

Becoming Music Teacher:  
Music Teacher Identity and Strong Structuration Theory

by

Timothy E. Nowak

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Margaret Schmidt, Chair  
Mark Robin Campbell  
Sandra Stauffer  
Jill Sullivan

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## ABSTRACT

Previous researchers documented that music teachers negotiate their identities throughout their career, but none of these studies examined identity negotiation from the perspective of both music teachers and their students. Assuming that music teachers and students negotiate their identities through the same interactions, how do music teachers and students together shape their social context and continually pursue possibilities for who they are becoming? I conducted an instrumental case study to explore the encounters of one veteran orchestra teacher—Steve—with three of his students to understand how they negotiated their identities together and pursued possibilities for who they were becoming. I used strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) as a theoretical lens to organize and frame my study.

Each time Steve assessed students and placed them within the orchestra's seating hierarchy, he experienced a tension in his identity as a music teacher. To relieve this tension, Steve changed the orchestra seating structure from a hierarchical-ranked structure to a randomized-rotating structure. This allowed him to provide individualized feedback to students as they rotated into the front row without issuing social sanctions. But this structural change also disrupted some of the students' identities as musicians and the labels they used to position themselves in orchestra. Steve's insistence that the student sitting in first-chair was the "leader for the day" continued an element of the hierarchical seating that conflicted with the students' understandings of meritocracy and leadership. Additionally, by decoupling the students' seating from the playing tests, Steve delegitimized his primary form of assessment. Based on my findings, I discuss implications for music education practice, and music teacher education.

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## CHAPTER 1

### QUESTIONS OF MUSIC TEACHER IDENTITY

Who are music teachers, and how do they become music teachers? Music education researchers investigate these questions because they are central to what music teacher educators do. Music teacher educators present knowledge preservice music teachers may need, offer them opportunities to develop skills they may use, and guide reflections on their experiences in order to prepare them to be successful music teachers. Music teacher educators shape not only what preservice music teachers know and believe about themselves as music teachers, they shape who preservice music teachers are and what they do as music teachers. In short, music teacher education is a process of shaping identities. Thus, it is crucial that music teacher educators understand who music teachers are and how they construct their identities as music teachers.

This document represents my attempt to understand more about music teachers' identities: who music teachers are, how they are becoming music teachers, and how they construct their experiences of teaching music together with their students. In this chapter, I briefly summarize two dominant frameworks—*role* and *socialization*—that music education researchers have previously used to organize their investigations of music teachers' identities. Then, I discuss problematic assumptions embedded in these approaches that frame identity negotiation as a normative process and limit the agency of music teachers in negotiating their identities and co-constructing their experiences of teaching music with their students. Finally, I posit an alternative frame—*becoming*—that I used to shape my inquiry, then outline the purpose of my study and state the questions that guided my research.

## **Defining Identity**

Before proceeding any further, I would like to briefly examine how music education researchers have previously used the term *identity*, as they have defined this and other related terms in ways that overlap and conflict. Aside from the inevitable confusion this creates in the scholarly discourse surrounding music teacher identity (Regelski, 2007), how one conceptualizes identity has tangible consequences for music teacher education and, thus, for the identities of music teachers. Researchers have examined the phenomenon of music teacher identity through two separate—though inextricably linked—knowledge traditions: psychology and sociology. Because these two traditions are so entangled, it is impossible to classify studies of identity as entirely one and not the other. Rather, the question is what a given researcher *emphasizes* in their conception of or approach to identity.

### **Psychologically Focused Conceptualizations of Identity**

Researchers working primarily from the field of psychology tend to focus on identities as sets of cognitive structures or schemas. McClellan (2017), for example, defined identity as “a cognitive structure [which] serves as a personal frame of reference for interpreting experience and self-relevant information and answering questions about the meaning, significance, and purpose of life” (p. 71). Researchers working from this perspective tend to focus their work on uncovering the defining knowledge or schemas music teachers possess, how that knowledge serves as an interpretive frame for constructing new knowledge or schemas, and how that knowledge affects behavior.

Within the field of psychology, researchers use several terms related to identity. For example, in their work on possible selves, Markus and Nurius (1986) focused on *self-*

*concept*, which they defined as “a system of affective-cognitive structures (also called theories or schemas) about the self that lends structure and coherence to the individual’s self-relevant experiences” (p. 955). Dolloff’s (1999) study of the images music teachers construct of themselves serves as an example of *self-concept* research in music education. By having preservice music teachers and graduate students tell stories and draw pictures of themselves and their memories of music teaching, Dolloff was able to illuminate the frames of reference through which these music teachers filtered their self-relevant experiences as music teachers.

But *self-concept* is distinctly different from *identity*. Baumeister (2004) explained the difference as such: “A self-concept exists only in one person’s mind, whereas identity is essentially social. That is, identity rests on a definition of the self that is shared by the person, other people, and society at large” (p. 268). In other words, *self-concept* is exclusively internal; it is a system of knowledge and beliefs that are not necessarily validated or shared by others. *Identity*, on the other hand, is a social construct; it is a shared system of knowledge and beliefs that are formed through negotiating one’s own knowledge—or *self-concept*—with others’ knowledge and beliefs about one’s self.

### **Sociologically Focused Conceptualizations of Identity**

Baumeister’s definition of identity belies the close connection between psychological and sociological conceptions of identity. Researchers working primarily from the field of sociology tend to emphasize the interactions of individuals with others as they negotiate and interpret their self-relevant knowledge, the context in which that negotiation takes place, and the larger social forces that shape that negotiation. In other words, rather than focus on the knowledge music teachers possess as their object of

study, sociologically-oriented researchers focus on the process of building that knowledge and how that knowledge functions as a means for music teachers to relate to and interpret themselves and others in their music teaching practice.

Sociological researchers generally conceptualize this negotiation process as *socialization*, defined by Austin, Isbell, and Russell (2012) as “the process by which an individual acquires the beliefs, values, skills and resources needed to live and participate in society” (p. 67). Socialization is predicated on what sociologists call a *role*, a socially defined set of specific actions and expectations applicable to all individuals who occupy a certain position in social situations. The traits, characteristics, and expectations of people who occupy a certain role are “accessible to all members of a society,” and establish a shared definition of who people within that role are and what they do (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 91). An individual’s knowledge of their role and how they enact their role is, therefore, an indispensable part of their identity as it serves as the central reference against which they and others negotiate self-relevant knowledge. Thus, the process of constructing an *identity*—self-relevant knowledge shared with others—is the process of negotiating one’s *self-concept* with one’s *role*.

### **A Working Definition**

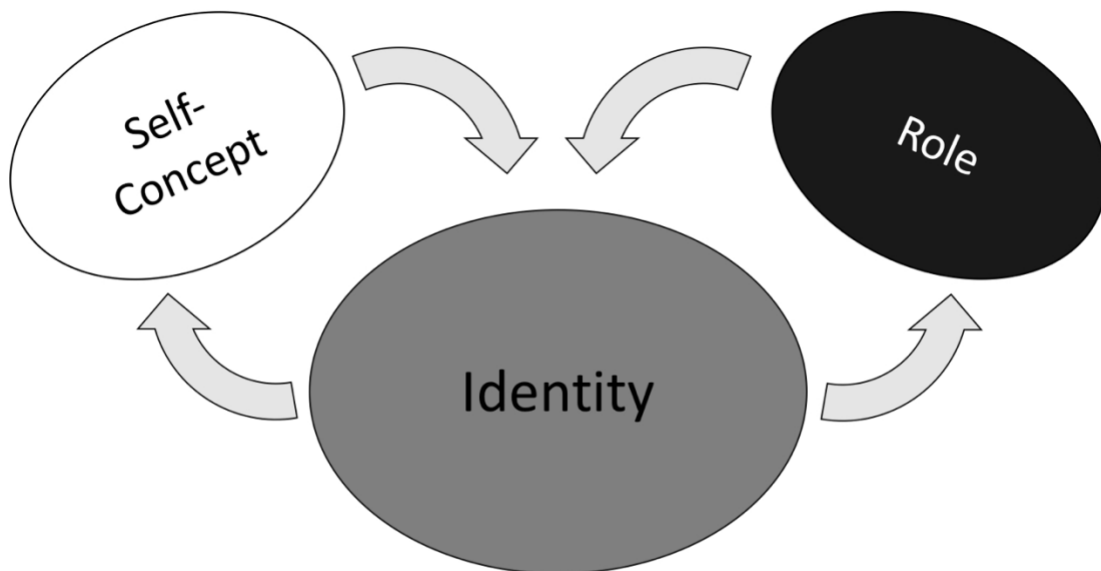
As I mentioned above, it is impossible to separate studies of identity into those that work strictly from a psychological perspective and those that work strictly from a sociological perspective. Researchers within each field draw heavily on theories and evidence from the other, and have agreed on several propositions about identity. Below, I highlight two of these common propositions to further clarify the working definition I will propose.

First, both sociological and psychological researchers have proposed that individuals have multiple identities and roles depending on the social context in which they find themselves (see Baumeister, 2004; Baumeister & Bushman, 2011; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Markus & Nurius, 1986; McCall & Simmons, 1978). This proposition has carried over into music education research (see Bernard, 2005; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Pellegrino, 2009; Roberts, 2004). Some music education researchers have used the term *occupational identity* to clarify and limit the focus of their research to the self-knowledge and beliefs that are relevant to music teachers' specific *role* as music teachers (e.g., Froehlich & L'Roy, 1985; Isbell, 2008, 2015; L'Roy, 1983; Russell, 2012). This, too, was the focus of my inquiry, and while I acknowledge that individuals have multiple contextually-dependent identities, I elected not to use the term *occupational identity* in order to avoid drawing an a priori distinction between what knowledge is and is not relevant to music teachers as they teach music.

Second, given the continually changing nature of social contexts, the assertion that identities are contextually dependent carries the corollary that identities can change or evolve, a proposition acknowledged by both sociological and psychological theorists. Markus and Kunda (1986), for example, argued for a working self-concept composed of "one's core self-conceptions embedded in a context of more tentative self-conceptions that are tied to the immediate social circumstances" (p. 859). Berger and Luckmann (1966) similarly argued that "identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations" (p. 194). Again, this malleable conception of identity has carried over into music education research (see Bernard, 2005; Brewer, 2014; Gray, 2011; Pellegrino, 2009; Russell, 2012). I would like

to emphasize, however, that identity is not simply a process. It also incorporates the continually constructed self-knowledge that results from a continual process of negotiation.

For the purposes of my research, I drew primarily from sociological literature—though informed by psychological literature—to broadly define *identity* as an individual’s knowledge and beliefs about themselves, shared and continually negotiated with others. I illustrate the identity negotiation process in Figure 1. Both an individual’s internal knowledge of themselves—their *self-concept*—and the expectations others have of them within a particular context—their *role*—contribute to their *identity*, as illustrated by the arrows at the top-center of the figure. An individual’s subsequent actions based on their *identity* then act back on their *self-concept* and others’ expectations, as illustrated by the arrows in the bottom-left and bottom-right of the figure.



*Figure 1.* Identity negotiation as a continual process. An individual’s *self-concept* and their *role* contribute to their *identity*. Their subsequent actions based on their *identity* then inform their *self-concept* and others’ expectations.

To understand the identities of music teachers, then, researchers must understand how music teachers define themselves—their *self-concepts*—and how they are defined by others with whom they interact and society at large—their *role*—as well as how these definitions are negotiated. In other words, the two fundamental questions that music education researchers investigating music teacher identity ask are similar to the questions with which I began this chapter: “Who are music teachers—according to themselves and others?” and “How do music teachers become music teachers?” Many of the researchers investigating these questions in music education have used the traditional frameworks of *role* and *socialization* to guide their inquiries. Below, I will briefly explore these approaches, and problematize some of the underlying assumptions of those approaches.

### **Who Are Music Teachers?**

#### **Establishing the Role**

Researchers pursuing the *who* question generally focus on identities as sets of definitive characteristics, knowledge, or traits that music teachers attribute to themselves as music teachers, or that others attribute to music teachers. In other words, these researchers focus on defining the social expectations that form the music teacher *role*. Some researchers have used surveys to ask music teachers to list traits, characteristics, dispositions, and knowledge they believe define a music teacher; or to identify the characteristics they would attribute to themselves as a music teacher (Froehlich & L’Roy, 1985; Juchniewicz, 2010, 2014; Powell & Parker, 2017; Wagoner, 2015; Woody, Gilbert, & Laird, 2018). Given that *self-concepts* are the frame through which individuals interpret self-relevant information, the participants’ individual answers in each of these studies would reflect their self-concepts. When aggregated, however, the data compiled

by these researchers are a generic and decontextualized picture of expectations for music teachers rather than the idiosyncratic views of individual music teachers. In other words, these researchers claim their aggregated data indicate the general expectations of the music teacher *role*, as defined by music teachers themselves.

Music education researchers have also worked with other groups who interact with music teachers—such as high school students (Kelly, 2008; Whitaker, 2011), school administrators (Juchniewicz, 2016), and collegiate applied studio teachers (Royston & Springer, 2017)—to determine what traits or characteristics define the music teacher *role* from the perspective of other members of society. Often, researchers have framed their inquiries as discovering what these other groups characterize as “effective” or “successful” music teaching, though researchers rarely explicitly define the criteria for “effective” or “successful” music teaching within the context of these studies. Building on Teachout’s (1997) analysis of effective music teaching literature, Brewer (2009) proposed a theoretical model for the knowledge and skills necessary for effective music teaching: musical skills/knowledge, teaching skills/knowledge, and personal skills/qualities. Thus, Brewer’s model is a means of organizing the traits and characteristics others in society expect of those occupying the music teacher *role*.

Given that music education researchers have generally accepted that individuals can have multiple identities, researchers have also focused on identifying other roles music educators might fill that intersect and overlap with their music teacher role (e.g., Austin et al., 2012; Bernard, 2005; Bouij, 1998; Brewer, 2009; Froehlich & L’Roy, 1985; Isbell, 2008; L’Roy, 1983; Roberts, 1991, 2004; Russell, 2012). In particular, music education researchers have focused a great deal of attention on the definitions and

interactions of the “musician” and “teacher” roles (Pellegrino, 2009). Bouij’s (1998) typology, organized along the axes of “Musician-Teacher” identity and “Broad-Narrow Musical Comprehensiveness” depending on which role a music teacher believed was more salient within their context, has been particularly influential in shaping this research.

The drawback to investigating the *who* question through the *role* framework, however, is that the answers often appear stable or universal, particularly in studies where researchers have used quantitative survey methods (e.g., Austin et al., 2012; Froehlich & L’Roy, 1985; Juchniewicz, 2010, 2016; Kelly, 2008; Powell & Parker, 2017; Royston & Springer, 2017; Woody et al., 2018). By removing traits and characteristics from their original contexts, these researchers are describing abstractions, generalized depictions of expectations for an ideal music teacher that none of the participants actually embody in their entirety. These abstractions take on a normative bent when data are derived from questions about “effective” or “successful” teaching, judgements which are necessarily contextually-based evaluations. This becomes problematic when music teachers, researchers, and music teacher educators use this collection of decontextualized expectations to define and evaluate anyone who claims to fill the music teacher *role* without regard for the specific context in which that individual exists.

### **Troubling the Role**

But how stable is this collection of expectations that these researchers claim form the music teacher *role*? Several other researchers have conducted qualitative studies of single or small groups of music teachers that illustrate the complex entanglement of understandings that inform how individual music teachers understand themselves and

what they do as music teachers (e.g., Abramo & Austin, 2014; Bernard, 2005; Brewer, 2009, 2014; Conway, Eros, Pellegrino, & West, 2010; Dabback, 2018; Dolloff, 1999; Ferguson, 2003; Gray, 2011; Natale-Abramo, 2014; Pellegrino, 2014; Schmidt, 2010). Their findings trouble the abstract and universal concept of a music teacher *role* by illuminating the *self-concepts* of individual music teachers.

Music teachers have their own unique interpretations of their personal experiences that create tensions with the expectations they face in their particular circumstances. This applies equally to preservice music teachers (Brewer, 2014; Conway et al., 2010; Dabback, 2018; Dolloff, 1999; Paise, 2010) and inservice music teachers (Abramo & Austin, 2014; Dolloff, 1999; Gray, 2011; Natale-Abramo, 2014). Indeed, researchers have found that music teachers at all points in their career draw upon their individual experiences to make sense of who they are and what they do as music teachers (e.g., Bernard, 2005; Dabback, 2018; Ferguson, 2003; Gray, 2011; Pellegrino, 2014; Schmidt, 2010). In other words, music teachers continually construct *self-concepts* throughout their careers that reflect their individual understandings of their situation, understandings which do not conform wholesale to the predefined music teacher *role* I discussed above.

Researchers (Bernard, 2005; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Brewer, 2009, 2014; Dolloff, 1999; Gray, 2011; Paise 2010) have frequently drawn on the concept *role-identity* to describe the result of the negotiation and tensions between *self-concepts* and *role*. McCall and Simmons (1978) define a *role-identity* as an individual's "imaginative view of himself [*sic*] as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position" (p. 65, emphasis in original). They use the term *role-identity* to refer to the knowledge—often idealized—that an individual has of themselves which serves as "an

important set of those perspectives or frames of reference for appraising one's thoughts and actions" (p. 67). McCall and Simmons also acknowledge that individuals have multiple, contextually situated role-identities, and that role-identities are continually shaped by feedback individuals receive based on interactions with others. All of these points resonate with definition of *self-concept* I presented above (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

However, I have chosen not to use the term *role-identity* to describe music teachers' self-relevant knowledge for two reasons. First, by combining two distinctly separate terms into a single concept, the term *role-identity* may further contribute to the semantic confusion that exists in scholarly discourse surrounding music teacher identity (see Regelski, 2007). Second, the term *role-identity* is inextricably built around the normative concept of *role*. As McCall and Simmons (1978) explain:

Role-identities are not at all purely idiosyncratic but actually include many conventional standards and expectations that would be held toward any occupant of that status. That is, among the contents of any role-identity are included those vague and abstract expectations we have discussed as social role. . . . The conventional expectations provide the structural framework of a role-identity, whereas the individual embellishments put some human meat on these arid bones. (p. 69)

While I recognize that social expectations strongly influence the individual knowledge music teachers have of themselves, defining this individual knowledge as trappings that hang upon the solid structure of social expectations reinforces the normative aspects of the *role*. To describe music teachers' knowledge and beliefs about

themselves as a *role-identity* is to place the music teacher *role* as the central referent around which all music teacher *role-identities* revolve. Put another way, the assertion that all music teachers are unique variations on a template is still predicated on the assumption that there is a normative template upon which individuals make variations. Thus, I have chosen not to use *role-identity* as a concept in my research, and will instead use the terms *self-concept*, *role*, and *identity* as I defined them above.

To summarize, none of the participants in any of the studies I mentioned above have ever perfectly embodied the ideal music teacher *role*. In other words, the findings of qualitative researchers in music education suggest that the music teacher *role*, as a set of ideal expectations, is strictly an abstract concept that does not exist in any embodied form. Their findings also suggest that social expectations change depending on the specific contexts in which music teachers find themselves; this notion has been generally accepted in the fields of psychology, sociology, and music education (Roberts, 2007). This further destabilizes the concept of a universally applicable *role*. In other words, while it is possible to create generalized lists of the traits and expectations music teachers are *likely* to have and encounter, those lists are insufficient to capture and describe the lived experiences of music teachers. Thus, the theoretical concept of *role* is too rigid to contain the lived phenomena of changing contexts and social expectations.

### **How Do Music Teachers Become Music Teachers?**

#### **Socialization**

Researchers pursuing the *how* question tend to focus their inquiries on the process by which music teachers construct and negotiate their identities. In other words, these researchers are interested in how individuals learn the characteristics of the music teacher

*role*, how that knowledge is integrated into their *self-concept*, and how that knowledge guides their interactions with others. While researchers have referred to this process by a number of terms—including *identity construction* (Natale-Abramo, 2014; Wagoner, 2015) and *identity development* (Brewer, 2009; Haston & Russell, 2012; Powell & Parker, 2017)—Roberts (2004) asserted that the differences between most conceptions of identity negotiation are semantic rather than substantive, regardless of whether they are based in psychology or sociology (p. 3). In other words, researchers working from both psychological and sociological perspectives view identity negotiation in fundamentally similar ways, though they use slightly different terminology.

As I mentioned above, many music education researchers have conceptualized the identity negotiation process as *socialization*, frequently using symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; McCall & Simmons, 1978) as a theoretical framework to understand this process (Austin et al., 2012; Bouij, 2004; Brewer, 2009; Froehlich & L’Roy, 1985; Gray, 2011; Isbell, 2008, 2015; L’Roy, 1983; Russell, 2012; Sieger, 2016; Woodford, 2002). Symbolic interactionism posits that individuals construct their knowledge of society and roles through face-to-face interactions with others. These interactions confirm or disconfirm their knowledge and, in turn, reshape that knowledge. Therefore, the two primary foci for music teacher socialization researchers have been: 1) Who do music teachers interact with to learn about their *role*; and 2) What types of interactions or experiences do they have in order to learn about their *role*?

Researchers have examined both *role models* and what I will call *role supporters* in their investigations of the individuals with whom music teachers interact. *Role models* are individuals music teachers would like to emulate in their role as music teachers

(Austin et al., 2012; Isbell, 2008; Madsen & Kelly, 2002). Role *supporters* are individuals who confirm and sustain the knowledge music teachers have of themselves in their role—colleagues, supervisors, students, and family (Austin et al., 2012; Gray, 2011; Isbell, 2008; Russell, 2012). Investigating and identifying role models and supporters allows researchers to locate and examine the sources of the knowledge that music teachers believe define their *role* as a music teacher and continue to shape their *socialization* as music teachers.

Simply identifying role models and supporters, however, risks isolating the people with whom music teachers interact from the interactions themselves. Thus, researchers have investigated the interactions or experiences of music teachers in conjunction with their role models and supporters. These researchers have found that preservice teaching experiences (Austin et al., 2012; Brewer, 2009; Isbell, 2008), performing in large ensembles (Austin et al., 2012; Isbell, 2008; Madsen & Kelly, 2002), taking private lessons (Austin et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2003; Isbell, 2008; Madsen & Kelly, 2002), teaching in public schools (Gray, 2011; Russell, 2012), and professional development conferences (Russell, 2012) are experiences through which role models and supporters might provide and strengthen the self-relevant knowledge of music teachers.

As with research on music teacher *role*, research on the *how* question using *socialization* as a guiding framework tends toward reductive interpretations of the identity negotiation process when researchers deploy quantitative survey methods (Austin et al., 2012; Froehlich & L’Roy, 1985; Isbell, 2008; L’Roy, 1983; Madsen & Kelly, 2002; Russell, 2012). When researchers aggregate their data for analysis, they separate specific individuals from specific interactions and contexts. This results in a generic

picture of who music teachers will encounter, the situations in which those encounters will take place, and the effect of those encounters on music teachers without consideration of the specific social contexts of a given teacher. This generic picture sets up a normative pathway that music teachers must follow as they negotiate their identities as music teachers.

This normative pathway is an inevitable result of conceptualizing the *how* question as *socialization* because of problematic assumptions embedded within the traditional definition of the term. As I defined it above, socialization is predicated on the concept of a fixed, pre-defined social *role* that is known to all members of society. Given the pre-established role, *socialization* is the process of initiating individuals “into the various cognitive and even affective layers of the body of knowledge that is directly *and* indirectly appropriate to this role” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 94, emphasis in original). *Socialization* privileges the *role* as the ideal definition of who a person is and what they do, the ultimate goal toward which an identity negotiation proceeds. We might, therefore, reconfigure the identity negotiation diagram in Figure 1 as a *socialization* diagram by removing the arrow in the bottom right corner (see Figure 2). While both an individual’s *self-concept* and social expectations might shape their *identity*, their subsequent actions can only reshape their *self-concepts*; they cannot—theoretically—alter the expectations of society at large. In other words, socialization is not an identity *negotiation* as much as it is an identity *acquisition*.

### **Reframing Socialization**

Some researchers have attempted to reframe the process of socialization to account for this critique. Bouij (2004), for example, drew on Reinharz’s (1979)

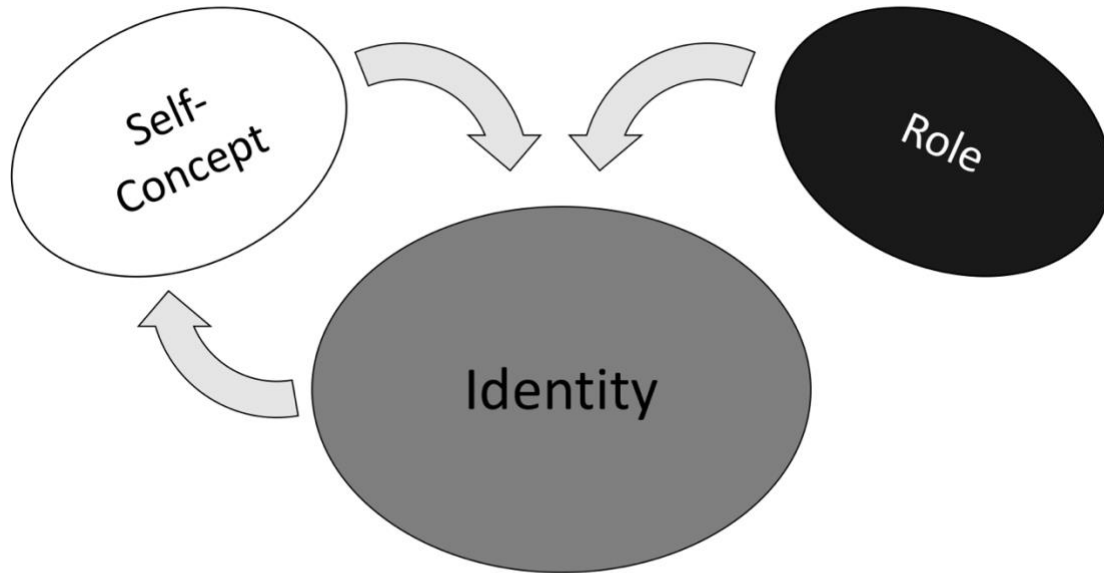


Figure 2. Identity negotiation as socialization. While both an individual’s *self-concept* and *role* shape their *identity*, their subsequent actions can only reshape their *self-concepts*. They cannot change the *role* as established by society at large.

reconceptualization of socialization as “not merely the transfer [of knowledge] from one group to another in a static social structure, but *the active creation of a new identity through a personal definition of the situation*” (p. 374, emphasis in original). Given this fundamental change in the definition of socialization, I will examine Reinharz’s argument in more detail.

Reinharz’s critique of socialization centered on her particular struggle of becoming a sociological researcher. She framed socialization as the tension-filled endeavor of learning to enact research methods that did not resonate with her own beliefs and experiences. As a result, Reinharz argued, socialization was a process of dehumanization which occurred “when [professionals] attempt to transform themselves into something other than that which they are—whenever they repress their values, attitudes, and goals for the sake of professionalization” (p. 30). Music education researchers have documented similar tensions in the music teacher socialization process

(e.g., Brewer, 2014; Conway et al., 2010). This, in turn, has much broader consequences: “Defining socialization in terms of denying the self in order to reduce conflict reflects and abets a society in which selves and autonomous thought are endangered” (Reinharz, 1979, p. 374).

Reinharz noted that the “basic dilemma of [her] socialization was the tension between becoming a member of the group and retaining [her] individuality and critical perspective” (p. 377). This mirrors the tension between the music teacher *role* and individual music teachers’ *self-concepts* I described above. Reinharz resolved this tension “only by rejecting the teleological image that posits a fixed identity definition as the culmination of the socialization process. Instead [she] attempted to create [her] own identity definition and then socialize [herself] into it” (p. 379). Reinharz’s response to the pressures of conformity in the socialization process was to assert the knowledge she had negotiated between the *role* and her *self-concept*—her *identity*—as an alternate definition for what might be considered a socially acceptable definition of a sociologist; she attempted to change the sociologist *role* as defined by the sociological community. In other words, Reinharz attempted to regain her agency in the identity negotiation process by restoring the bottom right arrow of the socialization diagram I presented above in Figure 2. Thus, Reinharz proposed that “socialization be redefined as a system of *reciprocal impact* between the parent culture and the novice” (p. 379, emphasis added).

While Reinharz’s reconceptualization—and Bouij’s (2004) subsequent use of her definition—more readily acknowledges the agency of individuals in the identity negotiation process, music education researchers have not consistently adopted this definition of socialization. Indeed, researchers continue to explicitly define socialization

as a process of acquisition (Austin et al., 2012; Isbell, 2008, 2015). On a more practical note—similar to my critique of the term *role-identity* above—attempting to redefine the term *socialization* has the potential to further contribute to the confusion that already exists in the scholarly discourse surrounding music teacher identity. Thus, in the interest of clarity, I will use the term *socialization* to mean the traditional sociological process of acquiring the traits of a normative *role*. Below, I will explore an alternate frame for my study that resonates with the spirit of Reinharz’s and Bouij’s reconceptualization.

