities, right? And so I have some kids who will belt it out…. And so, you know it’s just reminders to get them to be in head voice too. I mean, I don’t care if they belt it out when we’re doing certain stuff, right? But I want them to also experience head voice, right? … It’s not that one is the only way to sing… but yeah… it’s finding both voices…. It’s interesting…. I have found that a lot of my African immigrant students are often harder to get into head voice and will not match pitch as easy. Not all across the board, but I have found that … I’ll be singing in head voice, and they’ll be kind of in that monotone. How do we get you up? And it takes them longer to get up into there. Maybe they just haven’t experienced a mother singing to them in that register, you know… or the musical traditions aren’t in that register, so it’s a little more foreign I think.

The above testimony, while stressing the recognition of student voice and acceptability of diverse modes of singing, revealed Nicole’s own musical/cultural preference for head voice, most likely rooted in the classical vocal training that made up her musical background. I do not mean to imply that chest voice, or syncopation for that matter, are essential elements exclusive to jazz, but to point out how teacher preferences operate to privilege certain musics.
Although Nicole acknowledged the objective for students to find “both voices,” a clear hierarchy was set up that positioned chest voice as a cultural indicator of deficit in the music classroom, likened to “monotone.” Despite the value judgment, Nicole made clear that the intention was not to replace students’ vocal technique, but to add onto their repertoire, allowing for transcultural opportunities to explore and appreciate music.

With respect to rhythm, Nicole acknowledged that some “singing stuff” included syncopation, but concluded that there was “not much” in her music classes. Like other teachers, she focused her literacy activities exclusively on straight quarter- and eighth-notes, and tended to implement singable songs that did not reach a high level of rhythmic or melodic complexity. When instruction moved to instruments (second graders on xylophone, and third graders on recorder), repertoire more or less converged on simpler rhythms and melodies.

I’ll often take a song, and we’ll work that song and use it. But then we’ll use it as a means to, like, study the Chinese New Year, right… or it’s a rhythm study, or it’ll lead into something else. So it’s like, if I’m choosing a song, there has to be a reason that I’m choosing the song.

Nicole’s repertoire choices had to be melded to her learning goals, which might advance a cultural heritage celebration, but more often hewed to her structure and literacy objectives. Within these objectives was an effort to expose her students to a wide variety of music:

I also think it’s important that students… know and experience music—many different types of music. So I try to bring in music from different places around the world… different types of music. We study classical composers. We look at ballet. We do some Yoruba drumming from Nigeria. You know…. It’s like looking at what music is as a larger thing. So music history, or understanding the world of music. In third grade we do a unit on the blues, and study blues musicians… 4th grade we’re studying about the orchestra. We… learn a little bit about Stravinsky and “Firebird”… so that they’re getting many different experiences of what music is—not just singing kids songs… not just experiencing one type of music. But that we’re getting some jazz, we’re getting some blues, we’re getting the classical.
Notice how Nicole positions some jazz and blues in relation to the classical, with stress on the definite article. Although Nicole made clear that jazz was a requisite part of her curriculum, her treatment of it seemed qualitatively different from her treatment of classical music. Nicole stated that she basically kept her repertoire the same for kindergarten and first grade, but rotated her focus on an annual basis:

… so I go back and forth, so last year we did, we did jazz, and we listened to like Louie Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald or whatever, and we had a whole unit on jazz musicians and had some books that went along with it and learned to scat and move… to different music. And so I did that with my K and 1 last year, and now this year it’s like “Carnival of the Animals,” “Peter and the Wolf,” classical. And so next year… we go back and do the jazz. So… in one year they’ll get jazz, one year they’ll get classical…. They should know some of the composers, like Beethoven. I have them do a lot of written reflections…. Creating stories from the music they hear…. And… then also listening. Having a vocabulary to listen to music and say, like, ‘I hear that it’s forte. Or, ‘I hear that there’s a crescendo.’ And… trying to put those two together. And trying to get them to support their ideas… like they have to do in state tests, but using music as the medium. Like, how can you support [an argument] with [music as] text?

In the above account, one gets a sense of how genre fits into Nicole’s broader literacy goals which are aligned with her academy’s focus on Common Core Standards and high-stakes tests. Like Fiona, whose classes will be described below, Nicole named compositions and terms associated with classical music, and recounted lessons in which students used Prokofiev’s music to tell a story, but jazz inquiry was positioned in different terms, as a unit.

**Fiona redux: Jazz listening and performing Prokofiev.**

Recall Fiona’s jazz lesson, and the abbreviated listening map activity described in the previous chapter. Conceptions of jazz in Fiona’s class were patently more comprehensive than those I observed in most other classes. Nevertheless, jazz instruction in Fiona’s class, aside from being overtly undermined by classroom management protocols (see Chapter 10), remained circumscribed by literacy goals and subtle but evident genre hierarchies.
Fiona engaged jazz in meaningful ways; but relative to her lessons on classical music that she spoke of and that I observed, attention to African American genres and traditions elided stylistic differences, ascribing essential elements to jazz while also de-emphasizing specific compositions. That said, certain composers were acknowledged. When Fiona asked her students to review the recently-instituted jazz unit by turning and talking to a partner about “everything you learned… instruments… words from our song,” the students shared their answers. Fiona created a word web on the board, eliciting “saxophone,” “trumpet,” and “Wynton Marsalis,” who one student remembered because they had watched an excerpt of Sesame Street in which the jazz icon guest-starred. In preparation for the culminating activity—constructing a listening map—Fiona explained that the “… saxophone sounds smoother than the trumpet… kind of like an elephant trunk” and then had students actively sing, apply pitch fingers, and mime instrument playing along with “Good Mornin’ Blues” (a piece that at least two other teachers used in their music classes).

Notwithstanding the foregrounding of discipline during my observation, I admired the flow and conceptual basis of Fiona’s lesson for how it exposed and allowed students to actively and aurally explore features of form and instrumentation in jazz and blues music. But no distinction was made between jazz and blues, and the composer and composition used during the listening activity were not named. Perhaps owing to the fact that a different network teacher was responsible for the jazz lesson scripts, Fiona was relatively less knowledgeable about the content of the jazz unit and went into less depth with her students.

Succinctly, the goal of the jazz lesson was for students to understand the essential elements of jazz—its history, instruments and form. Fiona described these features in a modicum of depth (for instance, her fourth-grade class covered “work songs, spirituals, and… Afro-Cuban
jazz”). However, when I asked her about other units, I was told about broad musical concepts like pitch and dynamics, and also specific composers and compositions from Europe, like “Peter and the Wolf” for second grade, the “Peregrine Suite” for third grade, and “In the Hall of the Mountain King” for different grades (with different attendant activities). This more clearly defined canon exposed a comparatively reductionist (ie., superficial, limited) and additive (ie., appended) treatment of jazz in the context of the larger curriculum. The above songs would serve as a platform for endless explorations in pitch, rhythm, and dynamics, arranged for percussion, or as a backdrop for dramatic performance.

No doubt, Prokofiev’s extended masterpiece is perfectly suited for these activities, as was Grieg’s “In the Hall of the Mountain King,” which Fiona taught her kindergarten class as a story, and to her nine third graders, arranged for xylophones, recorders, and percussion. What better way to introduce children to symphonic storytelling than through fairy tales about animals and trolls? Fiona elaborated the practice of introducing a song as a developmentally appropriate medium for storytelling:

So a lot of times, the first day, I introduce… a song [and] we’re listening, we act something out or something like that; and the second day, we usually add instruments to it so there’s some kind of playing with it…. [A]t the end of the unit… the next level of that is create your own song that creates a story. So one day might be coming up with the story, and with K, you’re drawing the story that you want to tell, and then you’re choosing the instrument that’s gonna help you tell the story the best. And then the next day they all come in, they get that instrument or they share instruments, and they’re working on it. And … [they] have a choice, you can add words to it or it can be just instrumental, so they can kind of get that feeling. I’m trying to think of other activities. We act it out, a lot of times they come up with dance motions that explain a song if it’s song based, if it’s listening based, there’s lots of listening maps that go on. Sometimes I hand it to them and it’s the touching on the map and they figure it out.

Of note here is the focus on creativity and musical form, and Fiona’s strategy for integrating music with other performing and visual arts. Equally noteworthy was the fact that jazz music did not receive this treatment in full. Different styles of music figured into Fiona’s
instructional paradigm differently. Whereas European art songs were named as units, specific African American compositions were subsumed under a broader inquiry into genre (i.e., sing a blues song, and analyze an unnamed jazz form). Fiona recounted her attempts to tap into her students musical and cultural backgrounds (which will be elaborated upon in the third section of this chapter). Nevertheless, the scripted curriculum revealed a hierarchy—the same amount of time and focus that were taken on a single European composition could be allotted to a unit on all the genres historically associated with jazz.

For Fiona, literacy goals also played a role in circumscribing the presence of jazz and syncopation in her early childhood classes. Interestingly, Fiona noted that, “with K-1, 2, and 3, I really try to make it that they’re playing what they can read,” but only in fourth grade would the repertoire open up to musics that demand facility with syncopation:

In fourth grade, we’re doing [syncopated music] right now…. So we talked about different communities that music is important to, and then we play, like we did a Native American song, we did an African song and a Cuban song, like on the drum. Fourth grade is pretty drum heavy. And then their second unit is history of jazz, so we do like African American work songs, spirituals, and then the final thing is jazz. And then their third one that they are doing now is Afro-Cuban jazz… we learned about all these different communities, let’s put it all together, and that’s when we’re learning about syncopation. That syncopation is in all of this music, put it together. … I just say that syncopation is when we make the up-beat more important. We don’t go in to too much, and they learn syncopated rhythms. They understand why they are syncopated. I don’t know if they like fully get it, but…

The precondition that younger students in Fiona’s class should only be exposed to readable rhythms was noteworthy, and suggested the primacy of music literacy in her performance repertoire. Fiona did make concessions: “I don’t want to hold them back based on what they read. So if it’s a rhythm they can read I put it on the board. If it’s not a rhythm they can read I [might] just tell it to them.” However, her priorities aligned with having students
perform simpler, conventional melodies in early childhood as a way to facilitate a foundation in music literacy.

Wendy went one step further than Fiona and Nicole and insisted that syncopated rhythms be introduced earlier on, but likewise stressed that the concept and attendant literacy skills should only be addressed in the later years:

I think I start [syncopation] with third grade…. [W]e just look at that rhythm in third grade, but we might be singing it before that. And a lot of kids music, you know, you’re used to hearing it but you just might not say, “Oh, that’s syncopation,” or like, “Oh, that’s about a quarter or an eighth-note.” You know what I mean? So they’re exposed to it before then, but we don’t define it, I think specifically in rhythmic dictation, until third grade. And then, you know, we come back to it every year.

In contrast to the above teachers, Loretta’s performance repertoire and literacy goals were almost exclusively built on traditional children’s music, which overtly circumscribed jazz in its relation to the overall curriculum.

**Loretta: Children’s canon as cultural literacy.**

For Loretta, who taught in a community-oriented tolerant academy, where students danced with more than a modicum of freedom, jazz was basically a definition to memorize, and a genre that could be reduced to trite encyclopedic entries. Unlike other teachers, Loretta’s musical choices seemed explicitly and intricately aligned with the school’s discourse in ways that sidelined jazz.

Her second-grade class opened with students sitting on assigned rug spots, facing the smartboard, where the aims were listed as a SWBAT chart (ie., students will be able to…):

- alternate between beat, beat division, and rhythm
- perform, mental, physical, and vocal warm-ups
- read standard notation
- define and identify jazz
- identify re as a solfa note
- sing and define pentatonic scale
- sing/read song with re
The next slide was titled “Read,” and posed the first “essential question” of the unit: “What can we learn about African-American culture through jazz music?” Loretta had her second-grade students recite two mundane sentences about the genre from memory, in monotone. After breathing, singing, and stretching warm-ups that culminated with a large movement activity, Loretta turned the students’ attention back to the “jazz unit” by asking some borderline esoteric questions: “What instrument did Freddy Hubbard play?” (the trumpet and mellophone); “How many Grammys did Ella Fitzgerald win?” Students, eager to be called on, received a sticker if they stated the correct answer.

Though Loretta covered jazz icons like Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, there was no jazz music listened to, sung, or performed in the classes I observed, and the history was barely discussed. Loretta emphasized that whether referencing particular artists or musical styles, jazz was “talked about” more than it was experienced. She was not readily able to identify appropriate jazz music for her classroom, much less the means by which to incorporate it into her curriculum. She mentioned that her students had fun with “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If it Ain’t Got That Swing),” but explained that:

… we didn’t sing a whole lot [of jazz] because Kodaly takes so much time to … just get through everything…. [I]t’s been great doing it, but it’s going to take some tweaking to really get it to… fit in a format where I’m not pushing other music to the side, and… they’re reading because I really believe in literacy. And I really believe in them being able to write and create and stuff. It’s just so hard to… do it in the 45-minute time [frame].

Inspired by Kodaly’s method and focused on music literacy, Loretta’s performance repertoire for early childhood was almost entirely made up of traditional children’s songs, which for her, were the foundation from which students would not only be able to learn to read music, but also to teach *their* children classics that they might not be getting exposed to in their own homes. I asked if the choice to canonize traditional children’s folk songs was based on student
familiarity with the music, but Loretta retorted:

Probably the opposite. Because they don’t have familiarity with that. Oftentimes I have kindergarteners that come in, they don’t know the “ABC Song,” they don’t know “Twinkle, Twinkle,” they’ve never heard it… “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush”—they never heard that song before I taught it. So you see if you noticed they still weren’t singing [it’s] because… they don’t know it yet. Because parents often don’t always sing to their kids anymore. And it’s sad, but it’s just, it’s not a part of our culture any more. Especially up north. It’s just, we don’t do it. And so a lot of the nursery rhymes and kids songs have just kind of gone out the window, and I feel like I’ve… taken the job of like, “No, I’m gonna bring this back. And like the parents, they’re like, “My kid is always singing, singing all these random songs, are they getting it from you?” And I’m like, “Yeah, they’re getting it from me”…. And… it’s good. So it’s something that I’m really trying to just push and just have them go back to that. Because one day, they’re gonna have kids. And I want them to sing to their kids. And I want them to do patty cakes with their kids, and I want them to… bounce the kids on their knees and sing their song. You know, I want that. So I’m thinking super far in the future, but I want that for them. Yeah.

Loretta’s testimony was quite unexpected, but fit neatly with the discourse of her school. Her choice of repertoire was not serving the interests of classroom management, nor did it directly relate to her own musical upbringing or taste. Rather, traditional children’s music was viewed as a particular form of cultural capital that could help tap into music literacy. From this perspective, Loretta’s testimony seemed philosophically grounded in the theories of Lisa Delpit (among others) cited by the school in its mission. Delpit’s (1995) work has advocated for schools to teach basic skills in reading and writing, and to proffer critical consciousness and knowledge about dominant forms of cultural capital so that students might become engines of social and political change. However, despite her call for critical consciousness, Delpit has at times been narrowly construed to rationalize students’ initiation into mainstream models of human and cultural capital, without any critical consciousness. Such superficial readings more closely align with the core knowledge theories of E.D. Hirsch.

In Loretta’s school, literacy and cultural literacy were conceived as politically empowering in tandem with the character education described in the previous chapter. School
personnel believed that, together, the cultivation of these skills and literacies throughout the school would contribute to “community improvement” (refer again to the last chapter). In Loretta’s classroom, these literacies converged on traditional children’s folk music, to the exclusion of syncopation and meaningful engagements with jazz.

Loretta saw jazz as being at direct odds with her literacy goals and preferred canon. Her focus on traditional children’s music included early childhood mainstays like “Three Blind Mice,” “Fais Do Do,” “Teddy Bear,” “This Old Man,” “B-I-N-G-O,” and “Jump Jim Joe.” Although some of these songs were performed with a swung rhythm, there were not many opportunities to implement syncopated rhythms. Aside from the “Cedar Swamp Dance,” and the “Rule Call” that introduced the “Rules Rap,” most of the rhythms in Loretta’s performance repertoire were drawn from straight ahead melodies, with simple rhythms. And when students were asked to compose their own rhythmic chants, the emphasis was on quarter-note accents.

The expectation was that students would not venture to syncopate their original rhythms, whether the chant was to be felt as “marching” (straight) or “triple meter swinging,” terms that Loretta used to indicate groove and meter.

Beyond the structure of the music, Loretta viewed syncopation in tension with and secondary to her literacy goals, but still acknowledged that it might be developmentally appropriate: “… if it’s past their rhythmic understanding—not that they have to be able to read it—but if it’s gonna be too much… if it’s syncopated, it might be a little too much, if it’s not something they’re used to.” She continued to describe its ancillary status: “I don’t think about it. Just like, what feels good to me. And if I think that they can do it… I’ll try it. And if it’s a train wreck, then I won’t do it again.” From there, as Dan articulated with respect to repertoire, just “kinda choosing it and seeing what sticks.”
Paige: Rigor glossing over genre.

Paige, a network music coordinator in a discipline-based preparatory academy, glossed over genre in ways that presumed certain cultural and stylistic music education norms, while also lauding musical complexity as a paragon of rigor for young children. Paige’s approach to literacy mirrored Caty’s, exposing students to complex notated rhythms early on, but conceived of genre quite differently. Rooted in the Music Learning Theory espoused by Edwin Gordon (also cited by Loretta) that she immersed herself in during college and certification courses, Paige’s music pedagogy combined elements of her school’s focus on “mastery” and her own goal to teach complex music to young children. When I asked Paige if there was any particular music content that featured prominently in her practice, she resisted, mentioning Music Learning Theory and insisting:

No… I try to do things in a lot of different tonalities or modes, as other people call them. So I sing to my kids in all different tonalities, all different meters, so we do things in five, in seven, and everything so that they’re hearing that because I want their listening vocabulary to be as large as possible so that they can use that eventually as a tool for their own creations.

Paige referenced the Greek modes built off the Western major scale and cited body movement activities accompanied by a song in Dorian, composing in Locrian, and getting students to ideally be able to identify Phrygian, but she didn’t see these modal/melodic conventions as rooted in any particular cultural practice. Rather, Paige viewed variety within the context of discrete musical parameters (ie., mode and meter) and sought for her students to reach complex musical feats. Paige seemed to take on the view of her music education mentors, claiming that the linguistic and cultural facets of music might inhibit learning:

… a lot of what I use is… the series that Music Learning Theory is based on. There’s a book of experimental chants that’s from there that’s all spoke with songs and chants, so a lot of the things I do don’t have words because kids know language so if you sing to a young child with words, they’re going to hook onto the language, and so… that’s why
you get kids being like, “Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star” [singing in monotone]. They hear the words, not the melody. So a lot of what I do is without words and then I’ll add the words after if they’re really important to what we’re doing.

For Paige, authentic experiences with musical complexity should be offered to young students so that they might live up to the high expectations set by her and her school. In contrast to Loretta, Fiona, and Wendy, Paige had her students sing and learn syncopated rhythms through imitation, but did not delay conceptual instruction:

I just do it, I don’t know. I will—I have games where I will just chant to my kids like “do dat da, do dat do do…” [syncopated rhythm] and my kids give it back to me because they hear it enough. I think that the same way with a baby, if you have a baby you talk to the baby so that they are hearing that language. And babies who are in a house where there is a lot of vocabulary are going to speak fast—not necessarily speak faster but, like, their vocabulary’s going to be better when it’s time for them to speak or they’re ready for that point. I mean I think we go through absorption and listening to that and imitation so my kids can imitate those patterns and then they just do them. And even with reading, I can have my kids read tricky patterns if I say “oh remember when we said that pattern? Oh that’s what it looks like, isn’t that cool?” So I think it’s just a matter of building that vocabulary.