### **Identity Research and Music Teacher Education**

Taken together, the *role* and *socialization* frames create a normative discourse around questions of who music teachers are and how they become music teachers. *Role* literature that identifies knowledge, traits, behaviors, and dispositions of “effective” or “successful” music teachers risks reducing music teacher education curricula to lists of competencies and traits that preservice music teachers must acquire to replicate the archetypal music teacher *role*. *Socialization* literature that identifies universal experiences music teachers must have risks framing preservice music teachers as passive recipients in a transmission process. In other words, music teacher educators can use *role* and *socialization* research to construct a standardized, normative template from which they can shape preservice music teachers. Isbell (2015) neatly summarized this goal: “If music teacher educators wish to improve their preparation programs, *the* process by which preservice music teachers *acquire the norms* and understandings of *the* music teaching profession . . . needs to be closely examined” (p. 6, emphasis added).

There are benefits to this normative discourse in music teacher education. Stable norms and understandings of the music teaching profession—to use Isbell’s (2015)

terms—allow music teacher educators to standardize their practice. Stability allows music teacher educators to communicate clear expectations to preservice teachers, precisely measure the progress of preservice teachers on the pathway to being a music teacher, identify and understand challenges that preservice teachers encounter, and intervene in the socialization process to support struggling preservice teachers. In other words, this normative discourse increases the efficiency and effectiveness of music teacher education toward certain goals.

But this efficiency comes at a cost. Taken to the extreme, the *role* and *socialization* frameworks greatly limit a preservice music teacher's agency in the negotiation of their identities as music teachers. While a preservice music teacher might have an individualized *self-concept* of themselves as a music teacher, the purpose of the *socialization* process is to bring this knowledge into an acceptable level of conformity with the predefined expectations of the music teacher *role*, lest their self-concept contain any misconceptions about what a music teacher *really* is and does. Thus, a loss of music teacher agency and individuality is the price of efficiency and stability in music teacher education.

### **A Theoretical Dilemma**

Music education researchers, then, face a dilemma when conceptualizing their investigations of who music teachers are and how they become music teachers. The traditional sociological frames of *role* and *socialization* assume a normative pathway on which music teachers progress toward a normative goal, and thus contribute to music teacher education curricula that can limit the agency of individual music teachers in negotiating their identities as music teachers. The findings of many researchers, however,

indicate that this goal and this pathway are abstractions that cannot completely account for the complexities of individual circumstances. This, in turn, renders music teacher education curricula meant to transmit specific knowledge and skills inadequate to fully prepare music teachers for their lived experiences.

And yet, researchers have documented that social expectations exert a powerful normative influence upon who music teachers are and how they become music teachers (Abramo & Austin, 2014; Brewer, 2014; Conway et al., 2010; Gray, 2011; Natale-Abramo, 2014). If this is the case, knowledge of specific norms would be valuable for music education researchers to examine and include in music teacher education curricula. How might music education researchers conceptualize their investigations of who music teachers are and how they become music teachers in a way that acknowledges the influence social expectations have on identities without framing those expectations as normative prescriptions? How might music education researchers investigate music teacher identities in ways that support curricula that provide preservice music teachers not only with content knowledge, but also “foster a disposition of a creative problem-solver and reflective practitioner so that teachers are equipped to work through the contextual dilemmas that arise in teaching” (Natale-Abramo, 2014, p. 66)?

### **Becoming Music Teacher**

Derrida (1978) noted that there are two types of interpretation in the social sciences. The first type “dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play” and the ambiguities of language and meaning (p. 369). Researchers who ascribe to this mode of interpretation attempt to uncover universal truths through their research. This has been the goal of many music education researchers working within the *role* and

*socialization* frameworks—to discover the knowledge, traits, behaviors, and dispositions that music teachers should possess, and to outline the most efficient way to impart those norms in order to provide stable truths about who music teachers are and how they become music teachers. In other words, researchers working within the *role* and *socialization* frameworks have focused on who music teachers *are* or *ought to be*.

Derrida’s second type of interpretation, “which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play,” and attempts to pass beyond the notion of stable or fixed meanings (pp. 369-370). To engage in this second type of interpretation, music education researchers must acknowledge that there is no stable definition of who music teachers are and how they become music teachers. By doing so, they can focus less on defining who music teachers *are* and focus more on exploring how music teachers create possibilities for who they *might be*. Reinharz (1979) ascribed to this mode of interpretation when she rejected the “image that posits a fixed identity definition as the culmination of the socialization process,” and attempted to create a new possibility for herself as a sociologist (p. 379). By engaging in this type of interpretation, music education researchers could contribute to the development of music teacher education curricula that, as Natale-Abramo (2014) suggested, foster preservice music teachers as creative problem solvers who are prepared to work through the unique dilemmas they will encounter in their individual teaching contexts.

### **Becoming as a Framework for Identity Negotiation**

If the *role* and *socialization* frames are insufficient to work toward this goal, what might be an appropriate alternative framework? In her examination of how student teachers learn to teach during their internships, Britzman (2003) argued against the

traditional frame of teacher socialization, which she described as “at once authoritative and impossible” (p. 71). She pointed out that socialization was unable to account for “the complexity of negotiation and dependency that characterize the activity of learning to teach by teaching” (p. 70). In other words, Britzman’s analysis resonated with Reinharz’s (1979) critique of socialization as a normative process, a framework that limited the agency of teachers as they negotiated their identities.

Instead of attempting to redefine socialization, however, Britzman (2003) suggested that researchers shift their framework to *becoming*, a term which “conveys the simultaneity of time, place, events, and the meanings we give them” (p. 69). *Becoming*, Britzman argued, is based on *subjectivity*, “our conceptual orderings of things and the deep investments summoned by such orderings” (p. 71). This framework foregrounds individual teachers’ *self-concepts* instead of the social *role*. By focusing on subjectivity, researchers could “shift [their] thinking from a static notion of socialization that summons us to take up the unitary, noncontradictory discourse of the completed self, and move to a provisional, contradictory, and multiple understanding” of what it means to be a teacher (p. 71). In other words, rather than framing identity negotiation as an individual progressing toward a normative end, *becoming* frames identity negotiation as an individual continually reconciling specific social expectations with their own understandings of the contexts in which they find themselves. Because there is no normative endpoint posited by Britzman’s *becoming* frame—indeed, no endpoint at all—it might orient researchers more readily toward exploring possibilities for who music teachers *might be*.

Following a similar line of reasoning, Dall’Alba (2009) recommended that teacher educators shift the focus of their research and curricula to prioritize “developing ways of being the professionals in question” (p. 35). Central to this way of thinking were the understandings that teachers are “always already embedded in, and entwined with” their worlds, constantly interacting with others in unique contexts, and continuously pursuing a range of possibilities for being (p. 35). This constant pursuit of possibilities means that teachers are “continually in a process of *becoming*; more specifically, we are already (oriented to) what we are ‘not yet’” (p. 36, emphasis added). In other words, music teachers are continually exploring new possibilities for how they understand themselves and how they interact with their worlds as music teachers.

Based on both Britzman’s (2003) and Dall’Alba’s (2009) arguments, I adopted *becoming* as a frame through which to view questions of identity negotiation. For the purposes of this study, I broadly define *becoming* as an individual’s continual pursuit of possibilities for being in—existing in and interacting with—the world. *Becoming* situates music teachers within particular contexts, and recognizes the impermanence and ambiguities of those contexts. Both of these points resonate with the definition of *identity* and the process of identity negotiation I presented above. *Becoming* also avoids the normative underpinnings of the *socialization* and *role* frameworks that position social expectations as more ideal than an individual’s own understandings of their worlds.

Given this shift in thinking, I would reframe the goals of music teacher identity research as follows: In order to understand how a music teacher is *becoming* a music teacher, music education researchers need to understand 1) the social structures that shape the contexts in which a music teacher exists, 2) how that music teacher defines

themselves within those structures, 3) the expectations others have for that music teacher within those contexts and structures, and 4) how that music teacher negotiates and reconciles those expectations and structures with their own understandings to pursue possibilities for themselves as a music teacher.

### **Studying Music Teacher Identity and Becoming**

In order to meet these goals, researchers must study how practicing music teachers negotiate contextual dilemmas with a focus on how a music teacher's understanding of who they are and who they are becoming as a music teacher informs those negotiations. In other words, *becoming* as a framework for understanding music teacher identities introduces a third broad question: what do identities do? How does the way a music teacher understands themselves and who they are *becoming* as a music teacher shape what they do as a music teacher? How do their actions shape the structures of their specific social context? How do those social changes, in turn, shape who a music teacher is *becoming*?

Several researchers have completed studies in music education that begin to address these questions (e.g., Abramo & Austin, 2014; Brewer, 2014; Gray, 2011; Natale-Abramo, 2014), each illustrating different complexities of how music teachers understand themselves and how they negotiate various contextual dilemmas. These studies, however, have viewed the meanings and understandings of who music teachers are becoming solely through eyes of music teachers. If—as I argued above—identity negotiation is a continual process of reconciling one's *self-concept* with the expectations of others within specific interactions and contexts, then a thorough examination of who music teachers are becoming must include not only how *music teachers* understand and

shape those interactions, but also how *others* understand and shape those same interactions. Put another way, to understand how music teachers continually negotiate their identities, music education researchers need to understand both sides of the negotiation.

The others with whom music teachers most frequently interact as music teachers are music students. Music education researchers have built a large body of literature that examines how students negotiate their musical identities through engaging in music (e.g., Kruse, 2013, 2016; Major, 2017; Mills, 2010; Nichols, 2013; Parker, 2014, 2018; Willow-Peterson, 2016). However, music education researchers have yet to link the literature examining *students'* musical identities with research that examines how *music teachers* negotiate their identities. Assuming that both music teachers and students are negotiating their identities through their interactions, how do music teachers and students together shape their shared social context and, in turn, continually shape the possibilities for who they are becoming together? What implications might understanding this process of mutual identity negotiation and *becoming* have for how music teacher educators prepare preservice music teachers?

### **Purpose of This Study**

This study aimed to explore the encounters of one veteran orchestra teacher with three of his students in order to understand how these four individuals negotiated their identities together and pursued possibilities for who they were becoming. Four questions guided my inquiry:

- 1) What are the contexts of the interactions of this teacher and these students?

- 2) What individual understandings shape the interactions of this teacher and these students?
- 3) What resources are available to this teacher and these students in their interactions?
- 4) How do this teacher and these students negotiate these contexts, understandings, and resources to pursue possibilities for who they might become as a music teacher and music students?

### **Organization of This Dissertation**

The first three chapters set the stage for how I approached my research. In Chapter 1, I summarized the underlying questions and goals of researchers investigating music teacher identity, established the frame through which I examined music teacher identity in this study, and outlined the preliminary questions that guided my inquiry. In Chapter 2, I outline strong structuration theory (Giddens, 1984; Stones, 2005) as the theoretical framework I used to organize and interpret my findings, reframe my research questions using the language of strong structuration theory, and examine select research literature using strong structuration theory as a lens to establish a knowledge base from which readers might begin to interpret my findings. In Chapter 3, I outline the methodological procedures and considerations that guided my investigation.

The final three chapters explore the findings of my study. In Chapter 4, I present a narrative of four interlocking sets of stories about an orchestra teacher—Steve Davis—and three students in his orchestra program—Lena, Jack, and Britney. These stories give readers a realistic depiction of how each participant understood themselves and their interactions with the other participants from their own perspectives. In Chapter 5, I

interpret these stories using strong structuration theory, and organize the findings according to the research questions I posed. In Chapter 6, I provide a brief summary of the document, and discuss the implications of my findings for music teachers and music teacher educators.

I have also included three appendices. Both identity research and strong structuration theory use terms that readers may understand differently, or that other researchers may use differently in their studies, and this may lead to confusion or misinterpretation. In the interest of precision, I will highlight key terms in italics and define them as I use them, as I did in this chapter. Appendix A provides a glossary of these terms as a reference. Appendix B contains the approval, recruitment, and consent forms for this study from the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board. Appendix C is the tentative semi-structured interview protocol I prepared before the initial interview process. In the interest of confidentiality, I masked all names of people and places with pseudonyms throughout this document.

## CHAPTER 2

### REINTERPRETING LITERATURE WITH STRONG STRUCTURATION THEORY

In Chapter 1, I argued that researchers investigating music teacher identity might adopt *becoming* as a frame to guide their investigations. I also outlined the purpose of my study within that framework, and stated the questions that guided my inquiry. In this chapter, I discuss strong structuration theory as the theoretical framework I used to organize the data and my findings. I begin by summarizing structuration theory as Giddens (1984) originally developed it, and review how Stones (2005) adapted those ideas as *strong* structuration theory. I then apply strong structuration theory as a lens to reinterpret existing literature on music teacher identities and the social contexts of music education to establish a knowledge base from which readers and I might begin to explore my findings.

I organized this chapter around the four research questions I posed in Chapter 1—reframed in the language of strong structuration theory—dedicating a section to each research question. Within each section, I summarize details of strong structuration theory relevant to the given question, and use strong structuration theory to reinterpret select literature that informed my investigation of that question. Given the vast body of research on music teacher identity and the social contexts of music education, I did not intend this chapter to be a comprehensive reading of every study related to these topics. Rather, I selected representative literature related to music teacher identity and the social contexts of music education to provide opportunities to fruitfully discuss examples of the relevant aspects of strong structuration theory for each of my research questions.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, structuration theory includes various specialized terms readers may understand differently, or that other researchers have used differently than how Giddens, Stones, and I will use them. Throughout this chapter, I highlight key terms in italics and define them in text when I first use them. I compiled definitions of these terms in a glossary (see Appendix A) which readers can consult as a reference.

### **Strong Structuration Theory: An Overview**

In Chapter 1, I outlined four goals for identity research within a *becoming* framework: In order to understand how a music teacher is *becoming* a music teacher, music education researchers need to understand 1) the social structures that shape the contexts in which a music teacher exists, 2) how that music teacher defines themselves within those structures, 3) the expectations others have for that music teacher within those contexts and structures, and 4) how that music teacher negotiates and reconciles those expectations and structures with their own understandings to pursue possibilities for themselves as a music teacher. I used structuration theory (Giddens, 1984)—adapted by Stones (2005) into *strong* structuration theory—as a theoretical framework that helped me organize and address these goals in my inquiry. I selected strong structuration theory because, as I will outline below, it foregrounds the active agency of individuals—such as music teachers and students—in the creation, maintenance, and alteration of social structures. It also situates the understandings of individuals—including their *identities*—within dynamic social contexts that individuals continually reshape through their actions. Thus, strong structuration theory resonated with the *becoming* frame that I posited in Chapter 1. In this section, I explore key aspects of Giddens’ original theory to lay the groundwork for my discussion of Stones’ revisions. Then, I briefly summarize critiques

of structuration theory, and describe how Stones addressed those critiques in *strong* structuration theory.

### **Origins of Structuration Theory**

Structuration theory grew out of Giddens' (1984) attempt to bridge a divide in the field of sociology. Functionalist theories—built upon the *role* and *socialization* frameworks I critiqued in Chapter 1—overemphasize the social whole without considering the agency of individual actors. Hermeneutic theories, on the other hand, center social existence in the subjectivity of individuals without adequately considering the influence of larger social forces. To bridge this gap, Giddens proposed a theory that linked the reproduction of large-scale social structures with the subjective experiences and knowledgeable action of individuals. He referred to this link as the *duality of structure*. Stones (2005) succinctly summarized this concept: “Social structures almost always either have agents within them and/or are the product of the past practices of agents. And agents, for their part, have social structures within them, not least in the guise of [individual understandings of the world]” (p. 4).

### **Social Structures: Rules and Resources**

Giddens (1984) grounded his understanding of social action in *encounters*: face-to-face engagements which operate as units of focused interaction (p. 71). Encounters are the “guiding thread of social interaction, the succession of engagements with others ordered within the daily cycle of activity” (p. 72). As individuals continually move through multiple encounters, they construct understandings of their world and their relationship to the world. Individuals draw upon these understandings as structures in social interactions.

Giddens divided *structures* into two broad categories: *rules* and *resources*. *Rules* are generalizable understandings or procedures for acting (Shilling, 1992, p. 78). Giddens (1984) distinguished between *constitutive* and *regulative* rules. *Constitutive rules* are norms and discourses that define people and things. For example, an understanding that an orchestra teacher is a content expert in string pedagogy is a *constitutive rule*; it sets a criterion for the definition of what an orchestra teacher is. *Regulative rules* are norms and discourses that prescribe certain actions under certain conditions (p. 20). An understanding that an orchestra teacher conducts a large ensemble of string players is a *regulative rule*; it specifies a certain action a music teacher takes when teaching.

*Resources*, the second category of structures, are material goods, services, and an individual's ability to influence and control people and objects (Shilling, 1992, p. 79).

Giddens (1984) also divided resources into *allocative* and *authoritative* resources.

*Allocative resources* are material objects and the ability to control materials. Instruments and program budgets, for example, are typical *allocative resources* for a music teacher.

*Authoritative resources* are other people and the ability to influence and control people (p. 33). The ability of an orchestra teacher to assign music to students to practice or the ability to create a seating chart that physically positions students in a rehearsal room are *authoritative resources*.

While the term *structures* gives the impression that *rules* and *resources* have material existence, most structures only exist "virtually" (Stones, 2005, pp. 67-74).

Structures are the meanings and understandings that guide how individuals make sense of their interactions with the world. Even a material good only becomes an *allocative resource* once an agent knows the material could potentially aid them in social action and

uses it as such. In other words, an object is not a *resource* until an individual *makes* it a resource. Thus, as Giddens (1984) argued, structures do not exist “independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity” (p. 26).

Giddens outlined three functions of structures in society: *signification*, *legitimation*, and *domination*. Structures as *signification* involve rules grouped together as larger interpretive schemas. These interpretive schemas help individuals communicate ideas and concepts. For example, *self-concepts*—“affective-cognitive structures . . . about the self that lend structure and coherence to the individual’s self-relevant experiences” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 955)—are rules as *signification*. Structures as *legitimation* involve rules grouped together as social norms, which enable moral judgements and sanctions against those who do not conform to those norms. Notions of “effective teaching” (e.g. Brewer, 2009; Teachout, 1997) are rules as *legitimation* because they are based on judgements of goals teachers ought to have and an assessment of whether or not a teacher has sufficiently met those goals.

Finally, structures as *domination* involve the unequal distribution of resources. Given the emergence of social justice paradigms in music education research since Giddens applied the term *domination* to structuration theory, I want to preempt misunderstanding and clarify how Giddens defined this term. Rather than referring to specific systems of oppression, Giddens broadly used the term *domination* to refer the abstract phenomenon of unequal resource distribution. In practice, unequal access to resources means individuals are able to exercise *power* differently. Like *domination*, Giddens (1984) defined *power* broadly, using it to refer to “the capacity to achieve outcomes” without any implication of a hierarchical relationship or sectional interest (p.

257). For example, different funding levels between equipment and repertoire line items within a music teacher's classroom budget are structures as *domination*. This teacher would have differing degrees of *power* to purchase equipment and music based on the funding levels they have and the goals they want to pursue.

Each of these three functions of structures is codependent. To extend my example from above, the music teacher with different funding to purchase equipment and repertoire—structures as *domination*—would need to decide how to use that *power* to best meet their music program goals. This teacher would make those decisions based on their normative schemas surrounding what a music program ought to be—structures as *legitimation*—and their interpretive schemas defining their responsibilities as a music teacher—structures as *signification*. Thus, an individual's actions always occur at specific intersections of these three forms of structures.

### **Position: An Alternative to Role**

Giddens described these unique intersections of structures as *positions*: “specific intersections of signification, domination, and legitimation which relate to the typification of agents” (Giddens, 1984, p. 83). Shilling (1992) clarified this definition, arguing that researchers could understand *positions* as “bundles of practices that are expected to be carried out by those occupying specific social places,” those places being marked by intersections of specific *rules* and *resources* in specific spaces and times (p. 80). In other words, “a social position involves the specification of a definite ‘identity’ within a network of social relations” (Giddens, 1984, p. 83).

Giddens' concept of *position* is an alternative to the normative concept of *role* I critiqued in Chapter 1. Shilling (1992) argued that structuration theory rejects the static

and non-contradictory conception of society that underpins the functionalist concept of *role* (p. 80). Instead, *position* rests on the assumption that it is impossible to group social expectations into stable, universal packages. Because they are, by definition, specific intersections of *structures* at specific times and places, *positions* are unique, dynamic collections of *rules* and *resources*. Two individuals can occupy *similar* positions based on contextually relevant structures, but those individuals can never occupy the *same* position.

Thus, *position* provides a link between structuration theory and identity research that resonates with a *becoming* framework. *Position* acknowledges the inherent ambiguity of social expectations, allows for the possibility that there may be contradictory expectations of an individual within a single context or encounter, and recognizes that expectations and understandings change between social contexts and over time. By describing *identities* in terms of *positions* within a matrix of *structures*, researchers might better understand the interactions between music teachers' *self-concepts* (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and the expectations of others that shape who music teachers are and who they are becoming.

### **Agency**

Depending on the specific structures that shape their *positions*, individuals will have differing degrees of *agency*. In structuration theory, *agency* is the capability to act in accordance with one's knowledge and desires in order to achieve intended outcomes. Giddens (1984) emphasized that while some structures may constrain the agency of some individuals more than others, structures are "not to be equated with constraint, but [are] always both constraining and enabling" (p. 25). In other words, while a structure may

constrain one individual, the same structure may also enable another individual in a different *position*. A single structure could also enable the same individual to follow different courses of action. Seeking out and pursuing possibilities for being and acting within an ever-changing field of structural enablements and constraints, then, becomes the continuing process of social interactions.

To analyze differences in how structures enable and constrain individuals, Giddens (1984) outlined three categories of constraint: *material constraint*, *negative sanction*, and *structural constraint*. *Material constraints* are limitations of the body and the physical environment (pp. 174-175). For example, the size of a rehearsal room poses a *material constraint* on how an orchestra teacher might plan activities for students. *Negative sanctions* are social restrictions or punishments individuals experience based on specific normative schemas. If a student violates a classroom expectation—such as forgetting to bring their instrument to class—a teacher may issue that student a lower grade as a *negative sanction*. Finally, *structural constraints* stem from the fact that many social structures pre-exist individuals and are broader in scope than an individual’s direct control (p. 176). Requirements for music teachers to obtain a professional certificate to teach in public schools, for example, are long-standing legal policies in many states, and individual teachers do not have the power to change that requirement. Thus, certification policies pose a *structural constraint* to music teachers.

### **Process of Structuration**

As I mentioned above, social interactions are comprised of various individuals pursuing possibilities within the enablements and constraints of the various *positions* they occupy. Based on their interpretive and normative schemas—*rules*—and the *resources* to

which they have access, individuals have specific *intentions*: beliefs that actions will have a “particular quality or outcome” (Giddens, 1984, p. 10). To achieve those intended outcomes, individuals exert *power* to use resources in accordance with their interpretive and normative understandings. Thus, *structures* are the means by which individuals accomplish their goals.

But an individual’s actions also change how they and others interpret the world, and change their access to resources. In other words, individuals reproduce and change structures through their actions. Thus, structures are, at the same time, both the *mode* and *result* of social action. Structures exist within agents and guide their understandings of and interactions with the world; but agents also create, maintain, and adapt structures through their interactions. This is the core phenomenon of the *duality of structure*. Giddens (1984) argued that human action occurs not as “an aggregate or series of separate intentions, reasons and motives,” but rather as “a continuous flow of conduct” (p. 3). The *structuration* process, then, is the continual creation, modification, and reproduction of social structures through the interactions of agents drawing on those structures (p. 25).

### **Critiques of Structuration Theory**

Despite widespread recognition that structuration theory was a significant theoretical contribution to sociology, sociologists also raised several concerns about Giddens’ theory (Bryant & Jary, 1991; Stones, 2005). I will explore four of these critiques in more detail, and how Stones addressed these concerns in his development of strong structuration theory.

**Rules and resources.** While Giddens emphasized the agency of individual actors, his use of the term *rules* communicated an overly prescriptive notion of what he intended (Stones, 2005, pp. 67-69). Given that agents can transpose *rules* to different contexts and follow, ignore, or transform rules through their actions, Stones suggested *schemas* as a more appropriate term. Throughout this remainder of this document, I use *schemas* as a substitute for the term *rules*. Stones also did not find Giddens' distinction between *constitutive* and *regulative* schemas, nor Giddens' distinction between *allocative* and *authoritative* resources, to be useful. Instead, Stones recategorized structures according to differences in agency—as *external* and *internal* structures—and according to the three functions of structures Giddens identified—*signification* as *interpretive schemas*, *legitimation* as *normative schemas*, and *domination* as *power capacities*. I will discuss Stones' regrouping of structures in more detail below.

**Differences in agency.** Despite the fact that agency was a critical assumption within his *duality of structure*, Giddens (1984) failed to expand upon differences in agency beyond his assertion that structures were both constraining and enabling (p. 25). While he delineated the three forms of constraint I discussed above, he did not elaborate on enablement. Neither did his assertion that agents were enabled and constrained differently based on their *position* facilitate a careful analysis of those differences and the implications for an agent's actions. In other words, *positioning* was unable to answer the question: what structures are within an agent's control, and which structures are not?

To compensate for this, Stones (2005) recategorized structures as *external* and *internal*. *External* structures are those structures over which an agent has—or believes they have—no control. Creating this category also enabled Stones to discard Giddens'

somewhat confusing term *structural constraint*. For example, rather than certification policies being structures that pose structural constraints, certification policies are *external* structures, and therefore pose constraints that individual music teachers can neither control nor avoid. *Internal* structures, on the other hand, are structures over which agents have a degree of control. *Self-concepts*, for example, are *internal* structures; they are interpretive schemas that individuals can readily change or apply to different circumstances. Thus, *external* and *internal* structures allow researchers to label and discuss the potential effects of an individual's *position* on their *agency*, and to more closely examine the variability in how individual agents might pursue possibilities.

**Structuration process.** Aside from the fact that agents “draw on” structures and thereby reproduce structures, critics noted that Giddens did not further develop details about the structuration process. This was a deliberate decision, as he did not want researchers to incorporate the terminology and concepts of structuration theory wholesale into their work. Rather, Giddens felt that structuration was a worldview sociologists could use to orient themselves (Bryant & Jary, 1991, pp. 27-29). This stance, however, has led scholars to inconsistently apply structuration theory in their research and analysis.

To make strong structuration theory more applicable to empirical research—as opposed to strictly philosophical or theoretical research—Stones (2005) developed a four-aspect model of the structuration process (pp. 84-86). Above, I introduced the first two aspects—*external* and *internal* structures. The third aspect of the strong structuration process is *active agency*. Individuals make decisions based on their positions within structures and take specific actions to pursue their intended outcomes. The fourth aspect of strong structuration is the set of actual *outcomes* of interactions. *Outcomes* include

results individuals *intended* from their actions as well as the *unintended* results of their actions. Unintended outcomes also include outcomes of which an agent is not aware, but which were nevertheless a direct result of their actions. Outcomes then set the stage for the next cycle of structuration as new, altered, or reinforced *external* and *internal* structures.

**Application to research.** Giddens (1984) saw two practical applications of structuration theory. Institutional analysis examined the evolution of large-scale social phenomena over great lengths of time. Strategic conduct analysis, on the other hand, examined the “modes in which actors draw upon structural properties in the constitution of social relations” (p. 288). In his own subsequent use of the concepts he developed, Giddens focused almost exclusively on institutional analysis, emphasizing what Stones (2005) labeled “ontology-in-general” (pp. 8-9).

But Stones argued that analyzing broad social phenomena over large periods of history ignored the fundamental strength of structuration theory: structuration theory connects broad social structures to the knowledgeable actions of individual agents within specific interactions. Thus, it is uniquely able to address what Stones called “*in-situ* questions about the hermeneutics of agents in combination with structural diagnostics” (p. 117, emphasis in original). In other words, the best application of strong structuration theory is analyzing a discrete series of actions taken by specific agents within a specific set of circumstances and connecting that series of actions to larger social forces.

### **Summary of Strong Structuration Theory**

Stones (2005) adapted Giddens’ (1984) original theory of structuration into *strong* structuration theory to clarify the differences in agency between individuals, the process

of structuration, and the application of structuration theory to research. Stones (2005) regrouped *schemas* and *resources* into *external* and *internal* structures that function as systems of *signification*, *legitimation*, and *domination*. By drawing on these structures through *active agency*, individuals can pursue *intended outcomes* in their *encounters* with others. These actual *outcomes*, both *intended* and *unintended*, become the new structures that shape subsequent encounters.

### **Structuration and Music Teacher Identity Research**

Strong structuration theory has had a limited presence in music education research. None of the researchers I discussed in Chapter 1 used structuration theory as a theoretical framework to examine music teacher identity. I was only able to find two music education studies (Billiaud, 2014; Hall, 2018) that used structuration theory as a theoretical lens. Billiaud (2014) examined the involvement of individuals in a community band, and Hall (2018) examined organization cultures within indoor percussion ensembles. Neither author discussed music teacher identities or the implications of their study for music teacher education curricula. Nor did these authors use Stones' (2005) updates to Giddens' (1984) original theory.