Paige, while citing deficit theories about the word gap between working-class and middle-class children’s vocabularies that some schools mentioned in their missions, testified to young children’s capacity to absorb music as a language, advocating that they be exposed a rich, complex, comprehensive vocabulary in music, with attendant reading skills.

I really do give my kids a lot, you know, [a] hard repertoire, and they’re doing really tricky things, and they’re not just doing baby songs and they’re not just singing two notes, you know, they’re really doing a lot of material.

Whether because of her own musical sensibilities, or her academy’s stress on rigorous academic standards for underserved students, Paige held high expectations and a great amount of confidence in her students’ musical aptitudes. However, Paige conceived of rigor and exposure in ways that glossed over genre, and with it, linguistic and cultural considerations that were deemed secondary to fostering musical competence. Paige sought to instill in her students a
“listening vocabulary… as large as possible so that they can use that eventually as a tool for their own creations,” but she didn’t offer to critically reflect on the cultural features embedded in her repertoire choices (ie., that the Greek modes are situated within specific cultural practices).

Despite exposure to a multitude of musical parameters and dynamic spectra, Paige nevertheless positioned jazz as an additive supplement to her curriculum. While on the one hand dismissing any attention to genre (ie., “No… I try to do things in a lot of different tonalities or modes”), Paige acknowledged the incorporation of African American spirituals and jazz for Black History Month.

In her own way, Paige evinced a common thread tying together teachers’ conceptualizations of genre. Standard content reflected music teachers’ own predispositions, formed in their capacity as musicians, and informed by their teacher education. Though rationalized on the basis of exposure to a variety music, this standard content was unified by conventional (or occasionally homespun) conceptions of literacy.

**Raphael’s additive music curriculum.**

Raphael commented on exposure in terms of a broad philosophy of educational practice:

I feel so strongly about teaching music because a lot of kids are not exposed to music…. I can’t remember who my music teacher was in grade school. I don’t know if I had a music teacher. I really don’t. That’s the kind of impact that a music teacher, if I had one, left on me. …. [My] students have to gain… [an] appreciation for music and an understanding of what music is and what it can do for you, both… if you want to play or emotionally, understanding how that speaks to you. So that’s why I feel so strongly about teaching, because I feel a lot of times, I’ve come across educators that… don’t teach to the student, they teach to what they know, if that makes sense….

Raphael considered himself an amateur jazz musician, but constructed his “musical repertoire” to be composed of “songs that I feel like [students] should know… just songs in general that I feel they should be aware [of] or exposed to.” For the record, the songs Raphael specifically named
drew extensively from a tried and true corpus of children’s material, new and old: in addition to jazz and classical, there was music from Disney films (e.g., “Hakuna Matata” and “You’ve Got a Friend in Me”), children’s classics (like “Five Little Pumpkins”), “Winter Celebration” songs (for Christmas, Chanukah, and Kwanzaa), “Lean on Me” for community meetings, Latin dance party mixes for kids, and “patriotic songs like ‘This Land is Your Land’…. a staple of Americana.” Raphael went on:

We’re also going over jazz composers or just composers in general. So I feel that they should at least know one piece from each composer. So they should know, be able to recognize “Fur Elise” is from Beethoven, or a Bach piece, you know, or things like that…. We were doing “The Four Seasons,” Vivaldi, because of the seasons… anything that’s tied in to any theme that I want to work on… they need to know this because this is music related. [It] also might be academically related to what the school’s goal is, or the school’s mission for that year.

In Raphael’s diffuse musical choices, one can discern inherent conflict and harmonious possibilities among a matrix of educational goals emerging from his own fledging philosophy, and informed by an impression he seemed to conjure of a normative music class, predicated on a particular canon of composers. I found it significant that Raphael so quickly transitioned to talk about “composers in general” without mentioning a single jazz composer. It was only as I pressed Raphael on his attempts to connect with the community and cultural backgrounds of his students that he subtly exposed how black musics can be confined to an auxiliary role in the curriculum. Despite their presence, and despite his apparent enthusiasm and intent, Raphael still implied a marginal status for jazz as he admitted it into his curriculum:

I try to go big on the jazz thing because these are composers that they should know. They should know who Duke Ellington is… and our opportunity to do that is during Black History Month. So what we do is, during Black History Month, they did like four famous African Americans. So we did… stuff with… Martin Luther King… at community meeting. [T]hey did a play for Duke Ellington, and played a video of “Take the A Train.” … community meeting is probably the time where they show all these things… that’s why it’s called community meeting. So that’s the opportunity for the kids to learn about all these people that are important role models, and you know, what’s their impact on the
world, and their community… But I should definitely incorporate that into my class, like a little bit more on a smaller scale.

Comprehensive as it may seem, here was a jazz musician relegating the study of Duke Ellington to February, and allowing for just a “little bit more” African American music “on a smaller scale,” presumably because other forms of music took precedence. I think Raphael felt a bit defensive as a first-year teacher speaking to me about some of these issues, but his testimony revealed how celebrations of culture can take on an additive character when limited to a month or two:

… as far as that cultural aspect goes, I have Hispanic heritage month. We have that in September [and] October. And I delved a little bit into it, but not too much. So I don’t delve too much into [it] as I should though… delving more into [the history] would be obviously, more of my next stage as far as this cultural stuff goes.

In the above, Raphael expressed a sentiment that more should be done to incorporate black and Latin musics and their histories. However, in referring to these musics as “cultural,” Raphael, a Hispanic male, aligned himself with a discourse that maintains the hegemony of certain musics. More specifically, by designating jazz, African American, or “Spanish stuff” (multi)cultural components of a music curriculum, those genres assume a marginal status. The mere presence of “cultural” music fosters what Gaztambide-Fernández (2015) has referred to as the “colonial entrapment of additive approaches to multiculturalism” (p. 10), whereby cultural heritage months and “multiculturalism concretized the boundaries that not only distinguish between one culture and another but also secure the hierarchical positioning of one culture over all others and further enforce the very idea of what it means to be—to have and to hold—‘a culture’” (pp. 6-7).

Incorporating jazz into the early childhood music classroom remains a fraught endeavor. To better understand the way Raphael conceived of his repertoire choices, it is useful to recount
an anecdote from his experience applying for a Master’s degree in Music Education at one of the City’s public universities. To his dismay, during the interview component of his application, the panel, consisting of three senior faculty, asked him about his self-professed jazz background and his ability to read music. The panel reportedly asked: “Do you really read music, or do you just read jazz charts?” The intonation recalled by Raphael, with its emphasis on the word “jazz,” and the very suggestion of the question itself were clearly pejorative. The implication was that the ability to read jazz charts was not only insufficient for becoming a certified music teacher, but also evidently inferior to other forms of music literacy. This polemic left the first-year teacher confused about which path to take for professional development, and also left an indelible mark on his conception of music education. If teacher training institutions maintain that literacy should be narrowly defined such that it excludes jazz charts, much less aural-oral forms of literacy, it would be reasonable for Raphael to assume the position that an appropriate education for his students should focus on these literacy conventions.

“Cultural influences” in Frank’s pop technology classroom.

By analyzing content and deconstructing discourses surrounding musical genres, curricular choices, and conceptions of culture, we can examine the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics at play in music education. Look at the way Frank, a most well-intentioned teacher, conceptualized his broad curricular choices:

Many cultural influences are snuck into the curriculum. Scholars are taught African and Latin percussion patterns and access a plethora of genres at our two listening stations. There are small units on jazz/swing, reggae, spirituals, and pop.

Notice that Frank used the verb “sneak” to describe the efforts that needed to be made in order for non-traditional content to be incorporated into the curriculum, as if “jazz/swing, reggae, spirituals, and pop” must be accepted into the music curriculum on a smaller, disguised scale.
That these genres are named “cultural influences” suggests a normalized music curriculum, focused on music literacy and songs from the classical and children’s canons, devoid of culture. (Much in the same way that musicology supposes the cultural universality of European art music.) Stephen Blum has argued that what is normalized and deemed appropriate in the music classroom does not need to be named as “cultural” (or white, for that matter) because it is assumed, or exnominated (S. Blum, lecture notes, April 22, 2013). Along these lines, Frank resisted the notion that traditional children’s songs should comprise the totality of an early childhood music curriculum, and yet, his discourse reinscribed their status. I pressed Frank to follow up on his statement:

I try to find more African, Caribbean, [and] Latin American songs to do with them, just because it’s more cultural for their sake and for mine, because you know, I don’t want to do “Old McDonald” all the time. Like there are plenty of nursery rhymes from all over the world to do. So I want to sneak them in and give them those kind of things too.

I had assumed that Frank was using the word sneak to imply some of the forces at play in his school’s approval of the curriculum, but in fact, Frank was sneaking “cultural influences” into his curriculum so that his students could embrace musical diversity as normalized, if “different”:

You know, I’m not like, “Here’s our African unit.” I’m like, “Here’s a song from Africa.” Or like that Japanese nursery rhyme [which I did earlier]. You know, like here’s just something different…. not focusing on it, just doing it and not drawing… attention [to it]. [If I was] like, “Here’s our African, or here’s our… Japanese unit,” maybe people are like, “Oh, I don’t want to… what are we doing this for?”…. variety. That’s what it really was [for], that variety.

For Frank, contemporary popular music was the curriculum’s main resource. However, he also maintained a commitment to “variety” that reflected his own enthusiasm and his perception of student sensibilities and interests. Through engagements with technology and active listening, Frank facilitated meaningful experiences for his students that involved hands-on
experiences with novel and familiar pop music spanning decades, form the Beatles, to Katy Perry. Frank made a concerted effort to include music that students heard in their lives outside of school, whether viral YouTube videos like “Watch Me Whip,” top 40 pop hits (at the time) like “Pompeii,” or adapted hip hop songs like Nas’ “I Can,” for which Frank led his students in a discussion on the sampling of “Für Elise” (this will be elaborated upon in the third section of this chapter).

Frank had little regard for the more prescriptive conceptions of curriculum and literacy that preside over most music classrooms because, like Dan, Frank insisted on musicianship as his primary goal. Literacy was broadly conceived as multimodal and not restrictive. The walls were adorned with black musical icons, from Jimi Hendrix to Bob Marley to Michael Jackson, signifying the global pop aesthetic that echoed in the performance repertoire, and which readily embraced jazz music and its elements. Frank did not critique the homogenizing and commercial aspects of mass-produced music in his classroom nor during our interview, but he exhibited a rare sense of freedom to disregard widely-held conventions of music education, which seemed to embody the school’s mission and genuine orientation towards joy in the classroom. Music, here, was conceived of as a respite from the daily grind, with its strict and highly academic orientation to standardized tests, and was thus geared towards students’ extant music appreciation and skills, with the goal of developing musicianship.

It was thus notable that Frank discussion of singing paralleled some of the ways that Nicole talked about her students’ voices:

I think, I think some of the voices in this community are very low to start. … I do notice a lot of the boys are already deep, they’re already down here…. I want to show them that singing, that child singing voice, you know? And really show them that falsetto. I feel like a lot of them will just [low humming] murmur, talking, just lost in the sauce stuff. I really want them to really find where their singing voice or head voice really is and be able to really bring it out. I think only once today I said like, ‘Remember those mouth
shapes,’ you know, because a lot of us were [murmurs]. I really want them to bring it out…and I know that’s risky, you know, it’s hard to like put your whole voice out there. But without just yelling. You know, a lot of the time we’re just yelling. So I’m like, “Okay, remember to sing, remember to sing, remember to sing.” And I think that’s one of the hardest things to teach, because singing is so… when you try to explain it to somebody… you’re kind of like… “how do I do that?” And that’s why in the early grades we do a lot of… ‘this is my speaking voice, this is my singing voice.’ And a lot of, [singing] ‘ooh’ kind of stuff to make that difference known to them. But still, that’s something I still struggle with...

Within Frank’s acknowledgement of students’ musical cultures was the goal of getting students to escape certain singing habits. Except for Dan, all the teachers I interviewed cited pitch matching and singing as important skills to develop in early childhood; however, only Frank and Nicole made explicit their views of students’ nascent singing voices (as potentially lacking), citing the objective of moving from chest voice to head voice. In both cases, Nicole and Frank characterized their singing goals in terms of expanding children’s repertoires of practice, but only Frank allowed for such wide-ranging standards.

For teachers who focused on narrower conceptions of music literacy, jazz and pop instruction posed a subtle, if significant, dilemma when attached to rhythm reading and singing. But for Frank and Dan, whose focus was musicianship, students would naturally pick up on syncopated rhythms while performing on instruments and using digital music technology, such that the teacher would not necessarily have to explain the mechanics of the concept or how to sight read. The seemingly disparate elements of Frank’s teaching practice converged on “rhythm,” in ways that made performing syncopation more central to his objectives:

I know that I started as a percussionist in fourth grade, and that’s the reason I can play the piano convincingly, because I can play the rhythm. And I took that to guitar, and I can really play any instrument because I have the rhythm, even if I, like I have a cello over there. I can’t really play it, but I can play the rhythm well enough on one note that you go, “he knows what he’s doing.” So I think rhythm is like super foundational and I really want them to be able to take a sense of rhythm away. Maybe not a technical understanding of how to read rhythms or syncopated rhythms, even though they can do that. But just a good feel of rhythm….. I find [syncopated rhythms] challenging myself,
and... whenever I try to teach a lonely eighth-note with an eighth note rest, everyone was very... strange about it, like this strange note because they’re not very used to it. So I don’t do that as explicitly as I’d like to, but I’ll definitely put it in their head... so they can hear that. Like that [cascara clave] rhythm at the end, they weren’t hearing it until, you know, it was like [claps].... They just heard something different. But I like to give them that rhythm because it’s different, because they do this clap thing, and... it’s just very basic.... that’ll get their ears.

Like Frank, Dan positioned rhythmic competence as more important than literacy skills, probably a result of his background and extensive experiences with popular music. Though Dan did not incorporate much singing in his music class, he knew that the soul music and RnB in his piano lab demanded syncopation in keyboard performance. But Dan did not expect his students to be able to read the music fluently. Rather, Dan offered his student text-rich materials that showed standard music notation, in addition to note names and fingering diagrams. This knowledge, and the specific rhythmic organization of a short melodic phrase, would be taught and reinforced through teacher-centered drills that students would learn by rote and then practice independently with those textual supplements:

I let them feel it out. I think that if they can do it without me having to explain it so much, then why do I have to explain it to them. Again, I will explain it if they’re now talking about going further, you know, going to a middle school band program or something like that.... But as it is right now, I’m trying to get them into as many hands-on experiences as possible, feeling successful at it before they leave as 5th graders. And currently, in 6th grade, they might not ever have music again. So I’m trying to jam them full of as much successful positive experience while they’re here as possible.... [T]hey don’t know that they don’t know how to read a 16th-note syncopation, they just know that they can do it and they feel it. So I’d rather have that be the product than have them feel frustrated that either the music is too simple, and they don’t feel like they’re genuinely connecting to it, or... try to teach it in a very complex way of counting the 16th-note rests and all those things that I would have to do if I actually taught that, and then having them be like, “What? This is way too hard.”

In the above, Dan described music literacy as just one of many supports for students to use during independent practice. Nevertheless, he made clear that explicit instruction in reading staff notation, while available to some students who might go on to pursue music in middle
school band, was ancillary to his main performance goals. With respect to syncopation, Frank, Dan, Fiona, Raphael, Paige, Caty and Wendy, all acknowledged that musical learning could be achieved through mimesis, rather than by requiring students to establish an a priori conceptual understanding of, or a specific ability to read notation. Raphael explained that music teachers can rely on the “repetition of things... you know teaching by rote… they’re able to catch on.” However, Frank and Dan were the only teachers who instituted performance repertoires irrespective of music literacy abilities and objectives. On the other end of the spectrum were Nicole, Loretta, and Beatrice, who maintained literacy objectives that were central to their teaching practice, and as such, circumscribed the performance repertoire to a greater extent.

**Development: Conceptions of Music Literacy**

In the above accounts, one can discern some of the different ways that teachers conceptualized music literacy: Frank and Dan’s focus on musicianship did not pay much mind to conventional music literacy; Fiona, Raphael, Paige, Caty, and Wendy admitted to the ways that literacy goals interacted with their repertoire; Loretta and Beatrice located their teaching practice in the Kodaly model but stressed reading to very different extents; and Nicole made music literacy central to her practice because she believed reading would be fundamental to students’ middle school education. In the following, I recount the testimonies of teachers who were able to elaborate and expand upon their ideas surrounding music literacy. I begin where the last section ended, with Frank and Dan, whose conceptualizations of music literacy coalesced around broad notions of musicianship.

Frank began music literacy instruction later than most other teachers, and stressed the need to teach and learn the music aurally, first and foremost:
We do do notations. I like to start it teaching around second grade. I do like sound before sight, and even when we learn these songs, I do sound before sight, and then I challenge them to put it together. Sometimes we do… popsicle sticks, so I just give you a bunch of popsicle sticks and … you kind of make your own one measure rhythm and then be able to play it.

Like some other teachers, Frank had his students make sense of notation through hands-on, creative activities. However, when making music as a large group, Frank only used staff notation for recorder instruction. Ukelele playing entailed reading from tablature, and the vast majority of instrumental accompaniment came in the form of bass lines and chord progressions, which Frank taught using letters.

When we play ukulele, then we do tabs. When we do recorder, we have the staff. But only when we’re playing those instruments. The other times I’ll just write out chord charts…. It just said the letters up in the corner. I could write it, yeah. But sooner or later you’re just going to remember, it’s B, D, A, E. You're not even going to use the music anymore.

Given Frank’s propensity to shirk conventional literacy norms, it should be no surprise that he evoked the broadest conception of music literacy:

I think musical literacy is being able to listen to a song or hear music, identify the instruments you might be hearing, the kinds of instruments that they are, what family they might belong to. You might be able to identify the mood of the song by major or minor or maybe you can take something out of the song when you listen to the lyrics…. I want my kids to be able to listen to any music and not be like, “Oh, I don’t like that.” You know?…. I want my kids to be able to listen to any music, tell you about it… understand the instrumentation, maybe feel the rhythm, maybe able to pick something out of it and not have an opinion, a personal opinion about it, unless that’s what’s being required from it. That’s what I think. A good sense of rhythm, a good sense of… pitch as, you know, height, as space, and yeah, that’s what I really want them to do. And no hate on any type of [music]… Oh, and the other thing, when they perform and they make a mistake, they keep going, because that’s a sign of a real musician.