Strong structuration theory, however, could be a powerful tool to help researchers understand how music teachers are becoming music teachers. Each of the four goals for my research I outlined above corresponds to an aspect of Stones' (2005) process of strong structuration. The contexts in which music teachers exist are sets of *external* and *internal* structures, depending on the music teacher's believed ability to change them. How a music teacher defines themselves—their *self-concept*—is a set of *internal* structures, from the perspective of the music teacher. Others' expectations of a music teacher could

be *internal* or *external* structures, depending on the music teacher’s *agency*. Together, these contexts, expectations, and definitions constitute a music teacher’s *position*. To negotiate and reconcile these expectations and to pursue possibilities for themselves, music teachers pursue specific *outcomes* in their encounters with others through *active agency*. These *outcomes*—both *intended* and *unintended*—shape a music teacher’s *self-concept* and the understandings others have of that music teacher, which in turn become the structures that shape subsequent *encounters*. Thus, the strong structuration process mirrors the identity negotiation diagram I presented in Chapter 1. I have expanded this diagram and incorporated the terminology of strong structuration theory in Figure 3.

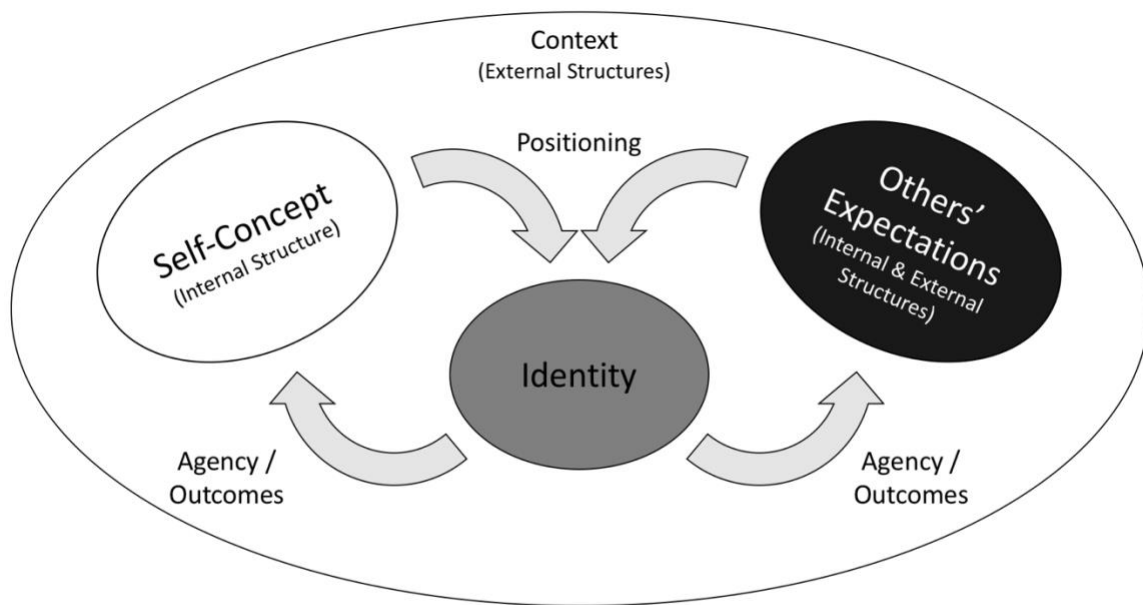


Figure 3. Identity negotiation as a process of strong structuration. This figure integrates the language of strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) with identity negotiation as a continual process.

### Restatement of Purpose and Research Questions

Given the specific terminology of strong structuration theory, I have decided to restate the purpose my study and the questions that guided my inquiry using Stones’ (2005) terminology. This study aimed to explore the encounters of one veteran orchestra

teacher with three of his students in order to understand how these four individuals negotiated their identities together and pursued possibilities for who they were becoming.

Four questions guided my inquiry:

- 1) What *external structures* shape the encounters of this teacher and these students?
- 2) What *internal structures* shape the encounters of this teacher and these students?
- 3) What *power capacities* are available to this teacher and these students in their encounters?
- 4) How do this teacher and these students *draw upon structures* to pursue possibilities for who they might become as a music teacher and students?

Below, I explore existing literature pertaining to each of these questions using strong structuration theory as an interpretive lens.

### **Question One: External Structures**

In this study, the first research question I posed was, “what external structures shape the encounters of this teacher and these students?” *External* structures are structures over which an agent has no—or believes they have no—control. In other words, external structures are structures that pose constraints on an individual’s actions that are too great to resist or avoid. Using Giddens’ (1984) initial categories of constraints as a guide, examples of insurmountable *material constraints* on music teachers could be room dimensions or travel distances. Insurmountable *structural constraints* could be long-standing program or community traditions. Insurmountable *negative sanctions* could

be the threat of termination for conduct deemed “unprofessional” by supervisors. Often, structures pose multiple constraints that are a combination of these three forms.

The degree to which structures are *external* to a given agent is dependent on their *position*. Stones (2005) described some structures as *independent causal influences*, and others as *irresistible causal forces* to further differentiate external structures. *Independent causal influences* “have the kind of causal influence on agents’ lives that those agents do not have the physical capacity to control or resist” (p. 112). In other words, an individual has absolutely no control over these structures. Examples of *independent causal influences* on the interactions of music teachers and their students could be the physical dimensions of classrooms because they do not have the physical capacity to move walls or doors.

*Irresistible causal forces* are “more qualified in that the feeling of the relevant agents that they cannot control or resist a particular causal influence is dependent upon their hermeneutic frame” (p. 112). Although agents may actually have the power to control or resist these structures, they may feel as though they cannot for a number of reasons. For example, depending on the severity of sanctions they anticipate community members will impose, music teachers may feel different degrees of control over a long-standing community tradition of performing at a local festival. Veteran teachers who have taught in the same district for over 30 years may feel that they could risk changing the tradition and not performing at the festival. In this case the performance schedule would be an *internal* structure, which I will discuss in the next section. On the other hand, newly hired teachers without tenure or the same rapport with the community may feel as though the consequences of skipping that performance would be so severe that

they have no choice but to comply. Even though their *position* as the music teacher might enable them to control the performance schedule, their *position* as a *new* music teacher makes them feel as though they do not have control over that schedule. In this case, the performance schedule would be an *irresistible causal force*.

Thus, the distinction between *independent causal influences* and *irresistible causal forces* is the ability of a specific agent to resist or control the influence of that structure on their actions based on their *position*. The important questions for researchers to ask when categorizing *external* structures are: 1) To what degree does the individual believe that structure constrains their actions, and 2) To what degree does the individual believe their actions could change that structure? In this section, I discuss four social structures that often extend beyond the control of individual music teachers and students and, thus, are likely to be *external* structures: school choice policies, the current “college and career readiness” discourse in American education, curricular requirements and mandates, and state assessment policies and discourses. I will note the differences between *independent causal influences* and *irresistible causal forces* in cases where literature allows me to do so.

### **School Choice**

Over the last three decades, school choice has developed into a national discourse in the United States. Advocates of school choice have various motives for advancing specific policies, ranging from a belief that school choice empowers parents to ensure the education their children receive resonates with their social or religious beliefs, to a belief that competition will pressure schools to improve standards and outcomes. Once these beliefs are codified into state or federal law, they become fixed normative schemas that

are beyond the control of individual teachers and students, and carry the weight of sanctions if educators attempt to resist or circumvent the law. At this point, school choice policies would become *independent causal influences*.

A variety of policy manifestations exist within the school choice discourse (Berends, Springer, Ballou, & Walberg, 2009). Traditional public schools which have attendance policies based on regional boundaries are referred to as “neighborhood schools.” Charter schools and magnet schools also receive government funding, and parents can choose to send their children to charter or magnet schools regardless of where they live. Magnet schools are administered by traditional public school boards, whereas charter schools are administered by private governing boards. Other school choice options include private schools or homeschooling, and the degree to which private schools and homeschooled students are funded and supervised by state governments varies between states. All of these policy manifestations enable students and parents to choose their educational environment. These policies could also constrain music teachers from making decisions that parents and students might find objectionable because the teachers do not want the students to withdraw their enrollment from the program or school.

Arizona—the state in which I conducted this research—was one of the first states to allow charter schools. As part of a sweeping education reform bill in 1994, the state legislature authorized 40 charter schools to open in the state. The legislation also required all public school districts to establish and implement “open enrollment” policies allowing parents and students to attend any school regardless of neighborhood boundaries (Arizona Revised Status [A.R.S.] §15-816.01, 1994; Ryman, 2015). In 1999, the

legislature removed the limit on charters altogether and by 2013, nearly 13% of students in Arizona attended one of 535 charter schools open in the state (Trevizo, 2013). These data indicate that a substantial number of students in Arizona have been enabled to choose their educational environment through school choice policies.

The 1994 law did not, however, adjust the overall formula for how Arizona funded schools. As of 2017, the state provided districts with a base funding amount of approximately \$3,700 per student (Beard Rau & Cano, 2017). This funding followed a student to whichever school they elected to attend. Thus, by choosing to attend a different school, a student would change the overall funding allotment a district would receive from the state. This constitutes a substantial negative sanction on public school districts who do not incentivize students to remain enrolled in their schools. The threat of that sanction, therefore, may enable more control over school curricula and environments for parents and students and, consequently, constrain the actions of administrators and teachers.

Critics of school choice contend that these policies exacerbate racial segregation by allowing students from historically privileged racial or economic backgrounds to cluster together in more racially homogenous schools. Frankenberg (2011) argued that “charter schools often are places of substantial racial isolation and, in fact, can contribute to pockets of white isolation as well as schools that are overwhelmingly students of color” (p. 102). In other words, Frankenberg asserted that school choice policies enable *de facto* school segregation. Bifulco, Ladd, and Ross (2008) found such a trend in the Durham County, North Carolina, public school district. Their data indicated that White parents were significantly more likely to opt out of their neighborhood school if it had a

higher percentage of Black students, and that White parents were significantly more likely to relocate their children to a school with a lower percentage of Black students. The same pattern held for college educated parents with children in schools with higher percentages of students with non-college educated parents—they were significantly more likely to relocate their children to schools with a lower percentage of students with non-college educated parents. The net effect of these patterns was that the Durham school district was more segregated than it would have been if students attended their neighborhood schools (p. 83).

Davis (2014), however, found a different pattern using a nationally-representative data sample from magnet schools. She found that total enrollment and honor-class enrollment in magnet schools were both significantly less racially homogenous than neighborhood schools across the United States, and noted that this contradicted findings in previous research based on local samples. Davis also noted, however, that while nationally-representative samples allow researchers to make broad generalizations, school choice was a “highly localized and contextualized” issue (p. 424). In other words, to fully understand how school choice enables or constrains students based on race, researchers need to place their examinations within local contexts.

### **College and Career Readiness**

“College and career readiness” has become one of the dominant discourses in the national conversation surrounding the purpose of public education in the United States. While the notion that primary and secondary schooling should prepare children to pursue higher education or participate in the work force is not new, “college and career readiness” as a specific discourse became prominent in the last decade, driven in large

part by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) movement that began in 2009 (National Governors Association Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA CCSSO], 2010). As of 2017, thirty-five states and the District of Columbia had adopted the complete CCSS document. Eleven states, including Arizona, initially adopted the CCSS but have since announced major revisions or replacements. Five states only partially adopted or never adopted the CCSS (Education Week, 2017). Thus, the CCSS have become a comprehensive interpretive and normative schema for the purpose and content of primary and secondary education in the majority of the United States. Depending on the specific local policy manifestations of this discourse, and the degree to which music teachers feel they can influence those local policies, music teachers may interpret this discourse either as an *independent causal influence*, or an *irresistible causal force*.

The CCSS include two major strands: Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA). Within each of these strands, the CCSS are broken into “College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards” and content standards that address specifics of the CCR standards at each K-12 grade level. The CCR standards are a central organizing component of the CCSS that “help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy no later than the end of high school” (NGA CCSSO, 2010, p. 3). In other words, preparing students to be “college and career ready” specifically refers to meeting the essential understandings and content requirements codified in the CCSS. While this enables states and school districts to more specifically claim that their curricula prepare students to be “college and career ready,” it may constrain some educators—including music teachers—from justifying the continued inclusion of their content areas in public

school curricula if their content area does not specifically address standards included in the CCSS documents.

Arts education advocates have long documented the comparatively low status of arts subjects relative to the “core” academic disciplines (e.g., Elpus, 2013; Koza, 2010). The CCSS college and career readiness discourse exacerbates this marginalization. In the combined 159 pages of CCSS Math and ELA content and CCR standards, only eight pages are dedicated to standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (NGA CCSSO, 2010). Music, along with any other conceivable content area, is subsumed within the “technical subjects.” While the CCSS do not explicitly address music, the exclusion of music from the CCSS documents implies that music as a content area does not explicitly prepare students to be “college and career ready” within that discourse. This, in turn, may legitimize the omission or low status of music in public schools that adhere closely to the “college and career ready” discourse as defined by the CCSS. Depending on how local district administrators or curriculum supervisors interpret the CCSS documents, music teachers may experience policies that constrain their ability to pursue specific possibilities for themselves or their programs.

### **Curricular Requirements**

The discourse of “college and career readiness” is, thus, closely connected to standards and curricular requirements. While the authors of the CCSS may have omitted music from their standards, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) spearheaded the creation of the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) as a mechanism to legitimize music as a subject in public school education (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards [NCCAS], 2014). While the NCAS includes a wide variety of music content

and music making practices, the inability of a standards document to include every conceivable form of music making means that the NCAS inevitably establishes some musical content and practices as more legitimate than others. Generally, these standards more thoroughly address music making practices and content based on the Western European Art Music tradition, and thus implicitly legitimize those practices and content over other traditions.

Standards do not inherently constrain music teachers and students. They do, however, form a vast network of interpretive and normative schemas that teachers and administrators can use to decide what should and should not be included within their curricula, and thus may become *irresistible causal forces*. Because education in the United States is administered primarily by state governments and local school district boards, national-level standards—such as the CCSS or the NCAS—are not compulsory. But once these standards are formally adopted by a state government, school districts are required by law to design their curricula around those standards. In other words, state-level standards carry the threat of negative sanction if administrators and teachers do not comply. At this point, standards may become *independent causal influences*. As of 2019, the Arizona legislature approved standards that closely resemble the language in both the CCSS and the NCAS. Thus, depending on each district's policies, music teachers and students in Arizona may be constrained to curricula that closely resemble those standards.

### **Assessment Policy**

Districts, teachers, and students may experience negative sanctions associated with curricular standards when their compliance is monitored and enforced by the state or district supervisors. States have developed a vast network of standardized testing to

measure the performance of students and, by extension, of teachers against the various standards their legislatures have adopted. Wang, Beckett, and Brown (2006) saw the expansion of state standardized testing as an outgrowth of the education reform movement beginning in the 1980's. But the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002), was the beginning of a new era of standardized testing as it connected funding rewards and penalties to schools and districts based on standardized tests results. In other words, NCLB initiated a discourse that closely associated assessment with negative sanctions. Given the codification of these assessment policies into national and state law, these policies are most likely to be *independent causal influences* for music teachers.

This connection between assessment and negative sanctions has been a focal point for critics of standardized testing. Teachers unions and professional organizations have argued that high-stakes federal and state testing incentivizes districts and schools to narrow their curricula to disproportionately prioritize subjects that appear on standardized tests (Walker, 2014). As I noted above, this reinforces the marginalization of music within public school curricula. Critics have also argued that the sanctions associated with standardized testing have created a climate in which teachers and administrators emphasize test preparation instead of “authentic” learning experiences (Meador, 2017).

The emphasis public school districts place on test preparation has spawned an additional “data-driven instruction” discourse. Proponents of the “data-driven” approach maintain that empirical evidence suggests that when teachers concentrate on frequently assessing students and using test data to plan subsequent instruction, student achievement on standardized tests increases (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). But recent critics counter that

the modest nation-wide gains in test scores after the wide adoption of data-driven methods and assessments have, perhaps, not been worth the financial cost collecting and analyzing that data. Rather than achieving the intended result of increased student learning, standardized testing and data-driven instruction have created an environment in which “school leaders and policy-makers . . . over-test student learning to the detriment of learning itself” (Rodberg, 2019, n.p.). In other words standardized assessment has become a means of legitimizing rewards and sanctions rather than a means of informing future learning.

### **Question One Summary**

Stones (2005) divided *external* structures into *independent causal influences* and *irresistible causal forces* depending on an agent’s believed ability to avoid or resist the effect of that structure on their actions. I discussed four prominent discourses—school choice, college and career readiness, curricular requirements, and assessment policies—that can act upon music teachers. At the local level, these discourses may be *irresistible causal forces* because music teachers may actually have the ability to influence the specific policy manifestations of a discourse, but feel as though they cannot because of the time and effort it would take to influence those policies. Once these discourses are codified into federal or state law, they may become *independent causal influences* that music teachers and students cannot avoid. In Arizona—the state in which I conducted this research—school choice and data-driven assessment policies were particularly strong discourses that could affect the interactions of music teachers and students.

### **Question Two: Internal Structures**

The second research question I posed was, “what *internal structures* shape the encounters of this teacher and these students?” *Internal* structures are “generalizable stocks, schemas, and skills that provide the transposable basis of ‘how to go on’ . . . [and] specific knowledge of the norms, interpretative schemas, and power resources of the relevant agents within context” (Stones, 2005, p. 72). In other words, they are the knowledge and beliefs that shape how individuals understand themselves and their relationships to the world. Thus, my definition of *identity*, “an individual’s knowledge and beliefs about themselves, shared and continually negotiated with others,” fits within the category of *internal* structures.

Like *external* structures, Stones distinguished between two types of *internal* structures. *General-dispositional* structures are “transposable skills and dispositions” such as worldviews, cultural schemas, and classification systems (p. 88). They are the broad interpretive and normative schemas an individual might apply to a variety of different circumstances. For example, an orchestra teacher’s beliefs regarding what a typical orchestra rehearsal routine should be is a *general-dispositional* structure: it is a generic template they could apply to multiple contexts. Often, individuals are not consciously aware of how they apply *general-dispositional* structures, drawing on them in “taken-for-granted” or unnoticed ways (p. 88). That being said, *general-dispositional* structures are not deterministic. In other words, once agents become aware of their broad schemas for understanding the world, they have the ability to change them.

*Conjuncturally-specific/positional* structures “involve an agent’s knowledge of the specific context of action” (p. 90). They are how an agent applies their general knowledge—*general-dispositional* structures—to particular sets people, settings, and

interactions. An orchestra teacher's understanding of their relationships with specific students, for example, are *conjuncturally-specific/positional* structures. While much of the knowledge and beliefs that constitute *conjuncturally-specific/positional* structures are garnered from immediate circumstances, they may also be built up over time. What distinguishes *conjuncturally-specific/positional* structures from *general-dispositional* structures, then, is how an agent applies them: general-dispositional structures are abstract concepts that potentially apply to any context, whereas *conjuncturally-specific/positional* structures are how an agent understands a specific context or set of circumstances.

Stones' combination of the terms "conjuncturally-specific" and "positional" into a single term opens the potential for confusion with the related—but distinct—concept of *position* that I discussed above. As Stones (2005) argued, "strictly speaking, the *conjuncturally-specific* dimension of the *internal* structures is only one aspect of a role or a *position*" (p. 90, emphasis added). To reiterate, Shilling (1992) defined *positions* as "bundles of practices that are expected to be carried out by those occupying specific social places" (p. 80). A *position* inevitably incorporates an individual's own understandings of the specific social places in which they find themselves. But a position also involves others' expectations of that individual. Certainly, an individual can *influence* what others expect of them—that is part and parcel of the structuration process. But because they cannot *control* others' expectations of them, those expectations are *external* to the individual. In other words, a *position* is a combination of *internal* and *external* structures as expectations. In order to avoid confusion throughout the remainder

of this document, I will shorten the term *conjuncturally-specific/positional* structures to *conjuncturally-specific*, though I mean this to be synonymous with Stones' original term.

Stones (2005) grouped *conjuncturally-specific* structures by the three functions of structures Giddens initially outlined: *interpretive schemas*, *normative expectations*, and *power capacities* (pp. 91-93). *Conjuncturally-specific interpretive schemas* are how an individual understands the actions of others given a specific set of circumstances, as well as knowledge of how others will understand or interpret their actions. For example, knowledge an orchestra teacher has about how their students interpret certain non-verbal cues—such as conducting gestures or classroom quiet signals—is a *conjuncturally-specific interpretive schema*. *Conjuncturally-specific normative expectations* are the values an individual applies to a certain situation, how they understand others' ideal and expected values, and their beliefs about what actions would or would not be appropriate in the immediate context based on those values. For example, a music teacher's decision of whether or not to discipline a specific student for talking in rehearsal is an enactment of their *conjuncturally-specific normative expectations*.

Stones (2005) also categorized *power capacities* as *conjuncturally-specific internal structures*. *Conjuncturally-specific power capacities* are the knowledge and beliefs an individual has about their ability to use or control resources in a given situation. For example, the belief of a music teacher that they will be able to use their rapport with a student to convince the student to practice more at home is a *conjuncturally-specific power capacity*. For this study, however, I found it useful to discuss *power capacities* and their connections to specific resources as a separate research question. To be clear, I am preserving Stones' theoretical classification of *power*

*capacities* as *internal conjuncturally-specific* structures. I have simply chosen to analytically separate *power capacities* to facilitate my discussion.

Thus, under the heading “Internal Structures,” I discuss *general-dispositional* and *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive schemas and normative expectations that music teachers and music students may have as *internal* structures regarding their interactions with one another. First, I discuss meritocracy as a prominent worldview—or *general-dispositional* structure—in American education. Next, I discuss prominent pedagogical traditions in string music education that may constitute interpretive and normative schemas for what music teachers and students do in their encounters. Then, I discuss the findings of previous research on music teacher identities as structures that constitute music teachers’ *positions* in their contexts. Finally, I discuss structures that shape music students’ *positions* in their contexts. In order to distinguish a specific structure as either *general-dispositional* or *conjuncturally-specific*, a researcher would need to locate their study within a specific context. I will note where the literature allows me to make that distinction.

### **Meritocracy**

At the most simplistic level, meritocracy is a system of interpretive and normative schemas for social organization in which individuals are recognized with prestige, rewards, and responsibilities based on their abilities, talents, or efforts. These beliefs have been particularly entwined with economic and political organization in the United States through the generally accepted narrative of the American Revolution. If one adheres to the principle that individuals are “created equal” and given an equal opportunity to pursue possibilities, those who have dedicated more effort to their endeavors and have

been more demonstrably successful at realizing those possibilities deserve rewards and are more qualified for leadership positions (Saa Meroe, 2014).

Although meritocracy is a pervasive discourse that stretches beyond the control of individuals in the United States, I categorized meritocracy as an *internal* structure because music teachers and students are most likely to encounter it as a worldview. Instead of an overtly codified system of laws, meritocracy is a *general-dispositional* network of interpretive and normative schemas that individuals use to understand and interpret interactions in a variety of contexts. In other words, meritocratic norms guide how individuals *position* themselves and others, and become interpretive schemas for their *identities*.

Given the broadly accepted meritocratic worldview in the United States, policy makers and civic leaders have often touted education as an equalizing force. “By giving each child, from the beginning, equal educational opportunities, social institutions can more equitably select those who best qualify for advanced education and leadership positions” (Saa Meroe, 2014, p. 492). This becomes the legitimizing schema behind the school choice and assessment discourses I discussed above. The discourse of meritocracy suggests that parents and students will reward the schools that provide the best education by choosing to enroll in that school. In order to fairly distribute financial funding, states must precisely measure the ability and achievement of students, and by extension, the work of teachers.

Meritocratic structures have also been prominent in Western European Art Music traditions and music education in the United States. Orchestras performing within the Western European tradition, including school orchestras, typically use a ranked seating

system that privileges performance proficiency or seniority as measures of merit (Yi, 2018). I will discuss traditional seating in more detail below. Music educators' professional organizations have also hosted a number of competitions throughout their history for a variety of student performance groups, including soloists, small ensembles, and large ensembles (e.g., Hash, 2016; Meyers, 2012). These contests reinforce meritocratic norms and worldviews by rewarding students with prestige based on their ability and effort, as measured by the quality of their performances. Thus, meritocratic assumptions can become embedded within music teachers' and students' *identities* as interpretive or normative schemas about the value of who they are and what they do.

Despite their pervasive presence in American political, social, and educational discourses, meritocratic assumptions have been—and continue to be—highly problematic. Saa Meroe (2014) argued that “meritocratic values carry explicit and implicit moral determinations of not only individual worth but cultural belonging as well” (p. 488). In other words, “merit” or “worthiness” is judged on the degree of adherence to interpretive and normative schemas derived from politically and socially dominant cultures. In the United States, this culture has been established by White European heterosexual males with economic means. In the specific fields of music performance and music education, meritocratic schemas are most often derived from notions of performance excellence within the Western European Art Music tradition.

Those that do not adhere to these culturally derived schemas of “merit”—typically individuals from historically marginalized populations—are labeled as less “worthy” of rewards. For example, in his review of sociology in education research, Mijs (2016) found that schools in the United States consistently provide students with unequal

access to resources depending on their social class. Although the distribution of financial resources to schools is ostensibly tied to assessment results, these assessments are based on culturally-bound measures. As a result, students who do not conform to those culturally-bound measures are more likely to perform poorly on assessments and, in turn, are more likely to be labeled as “less worthy” of financial resources. Furthermore, this inequitable distribution of resources compounds inequality later in the system (Mijs, 2016). In other words, the access students have to resources as *power capacities*—which I will discuss in more detail below—affects their ability to further generate other *power capacities* and constrains their ability to pursue outcomes. Thus, individuals with privilege within the dominant culture can use meritocratic discourses to legitimate the disproportionate resources they already possess and continue to generate, while obscuring the implicit cultural assumptions that underpin the distribution of resources.

### **Pedagogical Traditions**

Traditional knowledge and procedures of how to teach and learn are *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative schemas that guide how teachers and students interact with one another. Many education researchers have identified knowledge of these pedagogical traditions as the unique knowledge that defines an individual as a teacher. Shulman (1987), for example, distinguished pedagogical content knowledge among other types of knowledge as a “special interest [for education researchers and policy makers] because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching” (p. 8). In the language of strong structuration theory, pedagogical content knowledge is a set of *general-dispositional* structures as interpretive and normative schemas that define who a music teacher is and what they do in any given context. To avoid aligning my analysis

directly with Shulman's theory, however, I will refer more generally to these structures as "pedagogical traditions." Knowledge of pedagogical traditions, then, can become key elements of a music teacher's *identity*, as they define who a music teacher is and what they do as a music teacher.

Some researchers working within a socialization framework have focused on how teachers acquire their knowledge of pedagogical traditions and, hence, how teachers come to be identified as teachers. Lortie (1975) argued that teachers form their beliefs about teaching practice and pedagogical traditions from the countless hours they spend observing their own teachers during their formative years. Once they become teachers themselves, they reenact the traditions they learned from these observations. Lortie referred to this phenomenon as the "apprenticeship of observation," which Woodford (2002) noted was prominent in the music teacher socialization and identity research he reviewed. More recently, Haston (2018) found that the apprenticeship of observation—along with intuition, cooperating teachers, and method courses—was an important source of teaching knowledge for five secondary band teachers.

Stones (2005) noted that agents build *general-dispositional* structures—and many times *conjuncturally-specific* structures as well—on past experiences. This resonates with Lortie's (1975) theory regarding the apprenticeship of observation, and music education socialization and identity researchers have observed the same phenomenon (e.g., Isbell, 2015; Madsen & Kelly, 2002; Woodford, 2002). Knowing the history of pedagogical traditions as *internal* structures for specific individuals can help researchers understand the idiosyncrasies of how those individuals interpret their interactions with and *positions* relative to others. But the history of *internal* structures is less of a concern for strong

structuration theorists than how these structures shape specific interactions between individuals. In other words, how a music teacher formed their ideas about pedagogical traditions—while important to gain a fuller understanding of those structures—is secondary to how those pedagogical traditions enable and constrain their interactions with students.

As Stones noted, individuals often draw upon *general-dispositional* structures in “taken-for-granted” ways. But, as Regelski (2002) argued, taking pedagogical traditions and routines for granted without critical examination can have substantial consequences for music education. If music teachers assume that a particular pedagogical routine is inherently effective, that teacher’s goal could become the perfect enactment of that routine without regard to the specific needs of learners. In this case the normative dimensions of a pedagogical tradition as a *general-dispositional* structure override the interpretive and normative dimensions of *conjuncturally-specific* relationships. Regelski referred to this as “methodolatry,” the “standard delivery of the method [because] the goodness and the benefits of the results are taken for granted” (p. 111).

To be clear, knowledge of pedagogical traditions can be positive enablers for music teachers as part of their *identities* and *positions* in their encounters with students (e.g., Manfredi, 2006). The question, rather, is to what degree music teachers recognize the normative assumptions embedded in these *general-dispositional* structures, and to what degree they negotiate those assumptions with the *external* and *conjuncturally-specific* structures that also make up their *position* within a particular context. The normative assumptions embedded within the traditional *role* and *socialization* approaches to music teacher identity research have made this question particularly difficult to

address, as those frames privilege the *general-dispositional* knowledge of pedagogical traditions over the *conjuncturally-specific* knowledge of individual teachers. Below I discuss three traditions—public school string pedagogy, ranked seating, and individual assessment—that are prominent in the Western European orchestral tradition, and which could be a starting point for my investigation of an orchestra teacher’s encounters with students.

**Public school string pedagogy.** Educators have long reinforced a *general-dispositional* structure that individual instruction is one of the most effective means of teaching and learning, and string teachers are no exception. For example, based on their survey of secondary string students in Utah ( $n = 512$ ), Hamann and Frost (2000) concluded that string students who studied with a private teacher tended to practice more frequently and more efficiently, and were able to maximize their practice time better than students who did not study privately. This implied that the individual instruction those students received made them more efficient learners and performers. But because individual instruction is often not feasible within the *external* structures of most public schools, string pedagogues have developed a variety of resources that codify “effective” means of teaching large groups of students in heterogeneous instrument settings. These include various method books such as *Essential Elements* (Allen, Gillespie, & Hayes, 2012), *Orchestra Expressions* (Brungard, Alexander, Anderson, & Dackow, 2004), and *New Directions for Strings* (Erwin, Horvath, McCashin, & Mitchell, 2006); music education methods texts (e.g., Cooper, 2004; Dillon & Kriechbaum, 1978; Hamann & Gillespie, 2013); and the American String Teacher’s Association (ASTA) String Curriculum (Benham, Wagner, Aten, Evans, Odegaard, & Lieberman, 2011).

Each of these texts has common themes that constitute the “traditional” means of teaching strings in public schools, which can become the *general-dispositional* structures that define who a string or orchestra teacher is and what they do. These traditions include an emphasis on technique, proper posture, and body position as a precursor to performance; isolated scale patterns as a means of teaching left hand fingering patterns; isolated bowing patterns as a means of teaching right hand skills; application of a single technique to brief etudes; and an application of multiple techniques to canonical Western European orchestral repertoire (e.g., Allen et al., 2012; Brungard et al., 2004; Erwin et al., 2006). Often, authors of these method books use increasingly difficult left hand patterns as the over-arching organizational schema of material, positioning this as the most important skill for students to master by default (e.g., Allen et al., 2012; Applebaum, 1985; Gazda, 2000).

The vast majority of these texts assume the teacher is a content expert who will deliver their expertise to students through these specific pedagogical traditions. In other words, these texts assume a didactic relationship between string teachers and students, and this assumption shapes the *positions* of string teachers and students in specific ways. These texts also assume that the eventual goal of instruction is to perform existing Western European canonical repertoire on string instruments (for critical readings of these pedagogical approaches and goals, see Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Williams, 2011). Thus, these texts *position* music teachers and students in particular ways that shape their understandings, or their *interpretive schemas*, of who they are and what they do—their *identities*.

This is not to say that music educators and orchestra teachers have not devised or advocated for constructivist, student-centered, or creative approaches to teaching string instruments or large ensembles (e.g., Gilbert, 2016; Grauly, 2010; Scruggs, 2009; Stabley, 2001; Turner, 2013). But I was unable to find a method as comprehensive as the traditional methods I mentioned above designed around student-centered pedagogical approaches. This is not inherently problematic; it simply means that the *general-dispositional* structures within the *identities* of public school orchestra teachers are more likely to be comprised of teacher-centered approaches that focus on technical development and the performance of Western European canonical orchestral repertoire.

**Ranked seating.** Ranked seating is a second pedagogical tradition common within American public school string education. Traditional Western orchestras use a hierarchical system of seating in which the strongest player in each section sits in the “first-chair”—the outside seat of the stand closest to the conductor—and the remaining players sit in descending rank order: the second ranked player sits in the inside seat of the stand closest to the conductor, the third player on the outside of the next stand back, and so on. String pedagogues and teachers have also suggested a variety of alternative seating practices including pairing students by technical strengths and weaknesses, rotating students to different seats for a set period of time, or randomizing the seating (Bergonzi, 2003; Wrochem, 1971; Yi, 2018).

Despite these alternative seating practices, the method of ranked seating is still widespread among orchestras in K-12 educational settings (Yi, 2018), most likely due to orchestra teachers’ experiences with this seating method in their own histories—their apprenticeships of observation—and their underlying meritocratic assumptions. Thus,

ranked-seating is likely to be a *general-dispositional* interpretive schema that defines what a public school orchestra teacher and students do in their orchestra. This structure, in turn, has embedded normative schemas that define the relative value of students and their performance abilities in orchestra, which may contribute to their individual understandings of who they are and what they do in orchestra—their *positions* and *identities*.

**Individual assessment.** Performance assessments, particularly individual auditions, are a third structure that have been a longstanding part of the Western European orchestral tradition and, consequently, the musical experiences of orchestra teachers. Given the possibility of *external* structures—such as standards, state laws, or district policies—that mandate gathering individual student achievement data, and the importance music educators place on individual technique assessments in large group ensemble classes (Crochet & Green, 2012), many public school orchestra teachers are likely to have a *general-dispositional* structure that defines individual performance auditions as the best mode of assessment for students in a performance-based class. However, teachers might use other means to assess students including portfolios (Silveira, 2013) and self-assessments (Crochet & Green, 2012; DeLuca & Bolden, 2014). The mode of assessment orchestra teachers select is likely to be based, in part, on their interpretive and normative schemas of who they are and what they do—their *identities*—as an orchestra teacher.

Public school orchestra teachers will also select their method of assessment based on their broader *general-dispositional* structures regarding the purpose of assessment. Pellegrino, Conway, and Russell (2015) outlined four purposes of assessment in

secondary performance-based classrooms: meeting school mandates, providing documentation of grades, improving individual musicianship, and improving instruction. As I discussed above, the current discourse surrounding assessment in United States emphasizes accountability to *external* structures. But assessment can also be an important means of providing feedback to students and teachers. DeLuca and Bolden (2014), for example, argued the best way to provide feedback to students through assessment is for teachers to design rubrics and rating scales with “high-quality criteria that both enable performance possibilities and that provide sufficient structure to guide student learning” (p. 75). Thus, an orchestra teacher’s *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative schemas surrounding the purpose of assessment, and the *external* structures regarding assessment in their teaching context, shape their *conjuncturally-specific* structures of assessment. These structures, then, shape that teacher’s *identity* as a music teacher as understandings of who they are and what they do as a music teacher.

### **Music Teacher Positions**

Above, I noted that *positions* are combinations of *internal* and *external* structures. In this section, I discuss the *internal* interpretive and normative schemas connected to the *positions* of music teachers—the understandings and meanings individual music teachers have of themselves and their relationships to the world—and how those schemas might relate to the expectations others have of music teachers. At the *general-dispositional* level, these understandings include interpretive schemas about the general characteristics of music teachers, and normative schemas about “effective” music teaching. At the *conjuncturally-specific* level, these understandings include interpretive and normative

schemas about what music teachers believe others in their specific contexts expect from them as music teachers, and how they fit within those expectations.

Much of the traditional research literature surrounding music teacher *identity* examines the *internal* structures of music teacher *positions*. In this section, I will discuss these schemas as the characteristics and expectations that are likely to be part of music teachers' *positions* as music teachers. As Stones (2005), Shilling (1992), and many music education researchers have noted, individuals occupy multiple positions. Therefore, I will also discuss literature that examines the multiple positions music teachers may occupy in their lives as music teachers.

**Characteristics and expectations.** A number of researchers have conducted survey studies that identify characteristics music teachers might use to define themselves within their *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative schemas. In her investigation of occupational identity, L'Roy (1983) surveyed undergraduate music education students at North Texas State University ( $N = 165$ ). Part of her survey asked pre-service teachers to classify the importance of several characteristics of what "a good music teacher should be able to do," and traits "a good music teacher should possess." Her data indicated that 93% of respondents felt the ability to communicate was an essential trait; and over 80% felt using one's imagination, inspiring others, conducting, performing, and evaluating new ideas were essential traits (p. 150). L'Roy's data also indicated that a majority of respondents felt teaching techniques, music theory, repertoire, educational materials, and philosophy of music education were essential for music teachers to know about (p. 117).

In their open-ended survey of British instrumental teachers ( $n = 134$ ), Mills and Smith (2003) found respondents believed that enthusiasm, knowledge, communication, enjoyable instruction, individually tailored instruction, positive reinforcement, performance opportunities, technical focus, inspiration, and patience were the hallmarks of “effective” music instruction. Powell and Parker (2017) found similar results using an open protocol with music education undergraduates at three institutions ( $N = 134$ ) over four and a half academic years. The participants rated strong interpersonal skills, such as caring for students, humor, and honesty; individually tailoring instruction to students; and strong knowledge of performance fundamentals as key traits for “successful” music teachers.

Despite the disparities in years, populations sampled, and data collection methods, the data from these three studies have notable overlaps. In all three studies, participants believed communication or interpersonal skills, the ability to individualize instruction, and performance proficiency were essential to being a “good” or “successful” music teacher. In addition to these characteristics, Millican’s (2009) data from a survey of band and orchestra teachers ( $n = 173$ ) who were Texas Music Educator Association members indicated that the participants felt that the ability to organize and plan instruction, develop routines, and enforce classroom policies were important knowledge and skills for music teachers, in addition to interpersonal skills and content knowledge. Taken together, these four studies indicate that instrumental music teachers are likely to have *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative schemas in their *identities* and *positions* that define them as strong performers and content experts, inspirational, caring, enthusiastic, organized, and clear communicators.

These findings also resonate with Kelly's (2008) study of what high school students felt characterized "effective" music student teachers, and Royston and Springers' (2017) study of characteristics applied collegiate faculty find desirable in prospective music education majors. This suggests that the *internal* structures that form instrumental teachers' understandings of themselves as music teachers—if they align with the results from the studies I discussed above—are likely to resonate with the *external* expectations in their *position* as a music teacher. Working from a symbolic interactionist perspective, both Isbell (2008) and Russell (2012) found that the opinions of others were contributing factors to stronger occupational identities as teachers and musicians for both preservice (Isbell, 2008) and inservice (Russell, 2012) music teachers. From a strong structuration theory perspective, Isbell's and Russell's findings indicate that music teachers are more enabled to pursue possibilities for themselves when their *internal* interpretive and normative schemas of their *identities* resonate with the interpretive and normative schemas of the others they encounter—*external* structures that shape their *positions*.

But the four studies I discussed above were based on questions of what characterizes "effective" or "successful" music teachers. In other words, these *general-dispositional* structures generally define *ideal* music teachers, not specific practicing teachers. Dolloff's (1999) series of studies examining images drawn by preservice and inservice music teachers as metaphors for their *identities* is an example of how individual music teachers reconcile ideal *general-dispositional* structures with *conjuncturally-specific* structures that are parts of their *positions* in their individual contexts. Dolloff compared ideal music teacher drawings and self-as-music-teacher drawings of

undergraduate music education students and graduate students who were experienced music teachers. Preservice teachers' drawings of themselves did not resemble their drawings of ideal teachers, which indicated that their *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive schemas in their *identities* did not resonate with their *general-dispositional* normative schemas of music teachers. The experienced teachers, on the other hand, drew themselves as out-of-control versions of ideal music teachers. Dolloff concluded that these teachers believed "they are capable of being the teacher they believe to be 'ideal,' but are constrained by class size, workload, or lack of organization" (p. 202). In other words, the *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive schemas of experienced teachers' *identities* resonated with their *general-dispositional* normative schemas about who and what a music teacher *should* be, but they felt constrained by *external* structures in their pursuit of ideal possibilities.

**Plurality of positions.** As Pellegrino (2009) noted, music education researchers have devoted considerable time to investigating the relationships between "musician" and "teacher" identities of music teachers. Often, researchers (e.g., Froehlich & L'Roy, 1985; Roberts, 1991) have used the framework of social or occupational *labels* to investigate the multiple *identities* or *positions* of music teachers. From a strong structuration theory perspective, *labels* are collections of self-relevant interpretive and normative schemas that define who a person is and how they relate to others in specific *positions*. Thus, the labeling frame is resonant with strong structuration theory. Throughout the remainder of this document, I will use the term *label* as a short-hand term for collections of *internal* interpretive and normative schemas that individuals use to define their own *positions* and the *positions* of others, and which contribute to their *identities*.

In their survey of music education undergraduates ( $N = 165$ ), Froehlich and L’Roy (1985) found the participants most frequently applied the occupational label “professional performer” to themselves, followed by “musician” and “music educator.” Froehlich and L’Roy expressed concern that “even after several years in the program the students’ training in music education did not appear to have produced a professional image of music educator” (p. 70). In other words, Froehlich and L’Roy worried that these music education undergraduates had not developed *internal* interpretive schemas within their *identity* that *positioned* them primarily as music teachers.

Seeking a potential explanation for this phenomenon, Roberts (1991) interviewed preservice music educators at the University of Western Ontario. He found that undergraduate music education majors felt they were “outsiders” in the school of music, that they were “stigmatized” within the school of music culture for their status as educators, and felt inadequate as musicians. Roberts argued that preservice music educators undergo a process of *labeling* in their school of music culture; they “seek validations, that is, seek to be labeled as the sort of musician that the community deems to be acceptable” (p. 23). Interpreted from a strong structuration theory perspective, Roberts’ data indicate that preservice music educators respond to the constraints of *external* normative and interpretive schemas within schools of music by adjusting their *internal* interpretive schemas to reduce conflicts within or constraints on their *identities*.

But in his survey of undergraduate music education students ( $n = 578$ ) from 30 institutions across the U.S., Isbell (2008) found his participants received positive support as music education majors throughout their undergraduate career. He concluded that “musician” and “teacher” were distinct—though not necessarily competing—aspects of

music education undergraduates' identities, and that their experiences during college were the strongest experiences in shaping their *identities* as musicians and teachers. Austin et al. (2012) found similar results in their survey of undergraduate music students ( $N = 454$ ) at three different National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) accredited institutions. Data from a factor analysis indicated participants identified with four different occupational identity labels: "teacher," "musician," "conductor/composer," and "entrepreneur/entertainer." Using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), they found significant differences between institutions in the number of individuals who identified "teacher" as an occupational label for themselves. In other words, the differences in *external* structures and *conjuncturally-specific* practices and understandings that formed the social contexts of each institution seemed to shape the participants' self-relevant *internal* structures of who they were and what they did—their *identities*. However, the researchers did not find a significant difference in how music education undergraduates applied the "musician" label to themselves when compared to other music majors. Based on this finding, Austin et al. speculated that this perhaps showed that "music education majors aspire to a performer identity before 'settling' for a teacher identity" (p. 80).

Austin et al.'s characterization of music education undergraduates "settling" for a teacher identity, however, implies a value judgement—a "teacher" identity is less desirable than a "performer" identity—that their survey instrument did not explicitly measure. Notably, Austin et al. only listed this speculation as only one possible explanation. Perhaps a better explanation may be that a "teacher" identity becomes more *salient*, or more prominent, throughout a preservice teacher's undergraduate career. In his

longitudinal study of six Swedish music undergraduate cohorts ( $N = 169$ ), Bouij (1998) found the participants had multiple, mutually supportive labels within their overall identity (p. 26). “Crucial is, however, where the individual locates his [*sic*] main activity; whether it is playing or teaching music” (p. 28). Indeed, Bouij (2004) later added that music teachers had more identities in addition to “teacher” and “musician,” and that changes in such *labels* are the result of music teachers’ continuing negotiation of values and the meanings of music, teaching, status, and influence (pp. 6-7). In other words, Bouij found that music teachers had multiple *internal* interpretive and normative schemas they used to define themselves, and that the *conjuncturally-specific* nature of these structures changed based on the *external* structures of an individual’s specific context.

The participants in Brewer’s (2009) study are an excellent example of this negotiation. The five undergraduate students he followed from their practicum experience through their student teaching did not struggle to reconcile identities as “musicians” and “teachers,” but rather to formulate an identity of “self-as-authority.” Brewer concluded that this negotiation was a reconciliation of two separate *identities*: “(a) the self outside of the classroom; and (b) the self one is or wishes to be in the classroom” (p. 345). In other words, these preservice teachers experienced a tension between two different *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive and normative schemas of themselves in their *identities* as music teachers, and between their *internal* understandings and the *external* expectations their students and mentors had for them within the context of teaching.

Specifically addressing the “musician” and “teacher” divide, Brewer remarked that the participants in his study did not seem to struggle to reconcile these two identity labels. “Rather, teacher identity seems to be an emerging identity that is layered onto or

integrated with an already legitimized musician identity, and this musician identity is not necessarily threatened or replaced by teacher identity” (p. 370). In other words, the participants’ *identities* as music teachers were influenced by *conjuncturally-specific* combinations of their *internal* “musician” and “teacher” schemas, depending on their *positions* within their contexts. Russell (2012) found similar results in his survey of inservice music teachers ( $n = 300$ ) in the NAFME Southwestern Division. Participants in his study indicated that inservice teachers had integrated “musician” and “teacher” identities.

From a strong structuration theory perspective, distinguishing between “musician” and “teacher” identities is a secondary concern. *Conjuncturally-specific* interpretive and normative schemas from both of these identity labels could potentially be embodied within the same *position*, depending on the contexts in which music teachers find themselves. However, Brewer (2009) also noted that the differences in preservice music teachers’ identities impacted their learning priorities (p. 337). In the language of strong structuration theory, Brewer found that the differences in these preservice music teachers’ *internal* interpretive and normative schemas shaped their desired *outcomes* for their interactions. This implication *is* a central concern of strong structuration theory. I will discuss goals and desired outcomes and in more detail below.

### **Music Student Positions**

Given the amount of research delineating characteristics and expectations of music teachers, there is comparatively little research that delineates the characteristics and expectations of students. This is perhaps due to the normative expectation that music teachers help all students be successful regardless of their traits or characteristics. If this

is the case, identifying desirable characteristics of students as interpretive and normative schemas would be moot. But there are several assumptions embedded within music educator practitioner articles and research about music learners that might indicate some of the *general-dispositional* structures that music teachers have that define and *position* students. In this section I will briefly discuss literature that suggests the expectations music teachers have of their students, and examine the labels students apply to themselves and others.

**Teacher expectations of students.** A number of researchers have investigated effective practice strategies and habits through a variety of means with a variety of populations (for string-specific examples, see Austin & Berg, 2006; Geringer, MacLeod, & Lofdahl, 2015; Leon-Guerrero, 2008). The existence of this large body of literature in and of itself indicates that music teachers—particularly teachers of performance-based classes—expect students to practice individually. In his study of high school band students ( $N = 60$ ), Miksza (2007) found that isolating difficult passages, repeating those isolated sections, playing at slower tempos, and placing those sections back within the larger context of an etude correlated with significant improvement of students' performance scores. He also did not find a significant correlation between time practicing and substantial performance improvement, which led him to conclude that what students do during practice is more important than the quantity of time they practice. In other words, rather than simply communicate a general practice expectation to students, music teachers should expect students to enact specific practice behaviors.

Along the same lines—and as I briefly mentioned above—music education researchers and pedagogues investigating assessment strategies recommend that teachers

use specific criteria to evaluate student performance, and have suggested a number of behavioral criteria that music teachers might use as templates for rubrics and rating scales (DeLuca & Bolden, 2014; Wesolowski, 2015; Wesolowski et al., 2018). Wesolowski et al. (2018), for example, developed and validated a measurement instrument that teachers could use to evaluate the content and quality of solo instrumental performances. Their instrument included eight criteria domains—technique, tone, articulation, intonation, visual, air support, melody, and expressive devices—and four qualitative descriptors for overall evaluation—exemplary, proficient, emerging, and rudimentary. By setting domains as assessment criteria, music teachers indicate their expectations for students and, therefore, elements of their *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative structures regarding what students should know and do.

Embedded deeper within these studies is an assumption that teachers ought to assign activities to students and set the goals for music making and learning. This comes with a corollary assumption: students ought to be compliant with the goals and expectations set by teachers. This assumption is particularly pervasive in ensemble performance classes that operate within the traditional Western European Art Music tradition. Stein (2013), for example, framed his article suggesting ways for individuals to improve their ensemble playing as addressing the fundamental problem that “you have trouble staying focused in the orchestra and following the conductor’s cues” (p. 19). In other words, ensemble members must, above all, conform to the directions of the conductor. In an educational setting, the conductor is generally the teacher. Thus, music teachers may have a *general-dispositional* structure that defines themselves as the leader within their *position*, and students as compliant members of an ensemble.

Teacher-centric conceptions of large ensemble classes are not inherently problematic, as having a single director helps ensembles achieve a well-coordinated performance of challenging repertoire (again, for a critical reading of teacher-centered large ensembles, see Allsup & Benedict, 2008). Large ensemble pedagogues and music education researchers have also, as I mentioned above, developed student-centered and constructivist methods for large ensembles in educational settings (e.g., Gilbert, 2016; Grauly, 2010; Scruggs, 2009; Stabley, 2001; Turner, 2013). What may become problematic, however, is when teachers unconsciously include compliance in their *general-dispositional* normative schema for who music students are and what they ought to do, and apply that expectation to all their encounters with students without regard for *external* or *conjuncturally-specific* structures that shape their and their students' *positions* within a particular context.

**Student labels.** As with music teachers (Roberts, 1991), students also pursue specific social *labels* and *positions* as important elements of their *identities* (Tarrant, MacKenzie, & Hewitt, 2006). Often, students use their musical engagement as a defining *conjuncturally-specific* structure of the labels they pursue. In her study of the meanings three adolescent men ascribed to their music experiences, Stickford (2004) found that each participant had different meanings for their experiences, and used those meanings as a way to enact different personas—the “insider, drifter, and fringe dweller”—within different musical contexts. In other words, their *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive schemas defined their *positions* in specific contexts.

Being a member of a school performing ensemble may, in and of itself, be an identity label for students. For example, Parker (2014) posited an eight-stage model for

social identity development among high school choral students based on interviews with 36 total participants at three different schools. She proposed that students begin their involvement with choir by auditioning—by seeking a particular *label* as an interpretive schema for themselves. Once they are “chosen”—have that *label* validated by others as a means of *positioning* them—they form bonds with other group members through singing that establish the ensemble as a “team,” or a “place to belong.” All of this occurs within what Parker referred to as “overall contextual conditions” or—in the language of strong structuration theory—the *external* and *conjuncturally-specific* structures of that particular context.

Within ensembles, there are also sub-groups of labels that students seek or apply to one another. In her examination of orchestral seating practices in her high school orchestra, Yi (2018) found that students felt there was a social divide between the students who sat in the front of the orchestra and those who sat in the back. Yi referred to this phenomenon as the “half-split” between students who were strong players, and those who were not. In this case, the half-split exacerbated the differences in socioeconomic status between the students who could and could not afford private lesson instruction. In other words, the labels students used to define each others’ *positions* were based on *external* discourses of socioeconomic status, in addition to *conjuncturally-specific* understandings of their comparative technical proficiency on their instrument.

### **Question Two Summary**

Stones (2005) divided *internal* structures into *general-dispositional* and *conjuncturally-specific* structures. Meritocracy and pedagogical traditions based on Western European orchestral performance practice are general worldviews that orchestra

teachers and students are likely to have as *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative schemas that help them understand and define each other in their interactions. But how they apply those worldviews to their specific encounters as *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive and normative schemas depends on the particular details of that context and their decisions as active agents.

Prior researchers have found that orchestra teachers are likely to expect themselves to be strong performers and content experts, inspirational, caring, enthusiastic, organized, and clear communicators; and that others are likely to have similar expectations of them. In other words, orchestra teachers are likely to have these understandings as elements of their *identities*. Orchestra teachers are likely to expect their students to practice, pursue excellent performance standards on their instrument, and comply with the expectations of their teachers. Researchers have also found that students may expect a social bonding experience with their classes or ensembles. Both orchestra teachers and students recognize and pursue a variety of identity *labels* as ways of understanding themselves and others in their *positions*. These *positions* are intersections of *external* structures and *internal* interpretive and normative schemas, as well as specific *power capacities* in a given context.

### **Question Three: Power Capacities**

The third research question I posed was: What *power capacities* are available to this teacher and these students in their encounters? *Power capacities* involve an agent's positional "power-to" interact with and shape structures and other people to achieve their desired outcomes (Stones, 2005, p. 89). In other words, *power capacities* are the ability of an agent to draw upon both of Giddens' (1984) groups of resources that I discussed

above. To reiterate, *allocative resources* are material goods that enable an agent to take certain actions. In addition, individuals have differing degrees of access to and recognized authority to control people or material goods based on their *positions* in a specific context. These are what Giddens referred to as *authoritative resources*: people, and the ability to control objects and others (p. 33).

As Stones (2005) argued, an individual's ability to use both *allocative* and *authoritative* resources is dependent on interpretive and normative schemas. Material and people as *resources* are not separable from the contextual schemas that define those materials and people as resources in the first place (p. 92). This is why Stones categorized *power capacities* as *conjuncturally-specific* structures. From a theoretical perspective, I intend to preserve *power capacities* as *conjuncturally-specific* structures. But I found it easier to organize my discussion here by separating power capacities from normative and interpretive schemas. In this section, I discuss financial capital and significant relationships as resources that may be relevant to the encounters of music teachers and students, and their connections to the interpretive and normative schemas that enable their use as *power capacities*.

### **Financial Capital**

The access that music teachers and students have to financial resources can greatly enable or constrain the possibilities they can pursue in their encounters. This is, perhaps, an obvious point. If a teacher cannot afford to purchase equipment or a student cannot afford to purchase an instrument or private lessons, they will not have the same musical possibilities open to them as others with more access. But music education researchers have found that discourses surrounding financial resources—or

socioeconomic status (SES)—interact with other social discourses and resources. In other words, access to financial capital as a *power capacity* is related to other *external* and *general-dispositional* structures.

In their analysis of the nationally representative data set from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of the Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999, Miksza and Gault (2014) found significant differences in the elementary music experiences of children based on race, with White students receiving significantly more instructional time in music. The “most distinctive evidence of a persistent equity gap,” however, came when comparing formal music instruction outside of school. “Overall, students of color, from poverty, and from rural or urban areas were much less likely to have access to formal instruction in music outside of school” (p. 13).

Elpus and Abril (2011) found similar results when analyzing the nationally representative data set from the 2004 follow-up wave of the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002. In attempting to construct a demographic profile of high school performance ensemble participants across the United States based on race, gender, SES, urbanicity (rural/suburban/urban), and academic achievement, they found “significant associations between music participation and every demographic variable examined except school urbanicity and family composition” (p. 135). In particular, they found that White students were overrepresented in high school music ensembles while Hispanic students were underrepresented, and that students in the highest SES quartile were overrepresented and students in the lowest SES quartile were underrepresented. “On every dimension we investigated that is associated with social strata and economic resources, music students tended to be significantly more privileged than their non-music

counterparts” (p. 138). In terms of structuration theory, these two studies indicate that students are constrained in pursuing musical possibilities based on their access to financial capital as a *power capacity*, which is related to *external* and *general-dispositional* structures that define their race and the urbanicity of their community.

Yi’s (2018) study of alternative seating practices offers an example of how financial capital intersects with other *conjuncturally-specific* structures for students. Through her interviews with students, she found that the students sitting in the back of the orchestra bonded over their lack of technical performance ability when compared to those students sitting in front. The students were also aware that this disparity was due to the fact that those sitting in the front of the orchestra could afford private lessons, whereas they could not. Thus, their lack of financial resources as a *power capacity* became one of the defining characteristics of the label—the *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive schema—that defined their *position* in orchestra.

### **Significant Relationships**

Researchers investigating music teacher identities through a traditional socialization framework—particularly those working from a symbolic interactionist framework (e.g., Austin et al., 2012; Isbell, 2008; Russell, 2012)—have examined relationships music teachers have with others as they negotiate their identities. Often, these researchers used the term “significant others” to refer to the people who played an important part in the lives of music teachers. In the language of strong structuration theory, these researchers applied the label “significant other” to individuals who shaped the *internal* interpretive and normative schemas that music teachers applied to themselves—their *identities*. This understanding seems to depart from Stones’ (2005)—

the “power-to” (p. 89)—and Giddens’ (1984)—control over people (p. 33)—definitions of *power capacities* and *authoritative resources*.

But in his definition of *authoritative resources*, Giddens made a distinction between “people” and “control over people,” implying that he thought people could themselves be resources separate from an agent’s ability to control those people (p. 33). But because he classified “people” as *authoritative resources* and not *allocative resources*, Giddens also seems to have thought that people as resources were fundamentally different from non-living material goods. The difference that I see is the potential for a relationship or rapport with another individual. In the case studies I will discuss in more detail below (Brewer, 2009; Nichols, 2013), the participants felt as though the relationships they had with other individuals did indeed enable them to—gave them the “power-to” (Stones, 2005)—pursue possibilities in ways they would not have been able to without that relationship. In other words, from their perspective, the *relationship* they had with a specific other functioned as a *power capacity*. Thus, rather than focus on other individuals as an object-like resource—“significant others”—I will refer to music teachers and students as having “significant relationships” with others that empower them to pursue intended outcomes. In this section, I explore the relationships between music teachers and students, using the term “rapport” to suggest a positive relationship characterized by mutual support and understanding. Then, I discuss the possibility of teacher/student relationships characterized by overt authority and compliance, followed by relationships music teachers and students have with others outside that dyad.