Frank seemed to integrate all his learning goals into his definition of music literacy, forging objectives based on the ability to critically listen to a wide-range of music, and perform with “a good sense” of rhythm and pitch. Noticeably absent from this framework was music notation as a
hallmark of music literacy. Similarly, Dan stressed chord progressions to his students, and acknowledged that standard notation was ultimately overshadowed by the practical aspects of making and listening to music. It seemed that Dan had not reflected on the literacy aspects of his teaching goals, but saw fit to extemporize:

Hmm. I never really thought about a definition for that. But, I can say what I value, as far as making someone musically literate… they need to understand what music is, that it’s a form of communication… that there’s order in it, that there’s inspiration in it, that’s feeling in it. I think that’s the most important thing. They need to understand what it is. And I also think they need to understand how to do it. That’s like level one. I’d say level two would be the nuts and bolts of the technique, of the vocabulary, of the C chord, the musical alphabet. I think… they need to know how to do something on an instrument. I mean in my case keyboards, they need to know what an F is on a keyboard, they need to know what a C is, they need to know what a major chord is. All those things that I teach as far as actually executing the song, that to me is musical literacy…. Level two would be… you can talk about music and some of the vocab, use some of the vocabulary of harmony, of melody, of chords, of what is a bass line. We have these definitions that we use for the key catch terms that they need to know, like bassline, pitch, what is projection, what is expression, what is melody. We have all these little hand signals that I try to work in for the kindergarteners. Level three would be actually taking it and putting it on the page. To me, again, it’s a core foundation of what I believe… it’s way more important for a kid to be able to express themselves musically than it is to be able to read someone else’s expression…. Level three is looking at a piece of music and saying, I can make sense of this. I can see that that’s an E and I have to put my finger here, and hold it for this long. So getting into the standard notation things would be like a third tier for me.

Despite the behavioral strictures of Dan’ keyboard lab, musical expression was tantamount to his goals and conception of literacy, and making music was prioritized over reading music.

Similarly, Wendy described staff notation as “part of our world, even when we’re not specifically doing that.” Like Frank, she introduced it later on:

I think I do see [musical literacy] as something that is broader. We don’t really get into like writing music on the staff or reading music on the staff per se until, really, fourth and fifth grade. But it’s a part of what we’re doing. Like, when the kids are preparing for their holiday show, I don’t hand out music with just lyrics, like I’ll give them like a score. So you know, they’re looking at the notes. I might say look at this line here, look at what you’re singing. How long is that note? You know, they might know a half note. But they haven’t seen it on a staff before, or they don’t know exactly what all those other symbols around there mean. But you know, they could define that one thing.
So it is a part of our world, even when we’re not specifically doing that. Rhythmic notation is a part of our dialogue before we put notes on a staff. So is… our singing, like with pitch. Okay, we’re using the Kodaly hand signals, and my kids are very good at orally being able to define a melody but you know, they could pick out, “Oh, that sounds like sol-do right there,” you know what I mean? That sounds like high do. And they could hear that but they wouldn’t necessarily be able to write that. They could show it with hand signals or they could sing it back. Also with pictures too. With the younger ones we do a lot of picture representation. It’s kind of a good way for them to just focus on what they’re hearing [rather than] getting confused with a lot of other symbols and defining it for them. So I do think in my curriculum it is a lot more open-ended. You know, it starts to become defined as they get older, you know, more and more gets put into their vocabulary, and then you know, in fourth grade when we start doing recorders, like we really are looking very specifically at notation.

For Paige, music literacy was about making meaning from text, being able to play with the music and identify and listen with a foundation in solfege (ie., “hear [music in] the context of it all”):

For me, I don’t care if they know that the first line is an E, I could care less. To me that’s memorization and... you can learn a slogan and learn that. To me, I care that they can see something and that they’re hearing it, so that’s why the improvising on solfege is so important to me. It’s like I can sing, my kids know a tonic pattern consists of do-mi-so and so I can show them “Oh look, this is do-me-so. Oh what if we put them in a different pattern what does it sound like? Oh it’s still a tonic pattern but now it’s mi-so-do”…. I care more that they can see those relations and that they’re actually hearing what they’re seeing rather than this is an E and that’s why I play an E and that’s what it is. And actually, recorder I teach on solfege first, so I teach them three fingers, “this is our do, this is mi…”

For Paige, recorder teaching entailed more than just learning how to read standard notation.

Students would learn to follow the fingering and intuit the position of the notes in the scale. Like Wendy, Paige conceived of solfege as a foundational and corollary to staff notation.

Loretta also stressed literacy goals and acknowledged ways that students could locate pitch in different ways, such as with a melodic contour rather than notes on a staff:

…even like melodic like contour. Even if it’s without a staff and just showing the highs and lows of a melody… just having that stuff…. I realized last month that I don’t write enough for my kids. And… so now I’m trying to get a little more into that. So like their reading is fine. They’re identifying. We… just learned re… re kind of takes time. And then you have the kids, especially in that class, it can be so difficult for the kids who are trying to participate and really focus, for them to focus…. so it’s just coming back to
those things, and having them write. Writing just helps the brain so much better, and I just haven’t been doing that cause it just takes so much time. But it’s necessary.

In the above, Loretta testified to the importance of reading, but added writing as crucial to her literacy goals. This was sometimes at odds with the attention span of her students. As such, Loretta attenuated the writing goals to allow for more conceptual forms, like melodic contour, in which students would concretely convey their understanding of pitch relations, but in ways more abstract than staff notation would prescribe. The above views meshed with other teachers, like Caty, who approached music literacy from a broader perspective, but insisted that students get exposed to standard notation in meaningful contexts so they would be prepared for instrumental programs in future grades:

So for me music literacy… is kind of actually a broad thing. I think it’s not just… what’s written down, I think it’s the vocabulary, I think it’s being able to talk to your friends after you hear something, and being able to describe it. So I guess that’s also vocabulary. But also music literacy means being exposed to many different types of music. So do I teach kids how to read music? Sure. Rhythm has been more of an emphasis here. I’ve definitely emphasized pitch more in the upper grades. So like, third and fourth grade, really. I feel pitch is really… important to stress, [because] it’s always in support of an instrumental program. I wouldn’t want to pass them on [or]… to send them to the string program without being able to read on a five line staff or basic rhythms. And I wouldn't want to send them to the band program in fourth grade that way either. So it’s always thinking about, like, what’s the next step. I mean, am I stressing it if kids are making mistakes? No. I feel like I did these activities when I was in school. And even if they taught me how to read music, they didn’t feel authentic or meaningful. Unless you’re playing it… it doesn’t make any sense.

Caty conceived of music literacy broadly, encompassing understanding, vocabulary, exposure, and performance in addition to facility with standard notation. She stressed that literacy goals be embedded in “authentic or meaningful” activities because students would only make sense of notation by playing it. In the end, though, notation was incorporated into her teaching goals to align with middle school instrumental programs that students might enter. The goal here, as Fiona stated, was for students to “be independent music learners.”
No teacher was more adamant about literacy in staff notation than Nicole, who, like Caty, defended this goal on the basis of a sequential K-8 music program that would include band in middle school.

This is big… I think my students should be literate in music…. I believe that my students need to have the ability to read music. So, that can be… some students might have a greater ability… natural ability… but they all should have the resources and the experience to figure, “Okay, I know what these rhythm notes are, I can figure out these pitch notes, and then I can take this music, and I can start to play it on an instrument.” Not just, “Oh I’m learning by rote how to play ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.’” That… I [students] can look at a piece of music, and it doesn’t look crazy to me. That I can begin to decode and figure out what that means. So, that’s important, and that’s been important… K through 8… here. Or K through 6 right now.

So my students here… We do a lot of looking at rhythm notation…. Even in K and 1 they’re doing rhythm notation stuff… And then… 2nd grade we start playing for real on xylophone and doing some stuff. Third grade we get into… recorders… and 4th and 5th some of my best students move into piano… or the highest students move into piano classes. The other students we do a lot more with recorder, and we go a lot farther. And then we just opened our 6th grade, and 6th grade is now full band…. (flute, trombone, trumpet, clarinet). And… all the kids have an instrument and they’re learning how to play in band. … I also teach my choirs how to sight read. I would do… game stuff with them…. But when I see them only once a week, I feel like I want to get to the curricular stuff. That’s what I need to do.

Although Nicole saw the potential for games “combined into the learning experiences,” they were a counterpoint to “the curricular stuff,” which was mainly comprised of literacy in staff notation. Nicole articulated her curricular goals and conception of music literacy with great clarity, attesting to the need to prepare students for future musical instruction that would necessitate facility with staff notation.

**Recapitulation: Repertoires of Practice**

… variations in individuals’ and groups’ histories of engagement in cultural practices … reside not as traits of individuals or collections of individuals, but as proclivities of people with certain histories of engagement with specific cultural activities. Thus, individuals’ and groups’ experience in activities—not their traits—becomes the focus. (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003)
Overall, teachers’ attitudes towards music literacy and genre seemed to adhere to their own cultural experiences and musical backgrounds. As such, most teachers manifested their own repertoires of practice in curriculum development and instruction. In the cases where teachers were intent on inculcating musicianship features associated with a genre (i.e., Caty with jazz improvisation, and Dan and Frank with their pop music ensembles), rhythmic competence went beyond steady beat awareness, and students had extensive experiences with swing and syncopation.

Although a couple of teachers acknowledged multiple literacies, and sought to include their students musical lives outside of school, most teachers were conspicuously ignorant of their students’ repertoires of practice, either viewing them as blank slates, or seeing the absence of extracurricular music as a deficiency. For teachers whose conceptualization of music literacy was exclusively centered on staff notation, a standardized repertoire of practice, fit to conventional music literacy goals, was deemed appropriate if it exposed students to a specific set of skills. However, these conventions often precluded engagements with students’ musical worlds.