**Teacher/student rapport.** In his examination of the socialization of preservice teachers, Isbell (2008) argued that “the school music teacher arguably assumes the most significant and prominent role” in preservice teachers’ formative years (p. 173). Madsen and Kelly (2002) found 22% of the preservice music teachers they surveyed ( $N = 90$ ) made their decision to pursue a music education degree in order to emulate a specific director. Russell (2012) found that music teachers also felt empowered by their rapport with students. Participants in his study reported that their most positive identity-affirming interactions were with students, outranking interactions with other music teachers, parents, and non-music colleagues (p. 153). This suggests that the relationships they have with their students strongly enables music teachers to pursue the possibilities they envision for themselves as music teachers.

Researchers have also documented the influence music teachers have on the lives of students who do not become music educators. In her narrative study with Rie—a gender-variant student and song-writer—Nichols (2013) found that Rie’s relationships with her music teachers substantially enabled or constrained the musical possibilities she could pursue. When Rie began to express her feminine gender identity in middle school, she felt her middle school music teacher was a good musical role model, but not an explicit ally in her struggle with other students and the school administration. As she experienced increasing bullying from her peers early in high school, Rie and her parents decided to homeschool her, which cut off her ability to perform in the school band. In other words, Rie’s lack of an ally as a *power capacity* constrained her ability to pursue musical possibilities. But when her parents found an option to enroll her in the band at a neighboring high school, Rie felt that the music teacher there made her “feel special” by

offering opportunities for her to tutor younger students (p. 271). This teacher's validation of Rie's identity and musical proficiency then functioned as a *power capacity* for Rie to pursue the musical possibilities she envisioned for herself.

**Authority and compliance.** In the United States, teachers are generally recognized as having authority over students. In the language of strong structuration theory, many people across the U.S. have *general-dispositional* structures that include an interpretive schema that defines the teacher as the person who sets goals for and directs the actions of students. These *general-dispositional* structures also include a normative schema that legitimizes sanctions or punishments against students who do not comply with the directions of the teacher. These interpretive and normative schemas then become a *power capacity* for teachers to control and influence students.

This does not necessarily mean that teachers routinely use force or the threat of sanctions to direct students' actions. Curren (2004) distinguished between being *in authority*—"having an institutionally conferred right"—and *having authority*—"being able to procure [a student's] cooperation through his [*sic*] belief that [the teacher] knows what is best" (p. 197). In other words, subject matter expertise—what I discussed above as knowledge of pedagogical traditions—is both an *interpretive schema* that defines a portion of a music teacher's *identity*, and a *power capacity* that enables them to *have* authority. If students recognize a music teacher as an expert, the teacher is able to draw on their expertise as a means of influencing others.

A teacher's ability to draw upon this *power capacity*, however, is contingent on the willingness of students to *comply* with the teacher's requests or directives. Thus, compliance is a *power capacity* for students; students are able to withdraw their

compliance if they do not believe the teacher's directives are working toward the their intended outcomes. But Curren argued that a teacher's authority is ultimately conferred on them through the normative schemas of the school as an institution. In other words, developing a rapport with students may be a preferable *power capacity*, but a teacher's *position* as a teacher typically grants them the ability to impose sanctions on students regardless of the students' consent or compliance.

Brewer's (2009) collective case study followed five undergraduate instrumental majors from their internship through their student teaching experience, and illustrated how preservice music teachers can struggle with using authority as a *power capacity*. The participants in his study focused on three categories of instructional delivery: sounding like a teacher/authority, being clear and concise, and knowing one's audience and adjusting (p. 346). He also found that their concerns regarding rapport fell into three categories: establishing personal connections, humor/work balance, and maintaining authority (p. 353). In other words, these preservice teachers experimented with a variety of techniques to develop their relationships with students into *power capacities* that would enable them to reach their intended outcomes with students. Brewer also suggested that this experimentation continues throughout a music teacher's career: "The data in the current study suggest that classroom management issues affect preservice teachers and cooperating teacher alike, and that cooperating teachers may continue to struggle with their own classroom management beliefs and strategies" (p. 341).

**Outside relationships.** Students can also draw empowerment and inspiration from private instructors (Austin et al., 2012; Dolloff, 1999; Isbell, 2008; Kruse, 2013) and family members (Austin et al., 2012; Kruse 2013; Nichols 2013) as *power capacities*

to pursue musical possibilities. Kruse (2013) found both of these to be the case in his narrative study with Gabriella, a fourth-year Hispanic undergraduate in music education. As a child, Gabriella's father convinced her to begin taking violin lessons and brought her to participate in a mariachi ensemble. She also believed her private violin instructor was an important musical and personal influence on her as a student, particularly because this private teacher later became one of her music education professors. Thus, Gabriella's relationships with her father and her private teacher functioned as *power capacities* for her to pursue her goal to be a music educator.

Relationships with peers, friends, and colleagues can be significant enablers for music teachers and students as they pursue musical possibilities. Rie, for example, described a tight-knit group of friends that served as a social support mechanism (Nichols, 2013). But the cruelty of other peers and the school administration's lack of support were the primary catalysts for her family's decision to homeschool her, which temporarily denied her the ability to participate in a school music program. Russell (2012) found that interactions with colleagues were a positive influence on music teachers. But the teachers in Gray's (2011) study—which I will discuss in more detail below—felt a lack of support from colleagues and administrators was a contributing factor to their decisions to leave their positions. Ultimately, peers, friends, and colleagues are a strong influence on the experiences of music teachers and students. But whether these relationships function as *internal power capacities* or *external constraints* depends on the *conjuncturally-specific* structures of individual encounters.

### **Question Three Summary**

Stones (2005) classified *power capacities* as *internal* structures that are combinations of resources and the interpretive and normative schemas that define and legitimize an individual's use of those resources. For example, access to financial capital can greatly enable or constrain the ability of music teachers and students to pursue musical possibilities. This access is also closely connected to broad social discourses surrounding race, SES, and urbanicity. Music teachers can also draw upon their pedagogical expertise to enable them to more efficiently reach their goals with students.

Relationships with others in their lives can be some of the greatest *power capacities* that music teachers and students have. While their *position* as teachers legitimizes their ability to direct and control students, music teachers can also develop a positive rapport with students. This rapport can become a mutually beneficial *power capacity* that enables both teachers and students to pursue new possibilities. In addition, private teachers, family members, colleagues, and peers can substantially enable or constrain music teachers or students in their pursuit of possibilities, depending on the *conjuncturally-specific* structures of the context of encounters.

#### **Question Four: Pursuing Possibilities**

The fourth research question I posed was, “how do this teacher and these students *draw upon structures* to pursue possibilities for who they might become as a music teacher and students?” This question addresses the third and fourth aspects of Stones' (2005) four-part model of structuration: *active agency* and *outcomes*. Stones defined *active agency* as “the ways in which the agent either routinely and pre-reflectively, or strategically and critically, draws upon her *internal* structures” within the context of *external* structures (p. 85, emphasis added). Individuals may or may not be aware of how

their *internal* structures—particularly *general-dispositional* structures—shape their decisions and actions. Individuals then use their knowledge, consciously or unconsciously, to make decisions about how to act in order to achieve their intended or desired *outcomes*. Throughout this document I will use the terms *intended* and *desired* outcomes interchangeably.

Often, individuals will need to “compromise their ideal set of wants, desires and principles in order to be realistic; they sacrifice some things in order to safeguard others” (Stones, 2005, p. 112). This is the basis of what Giddens (1984) and Stones (2005) referred to as *strategic conduct*. Assuming that agents are knowledgeable about the context and the intentions and capabilities of others in addition to their own intentions and capabilities, agents can prioritize their goals based on what they think is possible or advantageous. They can also choose not to act, and instead to conform with *external* structures. Such a decision does not mean that an individual has lost or sacrificed their agency. Rather, they have made a strategic decision that inaction or conformity will be more beneficial in their pursuit of a desired outcome in a particular encounter.

*Outcomes* “include the overlapping but differential effects of actions and interactions on both external and internal structures, as well as all other kinds of outcomes” (Stones, 2005, p. 85). Outcomes can be changes in the material environment—*external* structures—or changes in people’s understandings of themselves and others—*internal conjuncturally-specific* structures—or changes in people’s understandings of the world in general—*internal general-dispositional* structures. Outcomes also include *unintended* results, outcomes an agent did not anticipate or plan

on—or perhaps results an agent is not even aware of—but were nevertheless a direct result of their actions.

As Stones argued, *outcomes* can involve “change and elaboration or reproduction and preservation” (p. 85). In other words, structures do not have to change to be an outcome of structuration. Structuration could, for example, reinforce long-standing traditions as *general-dispositional* or *external* structures, or validate an individual’s identity within a specific context as *conjuncturally-specific* structures. Outcomes then set the stage for the next cycle of structuration as the *external* and *internal* structures that form the understandings and context surrounding agents (p. 86).

As I argued above, the identity negotiation process I outlined in Chapter 1 is a process of structuration (see Figure 3 above). Based on the *external* and *internal* structures that shape their *positions* within specific contexts, individuals engage in *active agency* to realize possibilities for who they want to be—*intended outcomes*. The actual *outcomes* of their interactions with others—intended *and* unintended—shape their self-relevant *general-dispositional* and *conjuncturally-specific* structures—their *identities*—as well as others’ understandings of them, and the *external* structures in the specific context. These outcomes then become the structures that shape the *positions* of individuals for their next set of encounters, and the negotiation begins anew. In this section, I discuss outcomes music teachers and students might intend for their encounters with one another. I then interpret four case studies on music teacher identity (Abramo & Austin, 2014; Brewer, 2014; Gray, 2011; Natale-Abramo, 2014) through strong structuration theory as an example of how each aspect of Stones’ (2005) strong structuration process can shape the process as a whole.

## Outcomes

In this section, I discuss research that indicates the outcomes music teachers may intend for instruction and the outcomes they intend their students to achieve. Then, I discuss research that suggests additional outcomes students may intend for their participation in music.

**Teachers' intended outcomes.** In her survey study of undergraduate music education students at the University of North Texas, L'Roy (1983) asked participants to rank their first five choices from a list of twelve possible goals for music educators. Using a weighted scoring system, L'Roy found that the participants felt "give a basic appreciation of music" and "provide a creative outlet" far exceeded other possible goals for music educators' instruction. These were followed—in order—by "produce proficient performers," "teach fundamentals of music," and "produce a musically literate population" (pp. 100-103). L'Roy also found, however, that the participants were unable to clearly articulate goals for music educators in open-ended interviews. In other words, the preservice teachers in her study had trouble coming up with specific intended outcomes unless prompted with ideas, most likely because they did not have teaching experience to draw upon. This suggests that music teachers largely base their *intended outcomes* on contextual, *conjuncturally-specific* experiences and structures.

Indeed, many of the intended outcomes of inservice music teachers are likely based on their previous experience. In her phenomenological case study of four inservice string teachers, Pellegrino (2014) found the participants believed their current music-making practices allowed them to "remember what it is like to be a music learner, solve pedagogical issues, inspire students, and model for students" (p. 137). In other words,

actively performing was a *power resource* for teaching and legitimating their identities, and an interpretive schema for pedagogical practice. In addition, Pellegrino found that participants interpreted their students' motivations for music making based on their own past music making experiences: "past music-making experiences informed [their] beliefs about why students make music, and informed their own content knowledge" (p. 132). In short, the music teachers' experiences contributed to their *general-dispositional* normative schemas regarding what outcomes for music education ought to be both from their own perspective, and from their students' perspectives.

Since the beginning of the standardization movement in the 1980s, however, teachers have been increasingly constrained in their ability to set individual instructional outcomes or goals for students. Depending on how strictly supervisors enforce the codified interpretive and normative schemas embedded within state and national standards or local curricula, these documents can become *irresistible causal forces* that shape the outcomes teachers believe they must pursue with their students. For example, the National Core Arts Standards (NCCAS, 2014) are organized around four artistic processes that function as broad goals for the activities in which students ought to engage: Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting. For music, these strands are further divided into eleven anchor standards with specific achievable outcomes at various grade levels. This does not necessarily mean that music teachers are compelled to conform with the intended instructional outcomes delineated in the standards or local curricula. Because music teachers have *agency*, they may choose to readily adopt these outcomes and use the standards and curricula as a *normative schema* that legitimates the outcomes they plan, if the outcomes in the National Core Arts Standards or local

curricula resonate with their *general-dispositional* structures—their general worldviews about what music education is and should be. They may also choose, however, to pursue alternate outcomes, though their choice to pursue alternatives may depend on the level of sanctions they anticipate they would experience for pursuing those alternatives.

**Students' intended outcomes.** Students are rarely involved in the process of developing formal curriculum documents and standards documents, so any congruence between these documents and the desired outcomes of students is most likely happenstance or the result of a student's choice to conform. Pellegrino's (2014) findings indicated that the music teachers in her study made assumptions about the outcomes students intend based on their past performing experiences, not necessarily based on their *conjuncturally-specific* relationships with the students. This is not to say that students do not intend the same outcomes as music teachers. Rather, it is a reminder that a student's intentions for engaging in music may or may not resonate with the teachers' intentions.

Several researchers have found that, in addition to developing technical proficiency or creativity, student musicians find engaging in music to be an emotional support mechanism or a means of validating other parts of their identities. After she began homeschooling as a result of the bullying she experienced in middle school, songwriting became an important experience for Rie: “She confided that songwriting ‘made me feel like I wasn't crazy’” (Nichols, 2013, p. 270). Kruse (2013) found that growing up participating in a mariachi ensemble helped Gabriella form her Latina identity. In high school, Gabriella valued playing in orchestra to earn the respect of her orchestra director as a performer, which kept her motivated to attend her other academic classes. In his narrative study of JJ, a queer rapper of color, Kruse (2016) found that JJ

listened to hip-hop and British music as a way to feel comfortable in an unfamiliar place after they moved to the United States from England as a teenager. JJ also wrote raps and performed as a way to validate their Black and gender-variant identities. As JJ said, “it just makes me stronger . . . music just like, reminds me, ‘No. I can be that. And no matter what you say, I can still be that’” (p. 110).

JJ’s story also serves as a cautionary tale to music teachers about assuming the intended outcomes of their students. JJ felt their music experiences in school were unfulfilling because they did not see themselves in the music their teachers presented: “[teachers] just look at the surface of Black things and if it’s not something that seems very accessible to the White public, it’s just like, ‘No. It’s too difficult. We’re just not going to deal with it’” (p. 114). As a result, “apathy and frustration saturated discussions about their school music experiences despite music being the ‘most important’ aspect of JJ’s life” (p. 117). In the language of structuration theory, JJ’s teachers had developed *intended outcomes* based on their own *general-dispositional* normative structures in order to avoid conflict with *external* structures surrounding discourses of race and identity. As a result of this conflict in desired outcomes, JJ disengaged from musical experiences in school and created their own opportunities. As Kruse argued, “educators should beware the risk of assuming relevance for students” (p. 117).

### **Examples of the Structuration Process**

In this section, I review four case studies (Abramo & Austin, 2014; Brewer, 2014; Gray, 2011; Natale-Abramo, 2014) that examined music teacher identities through strong structuration theory. None of these researchers used strong structuration theory as a theoretical lens, but I have applied this lens to provide examples of how each aspect of

the strong structuration process—*external* structures, *internal* structures, *active agency*, and *outcomes*—can shape the *identities* of music teachers. While all four of the aspects of strong structuration were at work in each of these cases, I have foregrounded one aspect of the theory in each case to provide an example of how each aspect can affect the others.

**External structures.** Alex (Brewer, 2014) was a 37-year-old undergraduate music education student whose background consisted primarily of informal learning experiences on guitar. Because of this, Alex described his admission to a collegiate music education program as “conning” his way in. Alex did not have experiences that fit the *external* normative schema of music school admission requirements, and therefore lacked what he felt were adequate *power capacities* to achieve his goal of admission.

Alex’s subsequent undergraduate experience was “laden with negative thoughts and feelings” about his background because he felt “incompetent in a domain where he had formerly felt quite accomplished” (p. 36). In other words, Alex experienced considerable constraints as he pursued possibilities for his *identity* as a music teacher because he lacked traditional content knowledge as a *power capacity*. His *conjuncturally-specific* structures did not match the *external* structure of the music school curriculum or the *general-dispositional* schemas of many of his peers or instructors. While Alex may have been able to draw on other *power capacities*, his peers and instructors elected to conform to the *external* structures of the curriculum rather than help Alex to explore other possibilities. Alex’s experiences illustrate the constraints from *external* structures that music teachers might face when pursuing possibilities for themselves as music teachers.

**Internal structures.** Gray (2011) worked with four veteran elementary general music teachers who had changed jobs at least once to explore how career mobility influenced their identities. She found that the teachers in her study maintained a “core” identity that remained consistent across their career changes, and that elements of this core identity in conjunction with their teacher identity were “associated with their effectiveness as teachers, regardless of mobility” (p. 206). These teachers had *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative schemas that defined them as teachers and applied those structures to multiple contexts.

And yet, these teachers maintained that their role as a music teacher was “in part, place specific, and school context impacted how they enacted their music teacher roles” (p. 220). In other words, the *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive and normative schemas of their immediate context shape their *position* in addition to their *general-dispositional* schemas. Thus, Gray’s findings indicate the complex combination of structures that define music teachers’ *positions* and shape their interactions.

**Active agency.** Natale-Abramo (2014) examined the social discourses that shaped the identities of three public school instrumental teachers. Chris felt as though he needed to be a “social chameleon” and performed an alternate identity as a teacher in order to hide his identity as a gay man because he was not “out” to his students and colleagues (p. 63). He was afraid of the possible sanctions he would experience, because his *general-dispositional* interpretive schema of himself as a gay man did not resonate with the *general-dispositional* normative schema his students and colleagues had regarding sexuality. As a White middle-class teacher in a lower SES school working mostly with students of color, Anna found her role to be “guided by the predicaments and needs of

her students,” alternating between a caretaker and authoritarian (p. 61). The intersection of her own and her students’ *general-dispositional* interpretive and normative schemas surrounding race and SES shaped her *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive schemas of how she needed to teach in particular situations.

Natale-Abramo concluded that the participants entered discursive fields and chose among discourses as a means of performing their identities (p. 64). In other words, the music teachers in her study were aware of the *general-dispositional* structures that *positioned* them, and they used their *agency* to shape the *conjuncturally-specific* structures of their interactions with students and colleagues in ways that allowed them to attain some of their desired outcomes. Natale-Abramo’s study illustrates the ability of music teachers to use their agency to navigate a complex field of constraints and enablements in order to pursue possibilities for themselves as teachers.

**Outcomes.** Stephen (Abramo & Austin, 2014) had spent his career teaching traditional band before he began to teach a composition class to students who had limited formal training in music. When he first began teaching the composition class, his pedagogical approach was founded on his experience as a trumpet performer and conductor—the *general-dispositional* schema he had formed based on his prior experiences. Stephen found, however, that this approach brought him and his students limited success in the composition class; he found that he was unable to achieve his *intended outcomes*. Stephen decided to introduce informal learning practices into the composition class—he exercised his *agency* to implement a *conjuncturally-specific* structure that did not resonate with his *general-dispositional* structures. As a result of this

change his students began to flourish, despite Stephen's feelings that he was losing control of the classroom.

Abramo and Austin found that Stephen's success with an unfamiliar pedagogical practice, one that did not resonate with his own prior learning experiences, caused him to question his underlying identity as a trumpet performer and challenged his notions of what it meant to learn and teach music. Viewed through strong structuration theory as a lens, Stephen's decision had the *intended outcome* of enabling his students to compose and create their own music. But it also had the *unintended outcome* of altering his *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive and normative schemas surrounding teaching and learning music in a way that conflicted with his *general-dispositional* interpretive schemas of himself as a teacher and musician. Stephen would face a choice in the next cycle of structuration: should he prioritize his outcome of enabling student success by drawing on his new *conjuncturally-specific* structure, or should he change his *intended outcomes* in order to preserve the integrity of his self-relevant *general-dispositional* schemas—his *identity*? Stephen's narrative illustrates the challenge music teachers face when pursuing possibilities for themselves as teachers; their pursuit of a specific possibility does not always resonate with the possibilities students want to pursue.

#### **Question Four Summary**

Encounters in the process of structuration are composed of individuals using their *agency* to draw upon *internal* and *external* structures to pursue their intended *outcomes*. Often, music teachers base their intended outcomes for their encounters with students on curricular documents and standards; and on their own teaching, learning, and performing experiences. But the outcomes teachers intend are not necessarily the outcomes their

students intend; students engage with music for a variety of reasons, including building technical and musical performance proficiency, personal enjoyment, or emotional support. Through their encounters with one another, music teachers and students shape *internal* and *external* structures in ways that might resonate with their intended outcomes, or in ways they did not intend. These include the structures that shape their *positions* and contribute to their *identities*. These outcomes then set the stage of the next encounter as the cycle of structuration continues.

### Chapter Summary

In Chapter 1, I stated that the purpose of my study was to explore the encounters of one veteran orchestra teacher with three of his students in order to understand how they continually negotiate their identities together and pursue possibilities for who they are becoming. In this chapter, I reinterpreted previous research through the four aspects of strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005)—*external* structures, *internal* structures, *active agency*, and *outcomes*—to establish a knowledge base from which I began this exploration, and to demonstrate the potential of strong structuration theory as an interpretive lens for music teacher *identity* research. Given Stones' assertion that strong structuration theory is best used to analyze “*in-situ*” interactions of specific agents over specific periods of time, I would like to point out that while strong structuration theory was useful for drawing general conclusions from prior literature, these were only generalizations that informed the starting point of my investigation and analysis, including potential interview questions and potential analytic themes that might be present in the participants' stories. But, ultimately, the *conjuncturally-specific* understandings of the four participants in this study were the most important findings,

and the primary source which shaped my interpretations. In Chapter 5, I will return to the generalizations I established here and discuss how they related to my findings with the participants in my study.

## CHAPTER 3

### INVESTIGATING BECOMING

The purpose of this study was to explore the encounters of one veteran orchestra teacher with three of his students in order to understand how they continually negotiated their identities together and pursued possibilities for who they were becoming. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology that guided my exploration. I begin by briefly reviewing how my research resonates with a qualitative paradigm. Then, I discuss how I designed this study and how I selected the setting and participants. Next, I discuss my data generation process, including how I ensured methodological rigor; and my process for analyzing, interpreting, and presenting the data. Finally, I present the ethical dilemmas I considered and delimitations readers should keep in mind when reading and interpreting the data and my findings.

#### **Qualitative Paradigms**

In Chapter 1, I argued that identity negotiation is a continual process located within particular social contexts. In Chapter 2, I argued that strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) was an appropriate theoretical framework to organize my investigation of identity negotiation, and that researchers can best apply strong structuration theory to “*in-situ* questions” about the interactions of “particular, specified, agents” (p. 125, emphasis in original). Because the phenomenon I investigated—identity negotiation—and the theoretical framework I selected to investigate that phenomenon were both grounded in specific social contexts and situations, I selected a qualitative approach for my inquiry.

Qualitative researchers reject notions of a unified, objective truth that can be discovered through research. Instead, they view reality as complex, multiple, subjective,

and continually changing. They “seek to build partial and contextualized truths in collaboration with their research participants” (Leavy, 2014, p. 3). The goal of qualitative research, then, is to uncover meanings of a phenomenon from multiple perspectives, and to present an interpretation of that phenomenon based on those perspectives. The phenomenon I investigated was identity negotiation, and I sought to understand that phenomenon from the perspectives of a music teacher and three of his students.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) referred to qualitative research methods as *bricolage*, a pieced-together representation that researchers fit to the specifics of a complex situation (p. 4). By using “multiple methods of inquiry [and] diverse theoretical and philosophical notions of the various elements encountered in the research act,” researchers can work toward a fuller understanding of a complex phenomenon (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 682). For my investigation, I drew from three methodological approaches—case study, ethnography, and narrative—combined with strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) as an interpretive lens, and fit them to various aspects of my inquiry to create the *bricolage* represented in this document. Below I discuss how each of these approaches shaped my research design, data generation, and data analysis and presentation.

### **Research Design: Case Study**

Stake (2005) argued that case study “is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. . . . By whatever methods, we choose to study *the case*” (p. 443, emphasis in original). In this study, the case was an orchestra teacher and his interactions with three of his students over a specified period of time. Stake identified two types of case study based on the purpose of the research. Intrinsic case studies are interesting in-and-of themselves—researchers examine the case because of their interest in the

particular actors or situation. Instrumental case studies, on the other hand, provide insight into a broader phenomenon and allow researchers to illustrate the complexities of that phenomenon in a specific situation (pp. 444-445). Because my goal for this study was to illustrate how a music teacher and his students negotiated their identities, the overarching design of this research was an instrumental case study.

### **Selecting the Case**

I selected this case based on an exploratory project I conducted in the spring of 2017. My goal for the project was to conduct an intrinsic case study with two music teachers at disparate points in their career to examine the resonances and tensions in their professional life experiences. I selected two individuals with whom I had established prior working relationships using a maximum variation strategy (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Chase (1995) argued that researchers as interviewers should “*invite* others to tell their stories” rather than solicit reports (p. 3, emphasis in original). My rapport with these two individuals facilitated their acceptance of my invitation to tell their stories in detail.

Daniel, a preservice teacher and euphonium player, had enrolled in several classes I taught at the University and, at the time, I was assigned to supervise his student teaching. Steve, a high school orchestra teacher with ten years of experience, had mentored a student teacher I had previously supervised. Steve and I developed a close working relationship when he subsequently asked me to teach clinics for his students, and I joined the semi-professional string quartet he performed in with two other music teachers. I have held that quartet position for two years, and still actively perform with the group. Both Daniel and Steve separately accepted my invitation to relate their professional life stories to me—they did not know each other, nor did they interact during

the project—and I conducted one formal interview with each of them and several informal interviews and teaching observations.

Throughout those interviews and observations, both Steve and Daniel emphasized the importance of the relationship between a music teacher and their students. They told me stories of important encounters they had as students with their mentors, and these stories were closely connected to how they understood their own positions as music teachers. In other words, the importance of teacher/student relationships emerged as a resonant theme in both Daniel's and Steve's professional life experiences. But each of them differed in how they characterized those relationships. Daniel had been steeped in marching and wind band traditions throughout his musical life, and he consistently positioned music teachers—including himself—as the center of authority in instructional settings. Steve, however, had a more complicated view. He had lived and worked in a broad range of contexts, and his musical and professional lives had taken some unexpected turns. While there were consistent elements that tied his beliefs together, Steve felt that much of what he did as a music teacher was dependent on the specific needs of the community and individual students.

At the end of the exploratory project, I still had questions about how the lives of music teachers shaped who they were becoming. How do music teachers' interactions with students shape their identities as music teachers, and how did their identities as music teachers shape their subsequent interactions with students? My experience with the exploratory project indicated that I could best answer these questions by working with an experienced inservice teacher. Daniel mostly spoke about his relationships with students in abstract generalizations; this was not a surprise, given that he was a preservice teacher

and had comparatively little teaching experience. On the other hand, Steve consistently grounded his ideas about teaching music and his relationships with students in specific examples, drawing on the depth and breadth of his experience.

## **Participants**

Based on the rapport I had built with Steve and his potential to generate rich data for my study, I asked him if he would like to continue my inquiry with me, and he agreed. After I secured approval from the appropriate school district administrators and the Institutional Review Board at Arizona State University (see Appendix B), Steve and I discussed how we would recruit student participants. I initially intended to pursue the same maximum variation sampling strategy (Flyvbjerg, 2011) that I used in my exploratory project. I asked Steve if he would recommend three students from one of his orchestras that he believed had diverse backgrounds and might be enthusiastic about participating in a research project. Steve, however, was reluctant to hand-pick students because he did not want to influence what students might tell me about the orchestra program by selecting all enthusiastic or technically proficient students. He preferred to give all the students an opportunity to volunteer and leave it to them to decide.

Following Steve's lead, I prepared a recruitment script (see Appendix B) that gave a brief synopsis of my research goals and described what I anticipated to be the time commitment to participate in the study. I presented the recruitment script at the beginning of a rehearsal for Steve's largest orchestra—Symphony Orchestra—in August, 2018. After rehearsal, interested students approached me to pick up two consent forms: one for them, and one for their parents if they were under the age of eighteen (see Appendix B). Lena, a junior violist, returned the forms almost immediately. For approximately two

weeks, none of the other students returned their forms. Jack, another junior violist, took additional copies of the forms several times on my subsequent visits because he had lost or forgotten the forms. He eventually returned the completed consent forms in late September. Britney, a sophomore violist in the smaller advanced orchestra—Chamber Orchestra—had heard about the study through her friends and approached me about participating in early October. She returned her consent forms the following week. No other students volunteered to participate.

### **Case Boundaries**

Stake (2005) defined a case as a “bounded system” that exists within specific limits set by the researcher. I set flexible boundaries for my case that roughly defined what I would include and exclude from my analysis, depending on what the participants felt was relevant. My research was temporally bound by the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year, beginning August 2018 and ending December 2018. The beginning of the academic year served as a starting point, and Steve had a regularly scheduled winter concert in December which served as a culminating experience and ending point for the study. Although two of the students—Jack and Britney—could not participate for the first six weeks until they completed their consent forms, they retroactively described their experiences in the interviews, and I had been present to observe Lena and Steve for many of the events they described. During the interviews, all four of the participants described past events that were technically outside the temporal case boundary. However, the meanings they drew from these events were directly relevant to the meanings they constructed within the temporal boundaries. Thus, I included them in my analysis.

My research was loosely spatially bound by San Lorenzo High School, a school in the Kanab Union High School District in the Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area. As with the temporal boundary, each of the four participants talked about experiences that had taken place outside of this spatial boundary. But because the meanings of these experiences were relevant to their experiences within the case, I included them as well. All of my direct observations took place in the orchestra room and auditorium at San Lorenzo. All but five of my twelve interviews took place in the practice rooms at San Lorenzo—these five exceptions took place at local coffee shops for the convenience of the participants.

My study was thematically-bound by the experiences of the four participants within the curricular orchestra program at San Lorenzo. As with the temporal and spatial boundaries, I included experiences and stories that were not directly related to the San Lorenzo orchestra program if the participants felt they were relevant and important for me to understand their experiences in orchestra. Steve's teaching load consisted of three orchestras organized by ability level—Concert Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra, and Chamber Orchestra. Although he taught two separate sections of Concert Orchestra, it performed as a single ensemble. Steve also taught a section of Mariachi and several extra-curricular groups. I did not observe or include the Mariachi or extra-curricular groups in my study because the three orchestras represented the majority of Steve's teaching activities, and the student participants were not involved in these other groups.

### **A Plot Twist**

Based on my exploratory project, my initial research focus was going to be the lives of the four participants and how their experiences in the orchestra program shaped

their identities and possibilities for who they were becoming. In their first interviews, Steve and Lena talked about intersections between how they understood themselves as musicians and a music teacher and their lives outside of orchestra, including interactions with family members, friends, and personal mentors. These intersections appeared as though they would be the central themes I would examine. But in mid-September—one month into the data generation period—Steve told me he had decided to change a fundamental aspect of the orchestra program: he was going to change from a hierarchical ranked-seating plan to a randomized-rotating seating plan he had heard about at a recent professional development conference. This came as a surprise to me; while my first interviews with Steve and Lena had suggested that seating and chair placements were important as *conjuncturally-specific* interpretive schemas, I had not planned on making seating a central aspect of my inquiry. But once Steve implemented the change in late September, seating became a recurring central focus for all four participants in their interviews.

Barrett (2014) argued that a principal benefit of case study is a “flexibility of focus,” and that “as researchers subsequently draw boundaries more closely, the scope of the case comes into sharp view” (p. 114). While other themes also emerged as important to the participants—such as personal relationships, repertoire selection, and ensemble size—I decided to center my inquiry around the seating-plan change because this aspect of their orchestra experiences seemed to be consistently at the forefront of their minds within the time period that I interacted with them. In other words, the participants led me to tighten the thematic focus of my inquiry to examine the seating-plan change as an example of how the participants pursued specific possibilities for themselves based on

their identities, how their actions shaped their social landscape, and how their actions subsequently shaped their positions and identities. In the language of structuration theory, this sharpening of my focus also allowed me to investigate “particular accounts of situated events and processes” (Stones, 2005, p. 38).

### **Data Generation: Ethnography**

Kruger (2014) argued that the purpose of data collection—which I will refer to as *data generation*—in ethnography is to “identify and understand patterns of conduct that guide participants’ day-to-day practice, as well as to explore structures that shape that practice” (p. 135). This purpose resonated with the goal of my study because, as I argued in Chapter 2, music teachers continually negotiate their identities in their day-to-day encounters with students. Thus, I drew upon ethnographic methods to generate data, including semi-structured interviews, observations, document analysis, and a researcher journal (p. 136).

### **Interviews**

Beginning in early September, I scheduled monthly formal interviews with each of the participants in order to foster prolonged engagement with them and the situation (Stauffer, 2014). By the end of the data generation period, I had conducted three one-hour interviews with each of the participants, with two exceptions. Britney submitted her consent forms late in the process, and I was unable to interview her in my first round of interviews. But because my research focus had sharpened by the time I interviewed her, I was able to direct our conversation more effectively toward the themes that had become my central focus. Consequently, she was able to tell me just as many relevant stories,

despite having only two interviews. Steve completed an additional interview with me as part of the exploratory project, and therefore had a total of four interviews.

I conducted all but five of the interviews in practice rooms at San Lorenzo in order to situate my research in the “places where *narrators or participants* are” (Stauffer, 2014, p. 177, emphasis in original). The other five interviews—Steve’s four interviews, and Jack’s first interview—took place at local coffee shops because they were more convenient or comfortable for the participants at the time we scheduled the interview. I audio recorded each interview using the Voice Recorder application on an iPad, and took handwritten notes during the interviews. After each interview, I transcribed the recordings and wrote additional handwritten analytic notes.

Chase (1995) argued that a researcher’s task is “to provide the interactional and discursive conditions” that encourage participants to share their experiences, rather than to solicit them for reports on their activity (p. 12). In order to set up these conditions and establish a rapport with the participants, I created a semi-structured interview protocol for the first interview that centered around stories from their musical lives (see Appendix C). After each interview I compared the transcripts, my interview notes, and my transcription notes to concepts from strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005). Based on the themes that began to emerge, I prepared a second semi-structured interview protocol that explored those themes. I used this protocol with each of the participants, and included an additional section that further explored the unique stories of each participant. I repeated this analytic cycle to create the third semi-structured interview protocol. Before beginning the third interview, I presented some of my analytic ideas to the participants.

Their feedback on my preliminary analysis became an additional part of the the third interview.

### **Observations and Artifacts**

To add additional perspectives to the stories the participants told me, I attended orchestra rehearsals at San Lorenzo once every two weeks beginning in late August. Each observation lasted the length of the class period I attended. Periods ranged from 45 minutes to approximately one hour depending on the daily building schedule. I also attended the concerts the orchestras performed during the data generation period. The first concert was a Prism concert—a concert with continuous music and no applause breaks—in late September. The second was a traditional concert in mid-December. At each concert, I sat with the orchestras in the warmup room an hour before the concert began, and sat in the back of the auditorium during the performance where I could see both the performers and the audience members. These classroom and performance observations also gave me an opportunity to have additional informal conversations with the participants.

During these observations, I typed narrative field notes describing the interactions between Steve and the students, and transcribed large portions of their dialogue verbatim. I used brackets within the text to separate my analytic thoughts from the narrative descriptions. I adapted many of these narrative notes into the stories I present in Chapter 4. In other words, the observation notes allowed me to give a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of the setting and encounters between the participants. I also kept a folder of documents I collected throughout the data generation period. These documents included

the orchestra student handbook, a parent information flyer, grading rubrics, and concert programs. The documents helped me to expand upon the stories the participants told me.

### **Researcher Position**

Qualitative researchers are “part of the social world [they] study, and can not avoid either influencing it or being influenced by it” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 90). Similarly, Mills and Morton (2013) argued that ethnography is “an embodied practice that uses all our senses and emotional sensibilities” (p. 4). In other words, I was inextricably intertwined with and emotionally invested in the participants and the social world I was attempting to study. Thus, it was important for me to outline my positioning and examine how it contributed to my perspective on the data the participants and I generated. I would like to note that I use the term “position” in this section in the sense that many qualitative researchers use it—to describe my own background and how it potentially shaped my understandings of the participants’ experiences. The term does, however, bear close resemblance to Giddens’ (1984) and Stones’ (2005) theoretical definition of *position*. From the perspective of strong structuration theory, I will reflect in this section on the *general-dispositional* and *conjuncturally-specific interpretive and normative schemas* I had constructed that shaped my *position* as a researcher and music teacher, and through which I filtered my interpretations of what was happening during my inquiry.

My background as a music learner and teacher closely resembles Steve’s background. I grew up performing as a cellist in a traditional high school orchestra, and I taught secondary orchestra in New York for eight years. Steve—a violinist—had grown up in a traditional orchestra program, and taught orchestra in New York for five years. As a result of our similar formative experiences, Steve and I shared many understandings

and assumptions about how a high school orchestra program should be structured, including rehearsal routines and overarching goals. In one sense, this was an advantage for me because the setting felt very familiar and I was able to quickly identify aspects of the participants' experiences that were likely to be meaningful to them for my initial interviews and observations.

And yet, my familiarity with traditional American high school orchestra culture posed a substantial risk for my inquiry. I entered the San Lorenzo community with myriad assumptions about what I would and should see and experience. Left unchecked, I risked mapping my own understandings of the situation onto what the participants were telling me. I used my analytic notes and a researcher journal to check these assumptions. Some of these assumptions included reasons for why the participants might be in orchestra, the purpose of specific pedagogical approaches, the underlying logic of the program structure, or the value the participants assigned to various group memberships or labels. After writing about my understandings of each observation or interview, I challenged myself to return to the data and find evidence that both supported and contradicted my understandings. Once I had interrogated my own understandings of each interview, I included reminders to ask the participants about these ideas in subsequent interview protocols, and to look for additional evidence regarding these understandings in subsequent interviews and observations.

For example, Steve and I used the same warmup sequence with the orchestras we taught. Based on the reactions of the students I had worked with, I assumed that Lena, Jack, and Britney would strongly dislike those warmups, and this was my initial impression in the interviews. After closer examination, however, I found that Lena, Jack,

and Britney each had more complicated opinions. They understood Steve's objectives and trusted that, even though the warmups were not the most "exciting" part of rehearsal, Steve asked them to engage with the warmups because it would help them achieve other goals. This trust developed into an important theme in subsequent interviews with all four participants.

### **Methodological Rigor**

Historically, qualitative researchers established the *validity* of their findings by discussing the procedures they used to establish trustworthiness or credibility. However, Robinson (2014) pointed out that the term *validity* was originally drawn from quantitative rather than qualitative paradigms. Within the context of qualitative research, *validity* refers to the "credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). Because they deal "principally with the world as it changes with the position and stance of the viewer" (Bruner, 1986, p. 50), qualitative researchers must work to uncover a multitude of perspectives from which their phenomenon of interest might be viewed in order to strengthen the validity of their claims and interpretations. These perspectives include those of the research participants, the researcher, and readers of the research. Thus, qualitative researchers must rigorously design their studies to consider as many perspectives as possible, and show those perspectives with enough description to allow readers to examine the plurality of a given phenomenon and draw their own conclusions. As Barrett (2014) put it: "methodological rigor is the warrant on which validity rests" (p. 123). I will briefly discuss the means by which I established methodological rigor to work towards validity and trustworthiness in my inquiry.

I laid the foundations for methodological rigor in this study by inviting four participants to tell me stories about the same series of events and encounters. Because each of these participants occupied different *positions*, they were able to give me four different perspectives on the events that took place during the data generation period. My prolonged engagement with the participants—approximately four and a half months—allowed me to gather multiple stories from each participant and observe how their perspectives changed over time. The documents I collected allowed me to add additional details to the participants’ perspectives and confirm factual details they included in their stories, which allowed me to triangulate the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I was able to examine and interrogate my own perspective through my observation notes, researcher journal, and transcription notes. In order to allow readers to form their own perspectives and draw their own conclusions, I presented the data as narrative stories, which I will discuss in more detail below.

### **Analysis and Presentation: Narrative**

Giddens (1984) advised that researchers examining the “strategic conduct” of individuals should “avoid impoverished descriptions of agents’ knowledgeability [and should provide] a sophisticated account of [agents’] motivation” (p. 289). In other words, Giddens believed that researchers using structuration theory should provide readers with the thickest possible descriptions so that readers could intimately understand how participants constructed meanings of their world, and why participants took the actions they did based on those meanings. Bruner (1986) argued that there are two, irreducible modes of knowing and constructing meanings of the world. *Paradigmatic* knowing “attempts to fulfill the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and

explanation” through the deduction of testable, verifiable facts (p. 12). *Narrative* knowing, on the other hand, “strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place” through stories and believable accounts of the world (p. 13). Narrative knowing is how individuals construct personal knowledge and meanings of their everyday interactions. Therefore, narratives are “the life stuff of those whose behavior [researchers] study” (p. 43). Given Giddens’ (1984) demand for “sophisticated accounts” of the meanings participants constructed, and Bruner’s (1986) assertion that narrative knowing is how the participants constructed personal meanings, I decided to draw on narrative methods (Stauffer, 2014) to analyze and present the data.

Polkinghorne (1995) identified two forms of analysis in narrative research: paradigmatic *analysis of narrative*, and *narrative analysis*. Each of these modes of analysis—both of which I utilized for this study—are loosely associated with Bruner’s (1986) modes of knowing. During paradigmatic *analysis of narrative*, a researcher takes data in the form of storied narratives and attempts to classify or categorize instances of specific concepts (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 9). I engaged in paradigmatic *analysis of narrative* data as I attempted to “locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories” the participants told me (p. 13), and drew connections between the participants’ stories and strong structuration theory. While transcribing the interviews, I wrote handwritten analysis notes that allowed me to capture my analytic thinking (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105). I then compared these analytic notes with my interview notes to examine how my thoughts during the conversations resonated with or were in tension with my thoughts during the transcription process. I completed these comparisons for

individual participants for each round of interviews, and compared my notes between participants to look for common or dissonant themes and understandings.

Then, I returned to the field and repeated this interpretive cycle. I wrote about the participants and my interpretations (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), re-examined the theoretical framework, continued to observe the participants, and had new conversations with them. This process fit Stauffer's (2014) description of interpretive processes in narrative research that are "invented within the context of each study and comprised of multiple recursive moves between data, work in the field, literature and theory, and writing" (p. 179). Polkinghorne (1995) noted that the strength of paradigmatic *analysis of narrative* procedures is "their capacity to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories" (p. 15). The procedures I described above allowed me to uncover central themes as general knowledge that I could organize through strong structuration theory.

I then turned to Polkinghorne's second form of analysis—*narrative analysis* of eventful data. During *narrative analysis*, researchers attempt to "discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development" (p. 15). I synthesized specific stories the participants told me, quotes from our interviews, and my own observations into a narrative with four sets of vignettes that centered around Steve's decision to change the orchestra seating. As I noted above, I selected seating as the core theme because it had emerged as a central concern for all four participants during the time frame of the study. Writing the dialogue and narration for the stories forced me to return once again to the original interviews and observation notes, and helped me to further refine my analytic interpretation.

Each of the four sets of stories has four vignettes—one from the point of view of each participant. The first set introduces the participants, the second illustrates their experiences concerning the hierarchical ranked seating, the third illustrates their initial reactions to the random seating, and the fourth illustrated their positions at the end of the study. I later rewrote the fourth set of vignettes as a single large vignette in which all four participants interact at the same time and place.

Stauffer (2014) argued that “narratives aim at meaning rather than truth and convince through lifelikeness or *verisimilitude*” (p. 163, emphasis in original). This resonates with Giddens’ (1984) call for researchers to “avoid impoverished descriptions” and to “provide sophisticated accounts” of the agents in their study. To present narratives that were as lifelike as possible, the storied data became “novelized” (Bakhtin, 1981) as I constructed fictional dialogue that authentically expressed the meanings the participants had communicated to me.

In his discussion of critical storytelling in educational inquiry, Barone (2000) argued that the power of a story can come from careful and committed empiricism that is made manifest through such features of writing as powerfully “thick” description and invented but convincing dialogue. The text thereby invites and enables the reader to locate the beating and, yes, the aching of other human hearts. (p. 197)

Above, I documented the methodological rigor of my study to demonstrate my “careful and committed empiricism” and assure readers that the stories faithfully and genuinely represent the perspectives of Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney. Whenever possible, I drew dialogue and narration directly from interactions I had observed or quotes from the

interviews so that the stories “fit the data while at the same time bring order and meaningfulness that are not apparent in the data themselves” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16). Thus, the vignettes I present are *honest* stories that “generate in the reader awareness of the locations of (actual or fictitious) characters’ thoughts, beliefs, desires, and habits, in the webs of contingencies that constitute their life-worlds” (Barone, 2000, p. 192). To ensure that I had fairly and honestly represented their thoughts, stories, and lives, I gave each participant a compilation of the vignettes I had written from their perspective and asked them for their feedback. Each of them believed that the stories did indeed represent them well—Jack went so far as to describe his vignettes as “freakishly accurate.”

### **Ethical Considerations**

All of my data generation and presentation techniques complied with the regulations of the Institutional Review Board at Arizona State University. I masked the names of all participants, locations, and institutions with pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality. None of the participants had access to the data the other participants generated, and I applied pseudonyms and removed vignettes from other perspectives in the review copies I gave the participants to read.

The process of writing the stories raised an uncomfortable question: to whom does this narrative belong? The vignettes are accounts of the participants’ lives; they are *their* experiences, understandings, and meanings. And yet, *I* was the one arranging those meanings into stories that enabled me to present my interpretations of those experiences as a researcher. In other words, my motives for asking the participants to share their stories could have been in tension with the participants’ motives for sharing their stories.

Initially, I intended to co-author stories with the participants as Nichols (2016) did with Rie, the participant in her narrative study. She felt that “researching *with* Rie instead of *researching* Rie would position her as the guide to her world, not as the object of my gaze” (p. 444, emphasis in original). However, it became clear to me early in the data generation period that the participants were neither interested in nor available to co-author stories. Asking them to take additional time out of their already busy schedules would add an additional burden to their lives and preclude them from participating at all. Thus, I changed course to align my process with the one Chase (1996) described. I took responsibility for drafting the vignettes, then asked the participants to review the stories to ensure that I had faithfully represented them and their understandings. Each of the participants reviewed and approved of the stories I wrote from their perspectives, and they made the final decisions as to what I would include and exclude from the narratives, though none of them asked me to make any major changes to their vignettes after their review.

Nichols (2016) argued that considerations of whether to include participants in the analysis stage of narrative research should be guided, in part, by the kind of interpretation suited for the material and the participants’ desire to be involved in the analysis (p. 446). The participants trusted me to write the vignettes and begin the analysis on my own. Before the third interview, I asked each participant how much of my analysis and interpretation they would like to hear. All four said they were interested, so I summarized and explained the tentative themes I had found, and how their individual experiences seemed to resonate or be in tension with those themes. Then the participants gave me feedback on my interpretations, which I incorporated into my thinking and writing.

But, unlike the vignettes, I made the final decisions as to what I would include in my analysis and interpretation in Chapter 5. In her discussion of ethics in narrative research, Chase (1996) argued that narrative researchers might claim interpretive authority in ways that are not necessarily in tension with the feminist and participatory philosophies that underpin narrative methods. To do so, however, researchers must acknowledge their authority, and ensure that their claim of interpretive authority is appropriate to the specific aim or purpose of the research (p. 51). My overarching goal for this study was to inform music teacher education research and practice. This necessitated that I select and present specific data, interpret that data through a specific sociological theory, and discuss the implications of my interpretations in relation to existing research literature. None of the participants had the academic background to be able to conduct this type of analysis, nor did they express an interest in learning to do so within the time frame I had to complete this study. Thus, I drew upon my authority as a researcher in order to meet my overarching goal for this study.

### **Study Delimitations**

In addition to the case boundaries I discussed above, readers should keep four additional delimitations in mind while exploring the remaining chapters. First, the only participants I interviewed were Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney. Although there are other characters that speak and interact with the participants in the narrative, readers should remember that I was only able to learn about those characters through the eyes of the participants. Thus, those characters only represent the participants' impressions and understandings of the others with whom the participants interacted.

Second, I engaged in “narrative smoothing” (Polkinghorne, 1995) by including certain events and meanings in the vignettes and excluding others—such as repertoire selection and the myriad personal relationships the participants described—in order to center the narrative around Steve’s decision to change the seating. Although I attempted to create stories that resonated as closely as possible with the participants’ perspectives, the stories do not and cannot represent the totality of the participants and their experiences in orchestra.

Third, Bruner (1986) argued that the core of a literary narrative is “a text whose intention is to initiate and guide a search for meanings among a spectrum of possible meanings” (p. 25). The narrative I present in Chapter 4 illustrates, as closely as possible, the perspectives of the participants. The analysis in Chapter 5 illustrates my perspective and the results of my “search for meanings” in Steve’s, Lena’s, Jack’s, and Britney’s stories. Mine is not the authoritative account; it is only one interpretation in the “spectrum of possible meanings.” I encourage readers to use my interpretation as a guiding example, but to also engage in their own search for meanings in the narrative.

Finally, I organized the vignettes of Chapter 4 in chronological order rather than by participant to preserve a sense of temporal flow. However, I encourage readers to read the vignettes in order by participant—or in any order other than the one in which I arranged them—if they feel it would help them gain new insight into the stories.

## CHAPTER 4

### A NARRATIVE OF BECOMING

#### **Late August**

##### **Steve**

“Good morning everyone!”

Blank stares greeted him. A couple of students muttered semi-coherent “good mornings” as they nursed the coffees and energy drinks they had smuggled to their seats.

“Let’s try that again. GOOD MORNING!”

“GOOD MORNING!”

“That’s more like it! Let’s go over a couple of announcements before we start our warmups.”

A few of them grunted in approval as they stretched and began to pick their bows up off the stands. It was hard to blame them for being tired; 6:45am was early for anyone to be awake, let alone teenagers who didn’t technically need to be at school yet. But that was part of the deal to be in Chamber Orchestra: you needed to make a commitment to get to school for zero-hour.

“Don’t forget, your orchestra t-shirt payments and attire cleaning fees are due by the end of the week. No, Julio, I’m not taking your envelope right now. It goes in the grey box in the back after rehearsal. Questions on that? Alright! Let’s start the warmups.”

Steve picked up his phone and started the metronome app. The Bluetooth speaker behind the podium began a march at precisely 120 beats per minute.

“Alright, sit up nice and tall! Check your stand partner, always good bow holds. Alrighty—one, two, three, four, ready, set, and here we go!”

Considering the low energy they had greeted him with, the orchestra sprang to life with a powerful sound. Steve wasn't that surprised. They weren't the New York Philharmonic or the Phoenix Symphony by any stretch of the imagination, but they were good kids and they took pride in their work. Steve stopped the metronome.

“So, when we have an articulation like this, let's think about our bow stroke. How are we going to do this? What do we do with our bows? Right, bounce the bow slightly, keep it down toward the frog, use less bow. Let's try it again. Ready, set, we got it, go!”

Again the students leapt into action, adjusting their bow strokes and glancing around the orchestra at their peers to match their articulation. He loved how quickly Chamber adapted to his directions. It was like driving a fancy car that responded to your slightest touch—it seemed to know what you wanted to do before you did it.

They finished the warmups and pulled out the repertoire. Three weeks into the school year, Steve wasn't sure how many of these pieces would be on the Prism concert program yet; he and the orchestra were still getting the feel for each other. The kids seemed to handle the technical aspects of the music well, but he wanted to make sure the enthusiasm was there so the next seven weeks weren't like pulling teeth. It helped that the Prism concert theme was movie and Broadway soundtracks. So far, it looked like *Psycho* and *Beauty and the Beast* were the front runners. He'd have a few more conversations with the kids about the music this week and finalize the program on Friday.

“Ok, let's stop there. Violas, take a look at 45. Does that look familiar?”

“Yeah, we've rehearsed this for the last six days.”

Steve looked up from his score. Britney smiled back at him, a mischievous look in her eyes. A few of the other students chuckled to themselves.

“Very funny. I meant, from today. Where have you seen something else like this, TODAY?”

“That’s the bowing from the warmups.”

“Right, so, let’s do the same thing here. Get your bow down toward the frog. Try it; one and two, you got it, go!”

Steve watched Britney play as the violas ran through the passage. She was adjusting to being in Chamber really well, even though she was sitting in the back of a section for the first time. But that was an inevitable consequence of being the newest and youngest member of an orchestra. He glanced at his phone: 7:20am.

“Alright, great work today everyone! What’s due on Friday? T-shirt money and cleaning fees. Friday, or I’ll hang you by your toes from the door. No, Julio, grey box. Have a good day, take your instruments home after school, please!”

Steve closed his scores and stepped off the podium. Britney shot him a smile as she packed up and headed for the instrument storage room.

“Bye, Mr. Davis!” she called over her shoulder, and she darted out of the room.

She’s a good kid, Steve thought to himself. They all were. In the twelve years he had been teaching, he’d never encountered a “bad” kid. Sure, there were kids that didn’t practice and were just in orchestra for the social aspect, but he hadn’t ever had a student who was a real “problem.” He thought about his former students. The first beginning fourth grade violinists he had taught back in Quincy, New York, had graduated from high school by now... that made him feel old. Sometimes he wished he had been able to work with them for more than just five years; it felt like an unfinished project.

Steve started his career teaching the orchestras and the pull-out lessons<sup>1</sup> for every string student in the small Catskills town of Quincy. It was a great way to get his feet wet and experience all the different aspects of a public school orchestra program. It had been a very supportive community too, despite its economic struggles. Even the athletic director would move games around to make sure student athletes could participate in the concerts. But Steve had been lonely in Quincy. He was the only twenty-something for what felt like miles around, and he felt more isolated than ever before in his life. That's when his dad suggested a change: Steve's brother lived out in Phoenix, and his dad was pretty sure he would like the area. He visited during a break and instantly fell in love with Arizona. An orchestra job opened up at San Lorenzo High School in Kanab, and they asked Steve to fill the position. Leaving Quincy was one of the hardest things he had ever done, but it had been worth it in the long run.

That's not to say there wasn't a transition period. Lorenzo<sup>2</sup> wasn't a wealthy community either, but the school choice policy in Arizona was a major difference from New York. His colleagues said all the White kids began to mysteriously vanish ten years ago when the district started allowing kids to attend whatever high school they wanted in the district. All of a sudden, some of the local parents needed to send their kids to schools that "better fit their values." Steve didn't care. The diversity at Lorenzo made it stronger.

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<sup>1</sup> "Pull-out lessons" refers to an instructional model where a music teacher is permitted to excuse students—to "pull them out"—from other academic classes to provide individual or small-group instruction in addition to their regularly scheduled large ensemble instruction.

<sup>2</sup> The participants often shortened the name "San Lorenzo" to "Lorenzo" in casual conversation, which I will do as well throughout the remainder of this document.

You could walk through the courtyards and see every kind of kid—boys, girls, White, Black, Latino, rich, poor. They were all there together, and they were all good kids.

The galloping strains of the finale to the *William Tell Overture* snapped Steve out of his daydream. He wished the school played a variety of repertoire in the last minute of passing time instead of *William Tell*, every period, every day. One or two of the Symphony Orchestra students were already warming up, but most kids were milling around, talking casually with one another as they retrieved their instruments.

“Alright, let’s find our seats,” Steve called as the bell rang. The students settled in, still chatting with one another as they unpacked. Steve shuffled his scores, pulling out the *Moana* medley and the arrangement of “My Shot” from *Hamilton* that one of the youth orchestras he worked with had done last year. For an all-strings arrangement, it was pretty good: all the necessary parts were there, all the sections had interesting things to play at least once, and it had a few technical challenges that would be good for his students. He even had someone in mind that could do that rap. This rep<sup>3</sup> was on the fluffy side, but that’s what the Prism concert was all about. And as long as the kids were learning something from it, Steve was OK with fluffy rep to start the year. Eating dessert first wasn’t a bad thing when it came to repertoire; there would be plenty of time to dig into meatier stuff for the winter concert.

“Alright, let’s do some announcements before we tune. Remember, t-shirt money due by Friday. Don’t worry about the cleaning fee, that’s just Chamber Orchestra.”

He reached down to pick up the school violin he used for teaching.

“Anyone have any questions about that...? No...? Alright, here’s your A.”

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<sup>3</sup> “Rep” is a slang term music teachers often use to refer to “repertoire.”

Steve began to play a long, sustained open A, doing his best to immaculately demonstrate the kind posture and tone quality he expected from his students. It wasn't exactly a Stradivarius, but it worked for class demonstrations. The violins joined in and began to tune their instruments. He put down the pseudo-Strad and began to circulate amongst the violinists, assisting students and nodding to the lower strings to join them.

When they reached an acceptable level of agreement for the A, Steve motioned again to the lower strings, who began to tune their D strings, followed by the violins. This tuning procedure took a while, but was hard to overstate the importance of fundamentals like tuning. It was worth it in the long run. That is, if the students remained conscious. Steve tapped one of the violists on the shoulder as he walked by. The student snapped out of his trance and sat up a little straighter.

“You still with us, Jack?” Steve asked with a half smile.

“Yeah, I was just up late last night,” the student responded, blinking a bit more sleep out of his eyes for good measure.

“Good.” Steve made his way back to the podium. “Remember, good bow hold while you're tuning. Don't be lazy with your tuning. Alright, daily warmups, shall we?”

“Can we maybe skip those today?” Lena looked at Steve like he had asked her to empty the garbage.

“Skip them?!? Of course not! You need to do your daily warmups!”

He was sort of kidding, but not really. The Lorenzo administrators didn't let him do pull-out lessons like in Quincy, so daily warmups were the best way to get those little nuggets of technique wisdom to students so they could make real improvement. Ideally, Steve would love to have time to just focus on technique, but he was afraid to see what

the kids would say if he suggested forty-five minutes of straight technique work. Come to think of it, that might bore *him* to death, too.