Along with her clearly articulated visions for vocal intonation, music literacy, and overarching learning goals, Nicole had a clear conception of her students’ musical deficits:

So I would say a lot of our students don’t have a musical background outside of school, although our parents are very encouraging that they take part in musical activities and the more I talk to parents about, the more I talk to parents about getting into other music programs or lessons. They’re very eager to get their kids engaged into music and dance programs and art programs and are very supportive…. I don't know, maybe 20% of our families would do that, outside activities. What they come to with me, say like in kindergarten, when they’re starting, so often we need to work on singing skills, right. I would say like half the class would pick up pretty quickly.
Recall from the first section of this chapter the way that Nicole described her students’ propensity towards chest voice and focused on getting them to use their head voice. In similar terms, Nicole characterized her students’ conception of “beat” as a cultural deficit.

The steady beat is just something that just needs to be worked on constantly…. I think there’s more of an urge of a lot of my students to not be able to differentiate between beat and rhythm. They don’t… it’s a hard concept. And especially since… the word “beat” in their culture is used [to describe] something totally, totally different…. [M]y students will always—and I tell them a million times, right, it’s rhythm—[say], like “Oh, this has a great beat.” And it’s like, “This is not a great beat!” The beat stays the same, doesn’t change. It has a good rhythm, right? But it’s like, it’s a cultural thing that you hear a piece of music and you say it has a good beat, right?

Many other teachers cited the importance of distinguishing [steady] beat from rhythm, but Nicole was critical of the way that her students used and conceived of beat. In contrast to teachers who recognized and incorporated students’ musical cultures, who saw students’ ideas about “beat” as something to incorporate into classroom practice, Nicole saw her students’ musical backgrounds outside of school as lacking.

Paige echoed this sentiment, characterizing her students as blank slates:

I mean I guess at this point… my new students are mostly kindergarten so they’re coming in like music babble, not singing in tune all the time, sometimes, but most of my kids aren’t coming from a pre-K program and most of my kids are not coming from any sort of music background unless they have a family member. So I treat them as if this is their first musical experience…. My older kids that come in new—usually it’s… similar, usually they’re like clueless, sometimes they come from a school with a good music program, but not always.

Paige and Nicole conceived of their students’ musical backgrounds as limited to formal music instruction, and, like Loretta (who sought to inculcate traditional children’s folk music as a form of cultural capital), viewed their music students as empty vessels. Other teachers understood my question about students’ musical strengths and backgrounds to more broadly include listening habits and preferences, but confessed that they had either not considered those aspects of their students’ lives in curriculum. Some saw hip hop as inappropriate for classroom
use. For Raphael, growing up in Brooklyn gave him insight into his students’ cultures, and Dan made attempts to incorporate student choices; however, these teachers did not seek to expand on these connections.

Raphael: I actually can’t say, I can’t speak... I mean... I know the culture though, I grew up in Brooklyn... So yeah, the culture, I could say, obviously a lot of hip hop influence. And you can definitely see that in their dances sometimes. They try (laughs) to imitate a lot of hip hop movements that.. they might have seen on TV, whether it be an older brother watching or parents watching. So I can definitely see that influence on them. I also try to speak to that as well.

Dan: I have petitioned them in the past, and... I don’t know. Maybe I’m not asking the right questions, or not asking enough, but... I just... haven’t found stuff that I feel like I can also really get behind. And I haven’t found stuff that I think translates especially well to keyboard. So, get a lot of hip hop answers. I get a lot of R&B answers. And there’s been times when I’ve done a, you know... you know a song that they’ve given me. And it’s worked fine, but... They don’t really understand what I have to do when I’m selecting the songs for [keyboard], but, of course, knowing what they’re into is gonna help, you know?

Rather than describe their students’ musical repertoires of practice as resources for the classroom, Raphael and Dan, in line with their tolerant academies’ stress on character, highlighted confidence, “natural” ability, attention span, and curiosity as primary music student strengths.

Raphael: ... confidence, I think that’s a big part of it. I think, obviously you need to be confident in whatever ability you bring, right? So, obviously, kids that are shy, I can’t really assess their singing if they’re singing really low. Kid’s that are confident and sing loud and proud.... And, so I feel... some kids are just good rhythmically and some aren’t obviously. There’s just some kids that won’t get it, you know, a basic rhythm. So I would say confidence, natural rhythm... and one that I think is very crucial in younger grades: attention span [laughs]. I feel like that’s- some kindergarteners I feel their eyes are always on me. Like, they’re always waiting to hear what I’m gonna say next. Some scholars are, just, their eyes are wandering around the class. So I feel, confidence, natural rhythmic ability, and the different array of attention span that a scholar might bring to the table.

Dan: They bring their... their own curiosity, their own... their own.. just willingness to be a part of this and be excited about it and buy into it. ... And they bring their grit. More than anything, there’s times where I’m very demanding of the kids, and I ask them to do things that they might not have ever had to do before, or that... you know... that might
Raphael described his students’ musical strengths mostly in terms of their behavior. And although Dan sought out “songs that the kids are gonna know, that relate to keyboard well,” or music that students’ parents might identify with, his curricular choices were predicated upon assumptions about the cultural backgrounds of his students, and the hope that students would be curious enough to engage in the musical content that he chose by following directions and paying attention, and monitoring themselves while wearing headphones.

In contrast to the above teachers, to varying degrees Frank, Fiona, Wendy, and Caty articulated a concerted effort to understand their students’ musical lives and communities’ repertories of practice as they constructed curricula. Recall how Frank used popular music repertoire as the vehicle to get his students to access goals surrounding musicianship, rhythmic competence, and conceptualization of pitch:

… these are songs that they know that they’ve heard, so it’s much easier for me to start doing them right away with them because it’s already in their head…. They’re new songs and they’re songs that the kids knew and they’ve identified with…. We do pop tunes all the time. It’s all a matter of how far we scale them up…. I want to, you know, use what these kids hear outside and bring it in the classroom and show them that they’re able to do it…

Frank expanded on a synergy between his own preferences and the musical listening habits of his students and students’ families. Whereas Dan largely assumed what music parents listened to, Frank maintained acute awareness of the songs permeating students’ lives. Interestingly, Frank
allowed his repertoire to shape musical features of students’ singing voices, even though he
made explicit the goal to move students from chest voice to head voice:

I’m not sure how many songs we really do like that… are … like more showy singing or
more, like, polished and more, like, controlled. These are definitely more rough and raw,
which gives us that space to not be so confined. And since I can’t really teach you that
choral method, I will pick songs for us that we can kind of go, have space to go in
between. Because there’s some people who can really, really sing it, really nice. And
there’s some people who can’t. So at least we have that room where we can all be singers
and we can all rock with it. I don’t want to hold anybody back, since I can’t meet them
there.

Frank revealed his underlying belief in what is “really nice” and “showy” in contrast to the
“more rough and raw” styles of singing, and he expressed an honest level of teaching insecurity
(ie., “I can’t really teach… that choral method”), but more fundamental to his curricular choices
was the imperative to offer each student the opportunity to access a song. Frank acknowledged
the cultural background of his students, and saw their musical lives in the context of mass-
mediated popular music.

Wendy, Caty and Fiona all made explicit paean s to their students’ cultural backgrounds
and aligned aspects of their curriculum to acknowledge the repertoires of practice in students’
homes and communities:

Wendy: I’ve got a lot of really great singers here. I think culturally, singing and music
is… a part of this culture of our school and I think at home with these students as well. So
kids come to class and I rarely have students that are very reluctant to sing. You know,
maybe some boys. But it’s not uncool to sing, so I enjoy that. We have a lot of students
that go, that sing in church and stuff like that. So there’s a lot of religious music as well.
Gospel music. I think, you know, rap is very popular here, reggae is very popular. It’s a
largely Caribbean, Jamaican school…. [Our repertoire] really is a little bit of everything:
classical, jazz, music from around the world, different cultures. You know, our school is
largely a Caribbean population. So I do try to incorporate that into my lessons as much as I can.

Caty: So, we use West African music because many of our families come from West
Africa. We have families from Cote D’Ivoire and... Guinea… those are the two I can
think of off the top of my head for now. But that’s where many of our families, like,
either their parents came from, or they actually lived there for a little while—the children
or their grandparents came from there. So that’s something, like, I knew about the families when I met them. We went on home visits. So I’ve actually been on home visits and have been in some of the homes of some of the kids here. So… I try to do as much as I can to bring West African music into the classroom because I know while maybe not every child is West African, it’s such a big part of this community. So… like every year, the African American day parade is, like, this big thing in October. And it’s live music and dancing…. So… it’s such an awesome celebration and people are so proud of their culture here and…. jazz because… this is Harlem. Jazz happened here; jazz still happens here. And… I think one of the reasons why… why I’m here is because of my jazz background.

Fiona: I mean I really try to choose a lot of African or Cuban songs and, you know… a lot of [my students] are from West Africa. And they said their parents knew [songs we performed in class], so that was really nice…. I asked students, “Go home and ask your parents if they know this,” cause I get them from these websites [e.g., bethsnotes.com and mamalouisa.org which feature a wide cultural variety of musical content]… I don’t know if they’re really songs that people will [know], like, are they really folk songs from that area? I don’t know. And then last year I had my 6th graders… do a project where they had to… choose [a song] from the country that their family was from… they all did, and… their job was to go home and sing the song for their parents and see their reaction to it. Like, do they know it first of all? Like, what do they think about it? And one of my 6th graders was from Egypt, and… he opened it like, “My mom sang this to me when I was a child,” and like that made my whole year., that… it actually was there and it worked. And then my other like side goal of that project was like, those are the songs I’m gonna teach to the younger ones…. So that was really nice to do.

In the above narratives, Frank, Wendy, Caty, and Fiona call attention to the different ways that students’ musical lives might be accessed in the music classroom—integrating popular music, demographics, community histories, or surveying the student population. These teachers conscientiously incorporated students’ cultural competencies.