The students began their march along with the metronome. Their sound wasn't quite as powerful as Chamber, even though there were almost twenty additional students in this group. Steve scanned the group, keeping a close eye on their bows.

“Stop. OK, Lena, can you play that with me again? Everybody watch her bow.”

Steve picked up his modeling violin and looked down at Lena, sitting first chair in the viola section. She sat forward in her chair, locked eyes with him, and nailed it.

“Okay, thanks Lena. Everybody give her a round of applause.” There was a weak smattering of claps. “Did you see her bow? Everybody make that happen.”

The full group began again, most of them making an effort to imitate Lena's bow stroke. Steve winked a “thanks” to Lena over his violin. She smiled a “you're welcome” back at him. He knew he could count on her for that. Lena had missed being in Chamber Orchestra by the skin of her teeth, and was crushed when Steve told her he was placing her in Symphony Orchestra again. He wished he could put everyone in Chamber, but there were only so many spots available. Being a strong player in Symphony had benefits, though: she could be a leader, really concentrate on sharpening her technique and musicianship, and be a role model for the new students. That seemed to be enough consolation for her, and so far, Lena hadn't disappointed him.

“Alright, let's go over what we did yesterday in *Moana*.”

They seemed to be liking this piece. Steve stepped off the podium, bringing his demonstration instrument with him. He found it easier to work with an instrument in his hand—a demonstration was worth a thousand words, especially with tone quality. He

made his way to the back of the orchestra, listening for the kids he couldn't hear from the podium. If only there was a way to get to those kids more often....

“Violas, I'm loving you today, it's like an army. Everybody match the violas' volume. Remember, use more bow down closer to the bridge. Try from 63. One... two... one and two and here we go!” It was a little better this time. Symphony didn't adapt nearly as fast as Chamber, but they certainly moved faster than Concert Orchestra, especially this early in the year. Both of Steve's Concert sections were still working on basic routines, notes, and rhythms. But that's how it was supposed to be: Concert was a training orchestra. They would be fine by December.

“Alright, let's just hear the violins. Seconds, really listen for those second fingers, I'm getting a bit of....” Steve trailed off as he attempted to demonstrate what he was hearing. He had to seriously fight instinct to demonstrate out of tune playing. He demonstrated it again, cleanly this time. “Let's try to get it like that. Last time through. I'm going to stand back here and listen. Watch the concertmaster for the cutoff. Ready... two... ready, two, and one more time!”

As they ran through the last three lines, he watched Sofia in the concertmaster chair. Sitting her there had been a good call. Sofia had excellent setup, was always on point, and played really well. She handled the cutoff like a pro. It was only August, but Steve had a feeling Sofia would be in Chamber next year.

“It's getting there! I'm starting to believe we're there. Don't forget, T-shirt money due Friday. Remember to take your instruments home to practice!”

As the students bustled past him, Steve checked in with them. Just simple chit-chat, like asking how they were doing lately. He always made sure to do things like that.

Some of these kids didn't have great home lives, and the social aspect became really important in high school. You never knew when a small gesture like that could really help a kid.

"You need to play louder," Steve said to Lena as she walked past.

Lena whirled around to defend her honor. "I did play loud!"

"Yeah, but you can play louder."

"You said 'ARMY.' That sounds pretty loud."

"Yeah, but you can play louder."

"UGH! FINE!"

He smiled to himself as she turned toward the storage room. She was a good kid.

### **Britney**

"Does that look familiar?"

"Yeah, we've seen this piece for the last six rehearsals."

Britney smiled as innocently as she could.

"Very funny. I meant, from TODAY."

"That's the bowing from the warmups." Honestly, he walked into that one. He knew she was joking though. Britney had sort of met Mr. Davis by accident. She and her friends had gone to Panda Express for lunch during the honors orchestra festival in eighth grade, and she almost ran him over walking through the front door. She didn't even recognize him at the time, but Davis was part of the reason Britney had chosen to go to Lorenzo instead of Cholla, her neighborhood high school. That, and the strong arts program. Davis made orchestra fun; joking with him was just part of what it was like to be in orchestra here.

But playing was no joking matter. As they jumped back into rehearsing, Britney felt the whole viola section move together. She glanced up to the first stand players, checking to make sure that her bowing was on track with what they were doing. It had only been three weeks, but she could already feel the difference between Chamber and Symphony. Everyone in Chamber just took it more seriously. It wasn't that people in Symphony didn't, it was just half-and-half.

She had even gotten used to sitting in the second row. Britney had been first and second chair for most of her viola career, even though she started in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, two years later than everyone else. Viola just seemed to come to her. Her orchestra teacher in middle school had even recommended that she skip two orchestras because she was always sitting first chair in the lower orchestra. Now she was fifth chair out of six, but she and Camilla were the only sophomore violists, so it made sense.

“Alright, great work today everyone! Money by Friday, or I'll hang you by your toes from the door.”

Britney packed her viola up and slid it into her locker in the storage room. As long as her teachers didn't give her too much homework for these stupid AP classes, she might actually get some decent time to practice tonight.

“Bye, Davis!” she called over her shoulder. She walked out the door and rounded the corner to where Stephanie and Jack usually sat before they went to Symphony Orchestra. Stephanie was sitting against the wall looking at her phone with Jack stretched out on his back, head in her lap, eyes closed.

“Hey, wake up time!” Britney said, as she kicked Jack's feet.

“Ah, I'm here. I've been up since 5:00 to drive my brothers to school.”

“I know. Are we gonna practice together during Ac-Lab<sup>4</sup> today?”

“Unless I get called in for Spanish again. Señora Rodriguez is on me about vocab.”

“Probably because you were asleep in class,” Stephanie said.

“Yeah... that’s true. I’ll text you if I’m free.”

“Cool,” Britney said, sitting down on Stephanie’s non-Jack side.

“Britney, my mom wants to know what my brother should be practicing for his viola lesson with you tomorrow,” Stephanie said, lowering her phone slightly.

“Tell him to do that note-reading stuff we started. I don’t know what his teacher at school is doing, they haven’t gotten music yet.”

“How was Chamber?” Stephanie asked

“It was great,” Britney replied. “It kinda feels like when I was in JYS last year.”

“Wait, you’re not in that anymore?”

“When would I have time for that? I’ve got so much to do already.”

“I dunno, viola is, like, your priority, right?”

“Yeah, but I’ve got Key Club, blood drive, gardening committee, Orchestra Council, and AP’s, so, life.” Britney hadn’t wanted to give up the JYS youth orchestra. If Davis hadn’t arranged a late audition for her, she wouldn’t have been in it in the first place. Her parents even said they would keep driving her to the rehearsals, but there was only so much time in her day. “Besides, Chamber Orchestra is just as good.”

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<sup>4</sup> “Ac-Lab” is a shortened slang term the participants used to refer to “Academic Laboratory,” a study-hall type period where students could seek additional help from teachers, or where teachers could call students in for additional instruction.

“Yeah...” Stephanie said looking around the hall. “I’ve gotta get on Davis’s good side so I can get in next year.”

Britney raised an eyebrow. “That’s not really how it works. I mean, you gotta be good, but you also have to commit to the other stuff that goes along with it.”

“Like what?”

“Well, there’s the zero-hour rehearsal, so you have to wake up early everyday. And we have a retreat next month where we’re doing sectionals and rehearsals for two days.”

“Yeah, I wouldn’t like that,” Stephanie said, returning to her Snapchat feed. That was kind of Britney’s point. Stephanie was good but she wasn’t Chamber material yet. That sounded really bad, Britney thought to herself. She’d just keep her mouth shut and see how the auditions turned out. *William Tell* saved her from having to come up with a response. Britney jumped up, grabbing her backpack and kicked Jack’s feet again for good measure.

“Text me about Ac-Lab.” Jack mumbled something as she headed down the hall. Time to see what these AP teachers had in store for her.

### **Jack**

There was a sudden impact and Jack felt his feet lurch.

“Hey, wake up time!”

“Ah, chill, I’m here. You know I get up at 5:00 every day to drive my brothers.”

“Are we gonna meet to practice viola during Ac-Lab today?”

“Sure, unless I get called in for Spanish. Señora Rodriguez is on me about the vocab from last week.”

“Probably because you sleep in class.” Stephanie had a point. Jack usually slept through Spanish. Except that day he had tricked Señora Rodriguez into letting him sit next to Stephanie. He hadn’t slept through class that day. He also hadn’t been allowed to sit next to her again.

“Yeah... I’ll text you if I don’t get called in.” Jack really hoped he wouldn’t get called in for Spanish. Working with Britney on the orchestra music during Ac-Lab had actually been a big help. She just seemed to get the notes so much faster than he did. Not to mention it was hard to practice at home with five brothers in the house. Between driving them wherever they needed to go and working to make money for gas, Jack also didn’t have much time after school. He had some time at night, but he was spending it working on the computer he was building. That was the other reason he was tired. The motherboard he ordered had come yesterday and it didn’t quite work the way he was expecting. He had messed with it for almost two hours. Lesson learned: don’t buy computer supplies online from people you don’t know.

“I’ve gotta get on Davis’s good side so I can get into Chamber next year.”

Jack was only half-listening to Britney and Stephanie’s conversation. Actually, he didn’t think being in Symphony was all that bad. He’d love to be in Chamber at some point, but even if he made it in, Chamber rehearsed during zero-hour, and he needed to drive his brothers to school. That was one drawback of living in Chapparral. It was a miracle he was even able to get to school by first-hour. But he wouldn’t go back to Peralta High School to save his life. The year he spent there when they moved across town was miserable. The people were just... dull. And he really didn’t get along with the teachers there. Lorenzo was where all his friends from middle school had gone, so once

Jack had been able to afford a car to drive himself, it was an easy decision to switch schools. Having the car meant driving his brothers, but at least they had chosen schools around the corner from Lorenzo.

Jack heard the familiar warning bell music and felt Britney kick his feet again.

“Text me about Ac-Lab” she said, trotting down the hall.

“Yeah, I got it” he replied, hoisting himself, his backpack, and the can of Monster energy drink off the floor.

“Where’s your viola?” Stephanie asked as they walked into the orchestra room.

“It’s in the storage room. I practice during Ac-Lab, why would I take it home?”

“True,” she said, veering around the piano toward the cello racks.

“Alright, let’s find our seats,” Davis called over the noise.

Jack retrieved his viola and made his way to the middle row of violas, gingerly setting the can of Monster under his chair so it wouldn’t spill. He took his glasses off, rubbed the sleep from his eyes, and stretched. He liked starting his day with orchestra; he could enjoy himself for an hour and not have to worry about thinking too hard.

“Remember, t-shirt money due by Friday.”

Crap, Jack thought, I need to remember to bring that in. He felt a little guilty asking his mom to pay for an orchestra t-shirt, knowing that he and his brothers nearly ate her out of house and home twice a week. He’d pick up a few extra hours at work this weekend and cover it.

“Alright, here’s your A.”

This was the only downside of starting the day with orchestra. He understood why Davis made them tune so carefully, but it was hard to stay awake when it took so long.

The sound was just so... mesmerizing. He had also stayed up writing after he gave up on the motherboard. Jack began writing raps a couple years ago as a way to decompress, but he hadn't let anyone see or hear them yet. They weren't ready. Maybe Davis would let him do the rap for "My Shot." That would be awesome...

He felt a tap on his shoulder and looked up. Davis was standing next to him.

"You still with us, Jack?"

"Yeah, I was just up late last night."

"Good." Davis moved off to help some other people tune. He was part of the reason Jack had signed up for orchestra. All his friends had told him Davis was really cool. He was even cool enough to let Jack audition into Symphony at the beginning of last year instead of making him start in Concert Orchestra. That would have sucked. Jack had heard Concert Orchestra; he was pretty sure they were beginners.

"Daily warmups, shall we? We shall!"

"Can we maybe skip those today?"

Jack nodded in agreement. He understood why Davis made them do the warmups, but they were a little monotonous. It was nice to hear that even the people who took orchestra seriously like Lena didn't want to do them every once in a while.

"Skip them?!? Of course not! You need to do your daily warmups!"

Jack knew what was coming next. He straightened up, rolled his shoulders one more time, checked his posture, his bow hold, all the things Davis usually mentioned right around now, and jumped into playing.

**Lena**

"Can we maybe skip those today?"

“Skip them?!? Of course not! You need to do your daily warmups!”

Lena sighed. It was worth a shot. Davis probably thought she was kidding. Which she was, but only half. The warmups weren't that bad, but Lena just wanted to get to the music. She had worked on that passage in *Moana* with Jason in her private lesson and was eager to try it out. Lessons with Jason had been one of the best things she had ever done. He had helped her learn new techniques like vibrato, and just helped her become a better person overall. Even though the music wasn't too hard, she felt more confident playing in orchestra after they went over the music. Then she could really concentrate on being the kind of leader Mr. Davis needed her to be in orchestra.

“Lena, can you play that last line with me? Everybody watch her bow.”

Lena straightened up and scanned her posture to make sure she was doing everything she needed to do. This was why Davis had wanted her in Symphony this year instead of Chamber. She could have done Chamber, but Davis needed leaders in Symphony. She focused on keeping her bow right at the frog, feeling it gently spring back and forth as she ran through the exercise.

“Okay, thanks Lena. Everybody give her a round of applause.” From the cello section, Jada gave her a thumbs-up. Lena nodded an acknowledgement. She would have to remember to ask Jada after orchestra about playing a duet for the Prism concert. Davis always had small chamber groups play in the audience during the scene changes for the Prism concert. It was nerve-racking, but Lena had a lot of fun doing it last year. She was pretty sure Jada would do it with her if she asked.

They ran through the exercise all together again. Davis winked a “thanks” to her. He was a really good teacher: not only did he really know what he was doing, he made

everyone feel welcome, no matter what. Orchestra was like a family. They finished the warmups and pulled out *Moana*. It wasn't a hard piece, especially now that she had gone through it with Jason.

“Violas, I'm loving you today, it's like an army,” Davis said as he walked around the room. That felt good. After all, the violins ALWAYS got the melody. But Davis was usually good about listening to what the students thought about the music. He usually brought out four or five pieces when they started the year, and then asked the orchestra what they thought. Some people didn't seem to take it that seriously, but Lena wasn't shy about letting him know what she thought. His willingness to actually listen to them was another thing that made Davis a really great teacher.

“Alright, last time through. I'm going to stand back here and listen. Watch the concertmaster for the cutoff.”

They ran *Moana* one last time. Lena glued her eyes to the girl sitting first chair in the violins for the last four measures of the piece. Sofia really knew how to show people what they should be doing. No wonder Davis had put her first chair.

“It's getting there! Remember to take your instruments home to practice!”

Lena would definitely be taking her instrument home tonight. *Moana* had gone well, but there were still a few spots she where needed to add vibrato. She passed Davis on the way back to the instrument storage room.

“You need to play louder,” he said as she walked past.

Lena did an about-face. “I did play loud!”

“Yeah, but you can play louder.”

“You said we were an ‘ARMY.’ That sounds pretty loud to me.”

“Yeah, but you can play louder.” He smiled from behind his glasses.

“UGH! FINE!” Lena walked back and slid her viola into its storage cubby. She would work on vibrato *and* playing louder tonight.

### **Late September**

#### **Steve**

Steve leaned back in his desk chair, took off his glasses, and massaged the bridge of his nose. He glanced at the time on the iPad sitting in front of him: 5:43pm. And he still had another fifteen audition videos to watch. He could always grade them during Academic Lab tomorrow. Then again, there were always students that came in to practice, and he preferred helping them to grading playing tests. Best to do it now so he could get the seating for the concert posted tomorrow. It would be another late night.

Steve scrolled to the next video and pulled a blank rubric off the stack. He wrote Lena’s name at the top of the page, and quickly skimmed the rubric categories Having watched 95 videos already this week, it was easy to slip into monotony and stop listening to what the kids were actually playing. TONE, INTONATION, RHYTHM, TECHNIQUE, MUSICALITY. Got it.

Steve pursed his lips as he read through the five descriptors in each category. This rubric really wasn’t sufficient anymore. It had worked two years ago when he first found it online, but it really didn’t give the kind of detailed feedback that would really help kids make improvement. He was excited about the new rubric the orchestra teacher PLC<sup>5</sup> was working on. The district had mandated that every department create common assessments

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<sup>5</sup> “PLC” is a common education abbreviation for “Professional Learning Community,” a professional development method in which teachers of similar content areas meet to discuss data-based instructional strategies and solutions.

by the end of the year, so Steve had used his position as PLC chair to shape a new rubric that was going to have a lot more categories and the language was going to be much more growth-minded. Not like this rubric. Take TECHNIQUE: It didn't even separate bow hold from posture or left hand. And there was almost no space to write comments at the bottom. How was that supposed to help kids?

Maybe it was time to start the pull-out lesson discussion with the administration again. Fat chance, he thought to himself. Four years ago the conversation had lasted all of five minutes. It'd never happen in Arizona; it just wasn't part of the culture like it was in New York. Even the parents in the community seemed to think private lessons were like getting a math tutor. Just last week he'd suggested to a parent that her daughter get private lessons. "Why, what's wrong? Is she doing OK? Is she falling behind?" the mom responded. It took Steve another five minutes to explain that private lessons were for acceleration, not remediation. Not that it mattered. Even if they wanted to take lessons, most of these kids couldn't afford it anyway. He'd just have to stick with playing tests for individual feedback, even if they were woefully inadequate.

Steve heard a door click and glanced out the window of his office. Sofia strode across the orchestra room in her volleyball gear to pick up her violin. Amazing, Steve thought. She has a volleyball game, probably loads of homework, and she still comes and picks up her instrument to practice at home. Officially, he expected the students to practice 30 minutes per day, five days a week, but he knew that most of them didn't have the time to do that. As long as they did fifteen minutes of scales for technique work and ran through a few trouble spots, that would suffice. But it was always nice to see kids like Sofia put in the extra effort.

Steve swiveled his chair back around and looked at the iPad clock: 5:49pm. He better get to it if he wanted to make it home by midnight. He picked up his pen and started Lena's video. So far, so good. INTONATION: 5/5. RHYTHM: 5/5, not a surprise from Lena. TECHNIQUE: 5/5, especially now that she was starting to add vibrato. MUSICALITY: he'd go with 4/5. A couple of crescendos and decrescendos could have been a bit bigger. TONE: normally, her tone was pretty good, but this video wasn't really representing that. Her bow was shaking and thinning her sound. Steve had seen the same thing in at least 30 other videos. These kids were overrun with anxiety about these playing tests. All they focused on was the point total and what chair they got. He wished they would just focus on the *feedback*. Hopefully the new rubric would help with that. He settled on a 4/5 for TONE; he'd cut Lena some slack.

Steve totaled up the points and crammed some of his thoughts into the tiny space at the bottom of the page. He pulled up the online grade book on his laptop and entered a 23/25 in Lena's row for the PRISM PLAYING TEST. That was the *real* reason he was still using this dumb rubric. Last year he'd forgotten—ok, maybe not forgotten, just didn't bother—to put scores in his grade book for the first eight weeks of school. He and a few other teachers had received a sternly worded e-mail from the vice principal about keeping grade books up-to-date, so Steve had dutifully entered grades since then. But it still bothered him. Half the time, he wasn't even sure the kids understood what an "A" or "B" in orchestra really meant. How could he get through to the students that the numbers weren't the point? It was to give them feedback so they could improve their playing. Hopefully the new rubric would help with that.

Steve placed Lena's completed rubric on top of the Symphony Orchestra pile and scrolled to the next video. Jack looked back at him from the iPad. He hadn't even started the video and he could tell Jack was nervous. This wasn't right. Orchestra was supposed to be a place where kids felt valued and safe. Kids had too much to worry about with people judging them on social media and in other classes without Steve piling on. He hated the competitive aspect of music. His sophomore year, Steve's studio teacher had gone on maternity leave. She had high expectations of them, but she also did things in a way that let you know she cared about you. Steve really loved working with her. The woman who filled in for her, though, was nothing like that. She had stoked a competitive culture and always singled Steve out in front of everyone in studio class. The thought that he might be doing the same thing to his students made Steve queasy.

He thought about that inevitable moment when he would have to put the seating chart up on the board. There would be the usual gaggle of kids who sat near the front. They would compare precise scores and what they got "wrong" in which piece, but they'd settle into the first row fairly quickly. And then there would be the four kids in each orchestra who found out they were sitting last chair in their sections. Some of them would act like they didn't care; they might even laugh about how "terrible" they were with their friends. But Steve knew it really ate at some of them. They had tried so hard, had really put in the effort. And yet there they were, sitting where the whole orchestra now knew how much they "sucked."

It's not like the playing tests were even accurate representations of their ability as musicians, Steve thought. They captured a few lines of a few pieces at a single point in time. What if they were having an off-day? What if they didn't eat breakfast? What if

they were sick? Could he really adequately rank them as musicians using two isolated minutes of playing and this dumb rubric? And some of the kids based *so much* of their worth on what chair they got. It was crazy. If only he didn't have to do grades or seating charts, he and the kids could just focus on the feedback.

Steve paused as he went to drop Jack's completed rubric on the pile. He had to do grades, but maybe he didn't have to do seating charts. Two weeks ago, he had heard someone talking about alternative seating practices at the state ASTA<sup>6</sup> conference. The presenter assigned every kid a number in their section and used a randomizer app to put them in a new order each rehearsal. There was no first-chair, no last-chair. He looked at the stacks of rubrics waiting for him to pass judgement and sentence twelve students to last-chair for the Prism concert. That did it. He printed rosters for each section and began writing numbers in the left-hand margin. They would be trying something new after the concert next week.

### **Lena**

Lena made her way through the herd of people to the second row of violas and put her case next to the chair closest to the cello section. The two violists sitting in the front row had been there since before the bell rang, talking to one another and running through the music together. She took orchestra pretty seriously, but those two took it *really* seriously. They were probably taking orchestra for honors credit. Lena had considered doing that, but she wasn't really interested in doing extra written homework. She had

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<sup>6</sup> "ASTA" is the abbreviation for the "American String Teachers' Association," a professional development organization for both public and private string and orchestra teachers.

enough to do between JROTC<sup>7</sup> and the college class she was taking through the local community college on the weekends. Third chair wasn't too bad, she thought to herself. Everyone played the same part anyway, and your chair placement wasn't what made you a leader. Besides, she had sat first and second chair plenty of times in middle school. She really didn't think she was talented on violin when she first started playing in fifth grade. But then she switched to viola in sixth grade, she was sitting first and second chair all the time. It wouldn't be the end of the world if someone else had a turn.

Lena looked over her shoulder as she unpacked her viola. Jada had sat down in the row behind her. At least she would be sitting near Jada.

“Do you want to get together during Ac-Lab today and go through that duet?”

Lena asked her.

“I don't know if I'll be able to. My math teacher has been calling us in a lot for extra help.”

“We need to practice, though. The concert is really soon.”

“Yeah, I know. I'll ask Davis to sign me up just in case.”

Either way, Lena was going to come in. She didn't usually go to orchestra for Ac-Lab since she practiced at home and had lessons with Jason. But Davis had only gotten her the duet music on Monday because he had been so busy. The music wasn't that hard, but Lena always got a little nervous for performances, so she wanted to make sure she knew it all really well.

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<sup>7</sup> “JROTC” is the abbreviation for “Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps,” a high-school version of the more common collegiate ROTC program.

“Alright everybody, let’s go! We’re in concert mode now,” Davis said as he stepped onto the podium. Concert mode always added a bit of urgency to rehearsal. At least, Davis was more urgent. You could tell he was getting stressed by the concert. There wasn’t really anything different about their routine, but it was a reminder that everyone needed to really focus to make sure they were doing everything they were supposed to be doing. Lena moved to the edge of her seat.

“I put your playing test rubrics underneath your chairs. You probably saw that I updated your grades in Synergy<sup>8</sup>, but please, please, please take the rubrics home and look at them. The feedback I wrote on there is the important part.”

Truthfully, Lena never checked her orchestra grade in Synergy, so she hadn’t noticed at all. She just kind of assumed that as long as she was putting in the effort and practicing, her grade would be fine. It’s not like there was much to grade in orchestra anyway. Only the people taking orchestra for honors credit had written assignments. Other than that, it was really just participation and your skill, and as long as you put in the effort, you would definitely get the skill. Lena always put in the effort, so she didn’t really need to worry about her grade.

She pulled the rubric out from underneath her chair: 23/25. Tone and musicality... the bow shaking thing again. Stupid nerves. Lena knew that the playing tests were important, but she wished there was a better way to do it. One performance of a few excerpts didn’t really give an accurate representation of her as a player. Then again, if everyone got to record themselves more than once, it would take forever. She folded

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<sup>8</sup> “Synergy” is the student information system the Kanab Union High School District used to house student demographic data, official grades, and attendance records.

the rubric up and slid it into her case. She would go over it in detail with Jason. He would have some good advice.

“... and I think doing the random seating thing would really help. So we’re going to try it starting the week after the concert. Sound good to everybody?”

She had missed the beginning of what Davis said, but everyone seemed to be nodding skeptically. Random seating? They did that when Davis told them to scramble and sit wherever they wanted, but that was usually just part of a rehearsal. He wasn’t seriously thinking of doing that all the time, was he? She glanced back at Jada with an incredulous look. Jada just shrugged. The metronome thundered to life and Lena turned around. Davis knew what he was doing. She’d trust him.

### **Jack**

Jack plopped into his seat, draining the last bit of Monster out of the can before sliding his backpack underneath the chair. He saw a piece of paper lying face down and picked it up. It was the rubric from the playing exam: 21/25. Obviously that’s why he was sitting sixth chair. What was that, an 84%? Who gets a B in orchestra? Was that even possible? Jack walked over to the recycling bin to throw out the can of Monster, and tossed the rubric in with it. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw David walk into the room as the bell rang. This wouldn’t be good. David’s eyes lit up as he looked at the seating chart on the board. He pointed at Jack from across the room. Jack rolled his eyes and walked back to his seat.

“Let’s go! We’re in concert mode now!” Jack unpacked his viola and looked toward the cello section. Stephanie was sitting first chair, as usual. She was probably going to be in Chamber next year. Davis usually talked to you about moving up if you sat

in the first four chairs consistently. Jack wasn't really expecting that. He couldn't do Chamber Orchestra anyway, but it'd be nice to be asked to move up. David sat down in the seat to Jack's left and grinned at him.

"Dude, I'm sitting ahead of you!"

Jack rolled his eyes. It was going to be a long rehearsal.

"I put your rubrics underneath your chair and updated your grades in Synergy. Don't worry about your grades, it's not going to have that much of an effect. Make sure you take the rubrics home and look at them, the feedback is the important part. If you have any questions or concerns, please, please, please don't hesitate to come talk to me."

Maybe Jack would go talk to Davis after orchestra. He wasn't really concerned about his grade. Getting a B in orchestra would be embarrassing, but it probably wouldn't be a B once the participation grade went in. After all, Davis just said it wouldn't have that big an effect. Everybody got an A in orchestra as long as they were showing up and trying. The thing was, Jack really had tried this time. He had been going in to work with Britney during Ac-Lab pretty consistently, and he felt like he was really improving.

That was before the playing test. Then everything fell apart as soon as he turned the iPad on to record. His bow shook and he started messing up all the excerpts. That kind of stuff always happened to Jack on tests. Of course, he always played fine in the rehearsals and the concerts. But the parts he was good at weren't on the playing test this time. He wished Davis would do the seating based on the check-in tests he did sometimes in rehearsal. Sure, you had to play an excerpt with your stand partner in public, but Jack did fine when he was playing with someone else.

"Dude, how did you get behind me," David blurted out again.

Clearly, the parts David was good at had been on the playing test. That really pissed Jack off. David never practiced, and he made absolutely no effort to hide it from anyone. In fact, he openly *told* everyone he didn't practice and always left his viola at school. He sat last chair all last year, and was clearly just doing orchestra for the easy A. And now he was sitting in front of Jack. On the same stand. So Jack would have to turn his pages.

"Like, seriously, how did I get ahead of you?" David was nothing if not persistent.

"Dude, I don't know. I'm listening to the announcements," Jack replied.

Thankfully, Davis's voice cut off further conversation. "If you're playing with a chamber group in the Prism concert, please make sure you schedule a time to play for me. Also, I was thinking about the seating for after the concert..."

Playing in a chamber group was something Jack was actually pretty interested in. His friend Kyle had approached him three weeks ago in Spanish and said he was trying to put a group together for the Prism concert. Jack was ready to accept the offer to play with him when Kyle said, "Could you ask your girlfriend if she'd play cello for us?" Of course he would ask, Jack had said. In retrospect, Jack wasn't sure what he had been expecting. Kyle was also a violist, but he was in Chamber. Obviously he didn't need Jack to play in his group. But it would have been nice; he really liked playing in small groups.

"... and I think doing the random seating thing would really help. So we're going to try it starting the week after the concert. Sound good to everybody?"

Jack really didn't hear the details of what Davis had been talking about, but it was clear from the look on her face that Stephanie wasn't keen on the idea.

“Dude, aren’t you going to get the warmups out? You’re sitting behind me.”

Jack flipped his binder to the warmups page and sighed to himself. How was it possible they were only on the warmups?