Overall, this chapter has outlined the diffuseness of music teachers’ objectives and conceptions of music literacy as they related to considerations of genre and cultural competence. In different ways, teachers adapted their choice content to larger goals surrounding musicianship and literacy. For teachers like Nicole and Loretta, who focused on standard notation, jazz was uneasily adapted to the music classroom; but for teachers like Frank and Dan, who insisted on popular music and musicianship, the terms on which diverse genres were adapted to classroom
norms were much more fluid—Dan and Frank recognized that popular music can be performed with note names and chord changes and were free to ignore music literacy conventions. Most teachers found themselves caught in the middle, additively incorporating genres while negotiating any conflicts between musical features and literacy goals with uneasy accommodations or strategic ignorance. Interestingly, teachers’ approaches to cultural responsiveness, like their objectives and genre choices, were similarly diffuse in distribution. Nicole, Paige, and Loretta saw their music students from a deficit perspective, and held high musical and behavioral standards for them; likewise, Dan and Raphael conceptualized their students’ musical strengths as behavior traits; finally, the other teachers (Frank, Caty, Wendy, Fiona, and Beatrice) thought about their students’ backgrounds, their musical worlds, and the history and practices associated with their communities.
Chapter 12
Coda: Implications

The major findings of the preceding investigation into early childhood music education in NYC are as follows:

- **Access to early childhood music education in NYC is correlated with social class, race, and neighborhood.**

- **Although charter school data did not mirror the strong association between (absence of) music programming and racial/socioeconomic inequities across traditional public schools in NYC, charter schools were less likely to offer music instruction than low-poverty traditional public schools.**

- **Charter schools evince a lack of transparency and accountability with regards to music education requirements and funding.**

- **Charter school discourse, in the main, coalesces around strict, circumscribed notions of core curriculum and character, disproportionately targeted at students of color in high poverty areas.**

- **In terms of classroom management, most music teachers tended to identify with this discourse, and saw it as enabling their pedagogy. Music was, at times, subordinated to behavior goals. Music teachers in charter schools articulated a disjunction between what they were taught in Music Education Masters Programs and the demands of their urban classrooms.**

- **When music is incorporated into charter school music curricula, African American and Latin forms are often integrated additively, and treated reductively. Yet, some teachers exposed possibilities for meaningful musical engagements with jazz and popular musics, as well as students’ and communities’ music cultures.**

These findings are significant to policymakers, music education students and teacher education programs, which must consider how charter schools’ narrowing conceptualization of curriculum might exert downward pressure on arts programming and music classroom management, practice, and repertoire. Music teacher training institutions must work to align learning goals with the practical limitations of managing young children, and they must acknowledge the ways
that charter school discourse and procedures may circumscribe creativity and movement. Rather than face disjunction, music teachers should be offered strategies to navigate these tensions.

In this dissertation, I have discussed the factors that contribute to the omission of music from early childhood curricula in NYC public schools; I have recounted classroom observations where music instruction was subordinate to behavior goals; and I have analyzed the ways that jazz and African American musics can be treated as isolated undertakings in formal school contexts, subordinated in discourse and praxis to classroom management, literacy goals, and conventional content.

E.D. Hirsch’s Core Knowledge curriculum, cited or adopted by numerous NYC charter schools (see Chapter 9), exposes the nature of these forms of subordination in a manner directly relevant to the present study. Ever since Hirsch published Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (1987), important questions remain about how American culture and core curriculum might be conceived to constitute cultural literacy, and perhaps most unsettlingly, who decides what constitutes cultural literacy. Beyond these profound theoretical problematics lie a vast reality of Hirsch-inspired educational products and programs that bear noteworthy relation to this inquiry, in terms of both charter school practice and music education discourse.

The third largest network of charter schools in New York City adopts Hirsch’s Core Knowledge curriculum and is comprised of seven schools situated across impoverished and racially segregated neighborhoods the Bronx. None of these seven discipline-based preparatory academies reported having a music program and only three offered any arts at all. The schools in this network that reported having arts programming conceded that these subjects were not part of the “core” curriculum. The arts were only offered as afterschool clubs, or during the extended six-week span at the end of the year, after state tests had been administered. In practice then, the
core and periphery of the Core Knowledge curriculum as it is implemented during the school day can be devoid of engagements with the arts.

Hirsch’s (1987) list of terms that “all Americans need to know” and his foundation’s educational materials do recognize the contributions of African Americans, but it is fascinating to see just how they are assumed into the “core” canon. The music set for grades one and two sold by the Core Knowledge Foundation offers: “The world’s greatest music, including quintessentially American masterworks of blues, jazz, and musical theater” that are “part of our shared cultural inheritance” (Core Knowledge Foundation Website); but scroll down and you will find a list of 18 tracks, all European in origin. No specific mention is made of any black authors or works, and this doesn’t seem to be a mistake. Black-authored works are not mentioned until the grades three through five music CD set, with “Anonymous Spirituals” like “Amazing Grace,” “Wade in the Water,” and “He’s Got the Whole World” (Core Knowledge Foundation Website). Still, no African Americans are named. This anonymity points to an authorship made both obscure and insignificant.

The above omissions reflect the culturally biased predilections of the self-proclaimed arbiters (Hirsch and his affiliates), their conception of a proper foundation in music, and issues of copyright and attribution—since traditional songs do not usually have assigned authors, they are readily lumped together or discarded at the discretion of prevailing citation practices. There is

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less of a perceived need to appropriately name and cite because the conventional thought that occupies and dominates these academic, policy, and pedagogical spaces conditions the way music from marginalized groups is added into the curriculum. These tensions were evident in the discourse and praxis of the charter school music teachers, who discursively positioned non-traditional content as an adjunct to literacy and canonical conventions. This finding is not meant to imply that music teachers in traditional public schools are free from such conflict (nor is the narrowing of curriculum exclusive to charter schools). Rather, I aim to stress that certain philosophical constraints operate explicitly in charter school music classrooms, despite the ostensible freedom with which charter schools can purportedly approach curriculum.

Opposed to the additive approach to multiculturalism are critical approaches that aim to authentically secure aesthetic and humanistic benefits of multicultural music education while engaging (in) political discourses that raise consciousness and challenge dominant ideologies, stereotypes, and cultural hegemony (Morton, 2001). Far from challenging dominant ideologies, many charter schools (vis-à-vis “core curriculum” and character education) reinforce neoliberal conceptions of self and other that limit opportunities to engage in community music making. Nevertheless, charter schools leave open the possibility of implementing developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive musics and pedagogies that reflect the creativity and diversity inside NYC classrooms (and worldwide).

Among the teachers I interviewed, Frank and Caty appealed to this promise, as did Beatrice, the only teacher I interviewed from a progressive charter school. Beatrice’s testimony did not fit neatly into the themes addressed in the qualitative chapters, partly because her school’s distinct philosophical orientation was evolving alongside a gentrifying neighborhood, but also because of her commitment to integrate music, community, and social justice. Beatrice
saw Kodaly as a vehicle for musicianship and singing, but did not feel constrained to focus on music literacy, nor did she allow classroom management to play an outsized role in her teaching. Instead, Beatrice made folk songs from different cultural traditions the centerpiece of her repertoire; she consistently invited students to share their cultural backgrounds in music class; and she made efforts to align her content with the school’s social studies curriculum, seamlessly weaving together Pete Seeger protest songs with notions of a still-relevant Civil Rights movement spanning the past 60 years, connecting Martin Luther King to the Black Lives Matter movement.

The final two sections of this concluding chapter outline the implications of this study pertaining to its major findings, surrounding access and accountability, as well as discourse and praxis. The terms of charter school expansion, inevitable as it may be, would seem to portend an increasingly peripheral role for music, but that need not be the case.

**On Access and Accountability**

One of the assumptions underlying the promotion of charter schools is that market-like dynamics will spur competition, innovation, and improvement because schools (as corporate entities) will be held accountable to their consumers (i.e., students and parents). However, this discourse belies the reality that charter schools in many ways evade accountability. “Accountability” is one of the primary buzzwords featured in current debates about education reform, and yet charter schools can offer little by way of transparency or oversight. Without reference to underlying issues that affect academic achievement, such as poverty and formative early childhood socialization experiences, accountability has become the province of personnel in public schools, which face closure if they do not show progress on state standardized tests. Thus, accountability coheres to high-stakes assessments.
Accountability takes on a much different meaning when examining the self-aggrandized record of charter schools, whose finances and student records are often notoriously difficult to access. (The reticence among some charter school administrators to answer basic survey questions from this study about access to music provides a point in case.) Unfortunately, the deregulation that has accompanied the proliferation of charters has made it increasingly difficult to monitor academic achievement, school pushout, fiscal management, equity of access, and dissemination of effectiveness (Fine and Fabricant, 2012). Except for performance on standardized tests, “accountability” must be called into question as a guiding feature of the school choice agenda. With so many big issues remaining unresolved, it is no wonder that music education has been made an afterthought.

One of the presumed benefits of charter schools is that with greater accountability they will “allocate scarce resources away from management functions and into the classroom, and spur innovation...” (Fine and Fabricant, 2012, p. 10). Resources are especially scarce in the arts, which are usually the first programs to be cut when budgetary restrictions are put into place and when curricula narrow for the sake of high-stakes tests. If charter schools perform better in terms of fiscal management, and are free to innovate curriculum, it follows that they would likely provide more music and arts to their students. The evidence documented in this dissertation shows a different picture, however.

Notably, music programming in charter schools did not correlate with socioeconomic status or race. This finding was significant for its contrast to traditional public schools, which were more likely to offer music instruction in affluent neighborhoods with lower concentrations of black and Hispanic students. Be that as it may, charter schools in general were not as likely to have music as traditional public schools with more affluent populations. Charter schools
disproportionately serve students of color with higher levels of poverty; and they lacked music at basically the same rate as traditional public schools in high-poverty, racially segregated neighborhoods (where overall, close to one-third of schools lacked a music program). Although charter schools in one Manhattan district (5) presented a significantly higher incidence of music than their traditional public school counterparts, charter schools generally extended the pattern of music absence evident among low-SES traditional public schools.

Many traditional public school music programs seem to be beholden to outside funding, in the form of PTA contributions and grants. Policymakers must find ways to ensure that parents’ ability to make PTA contributions is not the ultimate reason why some schools go without music. The color of your skin, the income of your parents, and the neighborhood you live in should not predict whether or not you have access to early childhood music instruction. It is egregiously unjust that young students of color living in poverty are so much less likely to enjoy the benefits of a public school music education. There is much work to be done making access to music more equitable.

That I was not able to access data on outside funding for charter schools (be it PTA contributions, or corporate backing) was a serious limitation of this study. Charter schools, if they are to be held accountable to the public, should participate in the NYC Annual Arts in Schools Survey, and should be mandated to report funding levels and donors. Without access to data, one would be hard-pressed to describe charter schools in terms of their transparency or accountability. The NYCDOE should be applauded for recent investments in arts education and for its continued efforts to assure transparency presenting arts data from traditional public schools. However, the myriad data on arts in traditional public schools demands a more streamlined, meaningful metric for the presence of arts programming (e.g., including only
instruction of more than ten annual hours). This would allow for a clearer picture of the role of music in the larger curriculum, and ideally hold schools to account for not complying with NYS arts requirements. Accountability mechanisms should also be in place for charter schools that shirk NYS education law, especially given the fact that charter schools in New York are supposedly mandated to follow the state curriculum.

**On Discourse and Praxis**

As the charter school movement in New York City coalesces around core curriculum and character education, it is imperative that scholars make a concerted effort to classify charter schools by their philosophy and practices. This study’s typology has its limitations, but, like the call to streamline arts data, responded to the need for a clear-cut framework to organize and better understand the distinct strands of the charter school movement. Discourse analysis, though in need of refinement, allowed me to identify tendencies and to account for the minority segment of schools that adhered to a more progressive paradigm. The growing consensus on education reform, manifest in charter school expansion and discourse, suggests that the isomorphic tendency towards a compliance curriculum (ie., “no excuses” character education) shows no sign of abatement. This has far reaching implications for early childhood music education.

Glaringly, academies, with mission statements that marginalized anything outside the scope of core curriculum and character, were less likely to offer music. That the absence of music was concentrated among discipline-based preparatory academies should be a cause for alarm, since this subtype accounted for a plurality of NYC charter schools and is often extolled for effectiveness teaching to tests. These schools eschewed all reference to progressive or alternative curricular features. It may very well be that the future of the charter school movement
predicts further curriculum narrowing, with more discipline-based preparatory academies, and, consequently, a lower incidence of music programs. This is to say nothing of the ways that music instruction is impacted by the curricular disposition of the academies in which it is situated.

Whether discipline-based or tolerant, music teachers in academies, in discourse and praxis, manifested codes of character outlined in their charter schools’ discourse. Music instruction could, in effect, be subsumed under broader behavioral goals, to the extent that teachers were mandated to enact the curriculum and character education models espoused by their respective schools. Teachers expressed coherent musical goals, but they were at times circumscribed by the demands of efficient classroom management (i.e., getting on with the lesson, avoiding chaos). In other words, teachers straddled and sometimes conflated musicalization with the socialization expectations set by the school and/or in the classroom.

Although they didn’t preclude responsive, authentic, or meaningful engagements with music, academy approaches to classroom management tangibly infused early childhood music instruction in developmentally inappropriate ways. In many academy contexts, movement was restricted to varying degrees, assessment was tied to individuals’ conformity to strict behavior standards, and teacher talk was beset with directives and correctives. The very idea of “joy” was coopted to fit notions of rigor and self-discipline that constituted schools’ definitions of character.

Thus, just as students of color living in poverty are less likely to have access to music, they are also less inclined to receive student-centered instruction that might be considered progressive, democratic, or relevant. It may be the case that charter school expansion, if it continues to trend towards academies, would not only entail fewer music programs, but would
proscribe certain types of musical learning, foregoing humanistic, community, and aesthetic aspects of musicking in favor of more restrictive modes of classroom practice.

While raising concerns about the music teachers who readily adopted their school’s approach to behavior and literacy for the sake of smooth classroom management and consistency, it is imperative to note the radical possibilities extended to educators. By creating space for creative dance and building bridges to students’ musical lives—between the classroom and their community—some of the teachers in this study persistently showed how their attempts to shape music curricula could transcend conventional circumscriptions of movement and literacy. Even if these attempts sometimes fell short in meaningfully and authentically engaging young children with different musics, students in all the classrooms that I observed showed how eager they were to make music.

Student enthusiasm for different teachers’ motley approaches provided evidence of the freedom that many music teachers actually have—to develop culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate music lessons adaptive to local community knowledge and values, as well as individual students’ needs, talents, and interests. The extent of this adaptivity no doubt reflected schoolwide strictures as well as teachers’ own curricular leanings—toward what Hirsch (2009) might define as the “core… the knowledge and skills that all citizens should have” (p. 11). That said, teachers’ capacities to adjust and experiment also exposed room to maneuver, especially when in cases where they maintained a broad conception of music literacy. Across different charter schools, the varying ways that teachers attenuated school restrictions on movement and the sheer diversity of what music teachers defined as core musical knowledge signified the possibilities available to early childhood music teachers.
Evidence from this study suggests both the failures and potential of imagination manifest in prevailing educational practice, as enunciated by the major strands of the charter school movement. Findings also reflect some fundamental truths: that discourse shapes reality while at the same time attempting to interpret and reflect it. Opportunities abound for innovation among charter schools; and yet, the discursive trajectories suggested herein portend a bleak picture that should call into question the wisdom of “no excuse” paradigms for young children. Redressing inequitable and hegemonic value systems demands that we recognize how social contexts define and frame pedagogical spaces for thought and action. In doing so, we might better equip ourselves to critique the present state of affairs, and to imagine the not-so-radical promise of public schools engaging communities and students in progressive and pluralistic ways. Given the continued threats to immigrant communities and the rampant disenfranchisement of people of color, it may seem myopic to focus on issues pertaining to music education, but if there is one thing that has rung out in the great human struggles for social justice, it is that music matters.
Appendix A
Interview Guide

Interview Questions\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Part 1: Life History and Background}

Tell me about your musical background. (i.e., music education, instruments, personal/professional life)

Why do you teach music?

Can you describe the main influences on your teaching practice?

Tell me about your preparation/training to teach music. How has that prepared you (or not) for your job as a music educator?

\textit{Part 2: Reflections on Practice. Cultural and Development Responsiveness.}

What are the most important skills that you aim to teach and why?

What are the most engaging activities that you implement and why?

What are your favorite songs to teach and why?

How do you incorporate movement into your teaching practice?

How do you define musical literacy for your students?

\textit{On Students}

What are the musical strengths that your students bring to your music class?

How do you incorporate these strengths (i.e., students’ knowledge and skills) into your lesson planning and curriculum development?

\textit{On School}

How does the music program here reflect the goals and values of this school and its mission?

Do you feel that your school supports your vision for teaching music? How so?

\textsuperscript{24} Note that in-depth interviews were open-ended and semi-structured. As such, the order of and adherence to this interview protocol were fluid: not all questions were always asked, sometimes follow-up questions were asked for purposes of clarification or elaboration.
On Pedagogy and Practice

Tell a story that illustrates your best lesson…. How did the lesson observed compare with your best lesson?

Can you describe examples of the following in your teaching practice?

- games
- What else do you do to promote joy in the classroom?
- movement
- playing rhythm instruments
- playing melodic instruments
- syncopated rhythms
(How do you feel about teaching syncopated rhythms to young children?)
- reading musical notation(s)

- performing
- composing
- improvising
- classical composers
- popular and world musics (African, Afro-American, Afro-Latin music
- Orff, Dalcroze, Kodaly

Part 3: On Pedagogy and practice (follow-up to observation):

Can you talk about [X] activity, which was implemented during observation?

How does the lesson I saw compare with a typical lesson? What were the strengths and weaknesses.
Appendix B
Music Access in Manhattan Districts

Table B.1. Incidence of Music and Demographic Snapshot of TPS and CS in Manhattan, in the Aggregate and by District, 2014-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manhattan: n = 158 Schools</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Black &amp; Hispanic</th>
<th>% ENL</th>
<th>% SPED</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan: 131 TPS</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 CS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>158 Tot.</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>137</td>
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<td>District 1: 18 TPS</td>
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<td>89%</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>District 2: 35 TPS</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>43%</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>District 4: 19 TPS</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<td>6 CS</td>
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<td>District 5: 14 TPS</td>
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<td>86%</td>
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<td>District 6: 26 TPS</td>
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<td>3 CS</td>
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<td>67%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>96</td>
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Appendix C
Music Access in Bronx Districts

Table C.1. Incidence of Music and Demographic Snapshot of TPS and CS in the Bronx, in the Aggregate and by District, 2014-15.

<table>
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<th>Bronx n = 194 Schools</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Black &amp; Hispanic</th>
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<td>160 TPS</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td>34 CS</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<td>71%</td>
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<td><strong>District 7:</strong></td>
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<td>17 TPS</td>
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<td>12 CS</td>
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<td>92%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92%</td>
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Appendix D

Music Access in Brooklyn Districts

Table D.1. Incidence of Music and Demographic Snapshot of TPS and CS in Brooklyn, in the Aggregate and by District, 2014-15.

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<th>Brooklyn n = 291 Schools</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Music Program</th>
<th>n Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Schools w/ Sustained Music Instruction</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Black &amp; Hispanic</th>
<th>% ENL</th>
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