### **Britney**

“So, are you ready for your big moment?” Stephanie asked as they walked to the auditorium building from the orchestra room.

“Sure. At least I don’t have to do it in the dress. I feel like jeans and t-shirts are more a rap thing than an orchestra dress.” That would have been awkward. Britney hadn’t needed to wear the dress yet, since they were just for Chamber and this was her first concert in Chamber. But it definitely wasn’t something you would see someone wearing in *Hamilton*. Luckily, they always wore their orchestra T-shirts and jeans for the Prism concert.

“Good thing I didn’t battle you for it,” Jack said from behind them.

“You said you didn’t want to do it! Besides, you wouldn’t do that to me.”

“Yeah, I’m just kidding.” Jack said. He and Stephanie turned left to go through the wings to the stage. Britney stopped in the alcove and waited for the Chamber members to catch up. She thrust her viola toward Kyle.

“Can you hold this for me?”

“Sure. Do you need it for a chamber group or anything?”

“No, that didn’t work out. Just bring it on stage when you guys come up.”

“Sure. Where are you sitting?”

“Fifth chair again, with Camilla.”

“Right. Don’t forget: you need to wear the sombrero.”

Kyle veered right and went down the steps into the auditorium house. Oh, sombrero. Britney wasn't even sure how that started. Someone had come in to rehearsal with it on one day and it just kinda blew up. It was almost like the Chamber Orchestra mascot now. They were all trying to get her to wear it during the rap, but she wasn't sure how Davis would react to that. He had been cool so far about the sombrero popping up at random points in rehearsal, and Britney didn't want to push her luck by wearing it onstage without him knowing. Besides, it wasn't exactly a *Hamilton*-style costume either.

Britney sat down on the beat up couch the theater program stored backstage and began to run through the "My Shot" lyrics. She had first heard this arrangement last year standing backstage with Davis during her youth orchestra concert. When the performance was finished, Britney had remarked about how cool it was. Davis said, "If I do *Hamilton* next year, will you rap it?" Britney had said yes because she thought he was joking. But he *actually* decided to do it, and asked her if she was still serious about doing the rap. "Yeah, I don't see why not," she had replied. No one else seemed to be eager to do it, either. Jack had teased her about rap battling her for it, but he was just kidding. He didn't really want it anyway.

Britney got up and walked to the edge of the wing, looking out at Symphony Orchestra warming up to start the concert. Stephanie was sitting first chair—no surprise. Jack was somewhere in the middle of the viola section, maybe fifth, sixth? She should have just given her viola to him to put under her chair. Her chair placement hadn't really surprised her. After all, there were four seniors in the section, and she and Camilla were only sophomores. Just being in Chamber was honor enough. Britney didn't remember exactly what score she had gotten, but she had done well. She always put in effort and

practiced, so it's not like she would get below an A. She had glanced at the rubric during her first practice session after Davis gave them back, but there wasn't much on there that she needed to worry about. Just the usual things like adding more phrasing.

The stage lights came up, and she could hear Davis's voice echoing through the auditorium as he explained how the Prism concert worked. Big groups on stage, small groups in the aisles during transitions, light changes, continuous music, hold your applause until the end, yadda yadda yadda. The Lorenzo orchestras had been doing the Prism concert for forever, so Britney was surprised Davis even needed to explain it anymore. Then again, it was pretty different, especially the chamber groups playing in the aisles. Britney had done that last year and really liked it. It was nerve-wracking for sure, but getting a group of her friends together to pick music and prepare a performance on their own was an good challenge. She had asked Stephanie to do a duet this year, but it didn't end up working out. She'd try again next year.

She heard the audience start to applaud. Davis must have finished with his announcements. Britney turned toward the stage and did a double take. The sombrero was sitting on top of the piano on stage. She started laughing to herself, considering the possibilities. Then she felt a hand on her shoulder.

"Don't even think about it," Davis said, holding out a hand-held mic. "You ready for this?"

"Let's do it," Britney replied, and they turned to walk on stage.

### **Early November**

**Steve**

“OK, let’s stop there. It’s getting better. Let’s try and make it even shorter. Watch my bow, and see if you can get it to sound like this.”

The low strings ran the part again. It was getting better, but this would be a long project, even for Chamber.

“Let’s do a mini-section war.” A murmur of approval went through the orchestra. “Look to your first chair players—basses, look at the cellos. Let’s see who gets their bows most unified. Winning section gets the sombrero for the day. One and two, you got it go!”

The students played with new energy. Steve couldn’t believe the change in this group since the retreat. They had taken an overnight trip to a lodge for intensive rehearsals. They did scale classes and sectionals throughout the day, and group rehearsals in the morning and evening. The orchestra council even planned competitive “Section Wars” games. It had been a bit expensive, but the orchestra parents guild had paid most of the cost, and it had been an invigorating experience for everyone, even Steve. Chamber had become so much more cohesive, both musically and socially.

“Violins, what do you think? Violas or cello/bass? I agree. Violas, the sombrero is yours for the day. That’s all everyone, pack up and head to class.”

Steve saw Britney dart to the back table by his office and scoop up the sombrero.

“Just make sure you bring it back so we can do it again tomorrow.”

“Oh, definitely. Bye Davis!” She walked out of the room, sombrero bouncing on her head.

As much as the retreat had helped, Steve was pretty sure the new seating was what was really making the difference. The kids had been skeptical when he explained

the plan before the Prism concert, and the first few days had been a bit confusing. But now that they were in the routine of checking for their seat on the board before sitting down, they seemed to be liking it. It was so much easier for Steve to give individual feedback to the students in the front row, and now he could get different students there everyday. In the absence of pull-out lessons, this had been a great choice.

Most importantly, Steve had seen a change in the students' attitudes. Take Emma in Concert Orchestra: she had been sitting in the back of the seconds since middle school, and it seemed like she had given up on orchestra. But as soon as she had gotten to sit in the front row, it was like night and day. Every rehearsal she was alert and ready, and she had shown rapid improvement. She even e-mailed Steve in the evenings sometimes to ask him how to practice this or that part just in case she was first-chair the next day. All of a sudden, she felt like she could make a valuable contribution. Even students who had been his top players had told him they noticed a difference. Some of them had never sat in the back of a section, and hearing how the orchestra sounded from there had been revealing. It seemed like the random seating was working out for everyone.

Steve erased the Chamber seating from the whiteboard, pulled up the randomizer app on his phone, and began to generate the seating lists for Symphony. He stopped at the viola section. Viola 2 had sat first chair yesterday. Steve looked down at his number roster. Let's swap Viola 2 and Viola 6; he hadn't seen Jack in the front for a few days. He finished up as *William Tell* began the 60-second count-down. Students began to fill the room, unpacking and looking for their seats.

It really was remarkable how they adjusted to the change, Steve thought to himself. It hadn't always been that way. Adding the Prism concert his second year had

been a disaster. The kids had been so welcoming his first year at Lorenzo, but he hadn't changed much with the program. The following year when he suggested doing an informal concert with jeans, t-shirts, and lighting changes, the seniors had turned on him. "That's not how we do things at Lorenzo," they told him. They went on Facebook and posted about how he wasn't a supportive teacher, trashed him on Twitter saying he didn't know what he was doing, and tried to convince the underclassmen to drop orchestra. They had even conspired to hand in all their drop slips on Steve's birthday. Had it not been for the support of his colleagues, Steve would have quit teaching all together. "You're doing the right thing for the kids. Just keep at it, you can't let them win. It will get better," the choir teacher reassured him. And it did. The orchestra was a bit smaller his third year, but it was so much more positive. But that incident was always in the back of Steve's mind. There was no telling what might anger a student or parent enough to quit, especially when they could choose to attend whatever school they wanted.

The bell rang, and Steve stepped to the podium. Most of the students were already in their chairs; that was a good sign. They quickly ran through the tuning and warmups, and started on the first piece. It was an easy Chanukah tune he had all the orchestras play together as the winter concert finale every year.

"Alright, this is an easier piece for you guys, so you can really think about the musical aspects—tone, phrasing, dynamics, articulation. Really use your bows on the long notes." He demonstrated. "Try it from the beginning, watch your first-chair players."

Steve played along with the first run through, scanning the orchestra as they played. He saw Jack hesitate out of the corner of his eye. After a second, Jack started again, bowing in the wrong direction.

“Alright, let’s stop there. Watch your bowing,” Steve said, pointing to Jack’s bow. Jack nodded. “Can I just hear the viola melody at measure 24?” Jack began bowing in the wrong direction again.

“Yeah, it’s just the second part, you’re not expecting it to be up-bow.”

“Oh, ok. I got it.”

“Good, you have your pencil ready? Make sure you sit up straight and write that bowing in, you’re the leader for the day. Be an example for the section and show them what you want them to do.” They ran the passage again, and Jack fixed the bowing.

“Yeah, you got it this time. Nice job violas, let me hear everyone at 24 now.”

How easy was that? This new seating was really working out.

### **Britney**

“Make sure you bring it back so we can do it again tomorrow.”

“Definitely. Bye Davis!”

Britney walked out of the room and rounded the corner. Even if she explained that it was an inside orchestra joke, people would probably be weirded out if she walked around school all day in a sombrero. She would probably just put it back before going to first-hour. Stephanie and Jack were sitting against the wall in their usual spot.

“You’re *still* wearing that thing?” Stephanie said as Britney sat down next to her.

“Yeah, we won Section Wars today.”

“You’re not gonna wear it to class, are you?”

“I’ll wear it,” Jack said. “I can sleep under it in Spanish.”

“Can’t let you have it. It’s the Super-Secret Chamber Orchestra Sombrero.”

“Guess I’ll have to settle for sleeping on the desk.”

“Do you, like, get that if you’re first chair when your section wins or something?” Stephanie asked.

“No, it’s not actually serious. Davis just says someone wins at random times, and I grabbed it after rehearsal. I was sitting third today.”

“I’ll probably be sitting last again today, or something.”

“Is he still randomizing your orchestra too?” Britney hadn’t realized Davis was doing that in all the orchestras.

“Yeah, it’s crap,” Stephanie said. “What was the point of me getting first chair on the playing test when I can’t even sit there? I should just not practice.”

“Getting an A on the test?” Jack suggested.

“Everyone gets A’s. I could have not practiced and gotten an A.”

“Maybe he won’t give us playing tests anymore if he’s not going seat us. I mean, what would be the point of the test?” Jack said.

“Yeah, but he’s got to grade us on *something*, right? What else could you grade in orchestra other than participation? Practice charts?” Stephanie wondered.

Jack cringed and took a swig of Monster.

“I dunno, I see what he’s trying to do.” Britney said. “Don’t get me wrong, I’m not a fan. I feel like I go into orchestra and I have no idea where I’m supposed to be. Maybe I’m still not used to it.”

“Does he not put it on the board for you guys?” Jack asked.

“No, he does, it’s not that. I mean, like, I’m fifth out of six, that’s where my playing ability is, and I’m fine with that. But now that we’re moving all over I don’t quite know where I stand with my playing.”

“I get that,” Jack said

“But isn’t that better now? Because you can sit first,” said Stephanie.

“I don’t know, I’d rather know how I’m doing with my playing. It’s also kind of intimidating sitting next to the seniors all the time. I feel like I have to prove myself to them. At least I knew Camilla really well.”

“I kinda wish he left us in the seats longer,” said Jack. “I mean, getting to hear what it sounds like up front is good, because it sounds really different. But I feel like I can’t get used to it before I move. Maybe if he rotated seats every week or something.”

“But there’s still no point in earning your spot if you’re moving around all the time,” Stephanie retorted.

“Davis said he was going to randomize the winter concert too, right? Do you think he really will?” Jack asked.

“God, I hope not,” said Stephanie. “What happens if someone who sucks or doesn’t take it seriously ends up sitting first chair for the concert?”

“Maybe that’s his point,” said Britney. “He’s trying to make everyone feel like we need to be ready to be first chair whether we want to or not.”

“But that’d be a disaster, we’d fall apart.”

“I’m not really concerned about that aspect in Chamber,” said Britney. “I mean, I’d rather earn my spot for the concert, but we’re all strong enough players and leaders, I think any of us could really do first or second chair if we needed to.”

“That’s because you’re all BFF’s after that retreat,” said Stephanie.

Britney shrugged. “Not gonna lie, that actually helped a lot. It’s a lot easier to play with people when you’re friends with them. Something like that would probably help Symphony, but you guys are too big and not enough people would take it seriously.”

“I’m happy with the friends I have,” said Jack.

“And it’d be super expensive to have all of us go,” said Stephanie.

They heard the warning music start. Britney jumped to her feet, took the sombrero off, and plopped it on Jack’s head.

“Take that back inside for me.”

“I thought you said it was a super-secret Chamber thing.”

“Well, it’s a super-secret *viola* thing today, and you’re a *viola*,” Britney replied, and she turned to head to the academic building.

### **Jack**

“Make sure you sit up straight and write that bowing in. You’re the leader for the day. Be an example for the section. Show them what you want them to do.”

Jack straightened his back and wrote in the up bows he had missed. He always wrote in Davis’s feedback in orchestra, but the expectation to write everything in immediately, sit up straight, do everything correctly the first time, and be “the leader” was a little irritating. He hadn’t asked for that responsibility, and he most certainly didn’t earn it. He was there randomly, and now Davis expected him to be all the things first chair was supposed to be.

“Yeah, you got it this time. Nice job violas. Everyone at 24 now.”

Jack tried to play as loud as he could, now that his bowings were right. He was pretty sure they had played this Chanukah piece last year—he remembered Davis telling

them a story about growing up singing it with his family. Jack liked this piece. It was easy enough that he could actually think about things like bowings and dynamics. It felt really good once he could play it and just go all out.

“Alright, take out Boreas.”

This one was a bit more of a challenge. Jack wasn’t sure how qualified he was to “lead” this piece, but at least he liked the music.

“Seconds, wait, wait, wait, *F naturals*. Let me just hear the seconds.”

Davis started working with the violins, holding pitches one at a time and working through the passage at a painfully slow rate. There were definitely some people in that section that were just in orchestra to get their arts credit. That frustrated Jack. Orchestra wasn’t his life or anything and he didn’t have much time to practice at home, but at least when he was in rehearsal he took it seriously. One or two of the seconds barely looked conscious. Maybe this is why Davis always talked about wanting to do individual lessons. They would never let him pull people out of class, though. Even if they did, it would probably be for kids who had all A’s, which wouldn’t include Jack.

“Violins, this is really discombobulated right here. Try it again, sit on the edge of your chairs, listen to me and your first chair player to tune.”

Jack slid his phone out of his pocket: 8:36. Rehearsal would be ending in a few minutes. His phone buzzed as he went to slide it back into his pocket. It was a text from Stephanie. Jack looked over his shoulder—she was sitting just behind him to his left. She nodded down toward his phone. He looked at the text.

“I’m timing. We haven’t played in 10min.”

Jack looked back and shook his head. Sometimes he wished Davis would do more sectionals. Last time he did that, Lena had led the violas, and she had done a pretty good job. Then again, listening to Davis work with the violins really helped sometimes. Jack could hear parts he never heard before, which helped him understand how things fit together. But ten minutes of intonation work got a little painful.

“You gotta spot check this with a tuner at home. Really listen to each other. Alright, I have to let you go because it’s an Ac-Lab day. Take it home and practice!”

Jack began packing up his viola. Maybe he would come in for Ac-Lab and practice today himself.

### **Lena**

“You’re the leader for the day. Show your section what you want them to do.”

Lena watched Jack as Davis started the section up again. She didn’t notice much of a change in what Jack was doing, but at least his bowings were right this time.

“Nice job, violas. Let me hear everyone at measure 24.”

Lena tried to play louder, but it was hard to lead from fourth chair. At least David wasn’t sitting first chair today; he didn’t do anything to lead when he sat in front. She couldn’t understand why some people didn’t step up when they sat first chair. Obviously they were put there for a reason, so they should probably put forth the effort.

“Alright, take out Boreas.”

Lena kicked off her black patent-leather shoes as her stand partner changed the music. She loved being in JROTC, but the dress uniform got a little uncomfortable to wear every Wednesday. The shoulder braids and service ribbons also made it hard to sit the viola exactly right on her shoulder. But JROTC had actually helped a lot with

orchestra. It had taught her discipline, confidence, problem solving; all things you needed to play in orchestra. If you weren't disciplined, you couldn't really listen, and you couldn't follow, and you couldn't be a leader.

“Seconds, *F naturals!* Let me just hear the seconds.”

Lena sat back in her chair. This might take a while. She listened as Davis started walking the second violins through the intonation, pitch by pitch. One of the seconds in the back of the section had her phone on her knee, texting behind her violin every time Davis let them stop playing for a second. Lena rolled her eyes; it didn't make any sense to her. Why would you be in orchestra if you didn't want to be there? The arts credit? For that matter, why would you not want to play in orchestra? Lena loved playing viola. It just made her feel sane.

Luckily there weren't a lot of people like that in the viola section. Lena had gotten to sit with most of them since they started switching seats. Being able to hear the orchestra from different places and getting to know different people was actually really helpful. The more she thought about what Davis had told them when he decided to change the seating, the more she was coming around to the idea. No one had to be sitting last chair all the time anymore. Lena hadn't really considered that problem before—it must be terrible to know that you're the worst in the section, and have everyone else know it too. It was just annoying when someone who didn't want to lead sat in first chair. Maybe if Davis rotated every two days instead of every single rehearsal, it would give them time to adjust to the leadership role. And it would give them a chance to get to know their stand partners a bit better. Then again, Lena wasn't the teacher. Davis knew what he was doing.

“You gotta spot check this, really listen. Alright, I have to let you go. Practice at home!”

Lena began to pack up her viola. She would make sure to double check her intonation with the tuner tonight.

### **Mid December**

“ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAAAAAAAS IS YOOOOOOOOOOOU!”

Britney wasn't sure who had turned the Christmas music on, but she would gladly sing along. It was definitely a much better use of that Bluetooth speaker than the metronome Davis always put through it during the warmups. And this helped to pass time before they went on stage for the concert. Their call time had been 6:00pm, and Davis wouldn't get up and give his usual speech until about 6:50, so they had plenty of time. Britney had actually shown up around 5:00. Key Club had a late meeting and she didn't have time to go home in between, so her mom had brought her dinner and her orchestra dress. She and several of the other Chamber Orchestra members had just sat in the orchestra room and talked to Davis about anything and everything. He was like that. You could tell him anything, and he'd never judge you. He usually had some piece of wisdom that could help you out.

The rest of the orchestra had started showing up around 5:45, and by now, there were at least 90 people in the orchestra room. Between the tuning, talking, and Mariah Carey, it was mass chaos. Some people were clustered in little groups practicing their music. Other people sat on the floor trying to get homework done before the concert. And others, like Britney, just jammed with the music. There was a buzz in the air that only

happened before concerts that energized you. Jack and Stephanie walked up, Jack noodling on his viola as they meandered through the sea of people.

“Nice dress,” Jack said.

“It’s actually not as bad as I thought it was going to be. It’s ugly, but it’s not too uncomfortable, and we all look ugly together,” Britney replied. “Don’t get me wrong, I’d rather pick my own black outfit like you guys.”

“Yeah, but you’re the special ones,” said Stephanie. “Did you finish the AP World homework?”

“No, I was going to do it between Key Club and the concert, but I ended up just talking to Davis the whole time.”

“So glad I don’t have to do AP World anymore,” said Jack.

“Yeah, well, not everyone is a junior like you,” Stephanie shot back. “I’m going to go get my book from my locker so I can do it after the concert. Watch my cello for me.” She turned and hurried out the back door of the orchestra room, leaving Jack with the cello. Lena walked up, holding her viola and orchestra binder.

“Jack, you’re Number 6 in the seating right? Are you sitting third chair tonight?”

“Yeah. Why, are you Number 3?”

“Yeah. Guess we’re stand partners. I’m sitting fourth.”

“Cool. Do you want to use your music or mine?”

“We can use mine. I’ve got all the markings in it,” Lena said.

“Nice, one less thing for me to carry. My hands are a little full right now.”

“I don’t know what seat I’m in,” Britney said. Lena and Jack turned and looked at her like she had three heads.

“Seriously??? Davis sent out our seating this morning,” said Lena. “I didn’t think he would actually randomize the concert seating. Is Chamber going to literally sit wherever?”

“No, he’s going to send our seating to us on that Remind app he has before we go on. He was going to do it in the time before the concert, but a bunch of us were talking and distracted him. He said he’d just do it now, since it doesn’t take long and he liked talking to us better.”

Lena looked skeptical. “That doesn’t freak you out?”

“A little, but I’m sure whoever sits in front is going to be fine. I mean, I wish we had ranked seats for the concert, but I’m actually OK with it for rehearsal now,” Britney replied.

“Really?” said Jack. “I thought you said you hated it.”

“Initially I did hate it. But it’s actually been nice to move around and hear different perspectives. Different ways of playing, you know?”

“I agree,” Lena said. “I like it in rehearsal, but it made me nervous when he told us he was randomizing the concert last week. We lucked out though, Zoe is sitting first chair for us and she’s really good. At least we know she’ll be able to lead properly.”

“I dunno, it still kinda irritates me,” said Jack. “I feel like you should have to earn your spot for the concert. At least he didn’t give us playing tests for the random seating, that would have been pointless.”

Lena shrugged. “I don’t know, at least we get feedback when we do playing tests.”

“I guess that’s a good point.” Britney said. “I’d rather know where I’m placed for the concerts so I know if I’m improving. I dunno, that’s something that’s always been important to me, I guess.”

Jack nodded along. “Exactly,” he said.

“Yeah, the playing tests at least show who’s strong, who’s able to lead, and who put forth the effort into practicing,” said Lena.

“Well, sometimes,” Jack said.

“Yeah, everyone has parts that they’re better at and parts that they’re not as good at,” said Britney. “And for different people, those are different spots. Whatever, I don’t really think it matters. It’s not the end of the world if we don’t have playing tests or that we’re sitting randomized.”

Jack thought on it for a second. “Yeah, it’s not like I’m gonna quit orchestra over it. I’ve got bigger things to worry about.”

“Alright, listen up please.” Davis’s voice cut through *Feliz Navidad* and the music faded. “Let’s quiet down, we’re going to get started in a little bit. You all clean up nice! A quick logistical announcement.”

Davis began to walk everyone through getting on and off the stage. It wasn’t nearly as complicated as the Prism concert. Stephanie snuck between Britney and Lena to take her cello back from Jack.

“So, Concert Orchestra, when Symphony and Chamber finish playing *Christmas in Sarajevo*, you need to come right up on stage so we can do the Chanukah piece all together at the end. Got it? Alright, I’m going to go tune the Mariachi group, and then I’ll

be back.” He stepped off the podium and wormed through the crowd to the door that led to the hallway to the choir room where the Mariachis were warming up.

“You’ve got your copy of *Sarajevo*, right?” Jack asked Lena.

“Yeah, I kept it from last year,” Lena said, riffling through her orchestra binder. “That’s definitely my favorite piece we’re doing for this concert.”

“I dunno,” said Britney. “It’s cool and everything, but I kinda like the classical music.”

“Oh, that’s usually my favorite stuff too,” Lena said. “I just think it’s cool to have *Sarajevo* as a tradition for the winter concert every year. Like a theme.”

“I’d rather play pirate music,” said Jack. Britney, Lena, and Stephanie looked at him.

“What do you mean ‘pirate music’?” Stephanie asked.

“Like *Pirates of the Caribbean*. We did it when Lena and I were in seventh grade. It was awesome. I dunno, stop looking at me like that. I like music that’s slow, intense, dramatic, that kind of stuff.”

“I dare you to tell Davis you want to play ‘pirate music’ next week when he brings music out to read through,” Britney said, stifling laughter.

“Whatever. As long as it gets harder throughout the year, I’m OK with it. . . . And as long as it’s pirate music.”

“Alright, here we go everyone. Let’s listen please.” Steve stepped back onto the podium and waited for the students to get quiet. “We’re going to have a wonderful concert. Your dress rehearsals went well today. Regardless of what happens tonight, I’m really proud of you, and I love working with you everyday. This is a wonderful place to

be, and I look forward to coming to work everyday. Thank you for being my second family. People ask me when I'm going to have kids, and I say I have 110 of my own already. So, let's go play some great music. Lena, can you lead Symphony and Concert to the auditorium? Chamber, head to the stage please."

Steve waited until the last few students made their way out of the orchestra room and took a deep breath. At least that part was over, he thought to himself. All those kids in one place at one time, all trying to tune and ask him questions, he felt unhinged. Totally out of control. And he still had two more concerts to go this year. Four was a lot of concerts to prepare, especially for Concert Orchestra. Between those concerts and all the small groups the district requested to play at events, he felt like he never got to really teach. But he doubted cutting concert performances would fly with the community, and it was important for the small groups to go out and play at events. It really helped the program stay connected to the community.

This pre-concert had felt particularly chaotic because students kept coming up and asking about the seating. He hadn't *really* randomized the concert. He'd hand-picked the first two people in each section to make sure they were people who would be comfortable leading, and then scattered the stronger players throughout each sections. It was kind of random, Steve thought to himself, but he hadn't used the randomizer app.

That reminded him, he needed to send Chamber their seating. It probably wasn't a big deal that it was this late, most of them probably had their phones on them. Steve had meant to do that earlier in the evening, but he ended up talking to several of the Chamber Orchestra students. In the grand scheme of things, that was the more important part of his job. Kids in high school needed those models of appropriate adult relationships. The

seating could always wait; it hadn't taken him long to throw together. He went to his laptop and clicked SEND on the notification he had waiting to send.

Steve took a minute to look at the pile of music on his desk. It would be back to the drawing board tomorrow morning. Chamber would have an “alternate location” rehearsal, their code for canceling zero-hour and letting the kids sleep in. Steve would use that time to stuff sight-reading folders. He had about six possible pieces for each orchestra for the March concert. They would spend the rest of the week listening to them, talking about the strengths and weaknesses of each piece, and trying them out. His rule of thumb was one challenge piece, one middle piece, and an easy piece for each group. The middle piece needed to be about 80% sight-readable so they could spend time really working on the demands in the other 20%. Based on that and the feedback the students gave him, Steve would make his final decisions over the weekend.

It really needed to be this weekend, too. Usually he made repertoire decisions over winter break, but Steve had different plans this year. His New Year's resolution was to give the students more individual feedback on their playing, and he thought he had an idea on how to do it. He would put a prompt up on Canvas<sup>9</sup> and ask each student to come up with a goal for the rest of the year. Then Steve could respond to each of the students with advice; then the students would respond every two weeks after a checkpoint playing exam with his new rubric; then he would respond to their response. It could be a running dialogue all semester. It would take a massive amount of time, but if he set it up well over break and got all the paperwork out of the way, he might be able to pull it off.

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<sup>9</sup> “Canvas” was an online “learning management system” the Kanab Union High School District used for teachers and students to—among other things—post and submit assignments.

But that was all for tomorrow. Right now, he had a concert to perform. Steve folded the laptop, picked up his baton and scores, and walked out of his office. As he turned to lock the office door behind him, he heard the orchestra room door click. Lena poked her head in.

“Davis, you coming?”

“Yeah, I’ll be right there. Just locking the door.”

“OK, I just wanted to make sure you didn’t need any help carrying stuff.”

“I’m good, Lena, thanks for checking. I’m right behind you.”

She turned and let the door close behind her again. He pulled his phone out of his tuxedo pocket: 6:58pm. He glanced up at the photos that ringed the orchestra room, pictures of every Lorenzo orchestra dating back to 1988. Steve smiled to himself as he slipped his phone back into his pocket and turned to go to the auditorium. They were all good kids.

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERPRETING A NARRATIVE

In the previous chapter, I presented a narrative of an orchestra teacher—Steve—and three of his students—Lena, Jack, and Britney—and their experiences in orchestra over the course of one semester at San Lorenzo High School. In this chapter, I present my interpretation of that narrative using strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) as a theoretical lens, and place my interpretation in dialogue with existing literature. This interpretation, while informed by my interactions with the participants, represents my own perspective and does not necessarily represent the perspectives of the participants.

I organized this chapter according to the four research questions that guided my inquiry. I categorized *internal* and *external* structures from Steve's perspective because the underlying goal of my study was to investigate music teacher identity negotiation to inform music teacher education. But because each participant occupied a different *position* and had differing degrees of agency in their encounters, some structures that I categorized as *internal* to Steve could be reinterpreted as *external* to the students. I noted these differences in positioning and agency throughout my analysis. At the end of my discussion of each research question, I address how my findings and interpretations for each question relate to the four goals for music teacher identity research I laid out in Chapter 1.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the central focus of my inquiry became Steve's decision to change the seating structure from a hierarchical ranked seating plan to a randomized-rotating seating plan. During my analysis, I found that the seating structure and the possibilities open to the participants as a result of Steve's decision to change the

seating structure were closely connected to the hierarchical orchestra placement structure, and Steve's assessment structures. Accordingly, I have emphasized and centered these three structures—the orchestra placement hierarchy, the seating hierarchy, and the assessment structures—in addition to the participants' *positions* and *identities* in my discussion. While centering these structures provided a scaffold for my analysis, readers should not interpret my analytical decision as indicative of the importance the participants placed on these three structures in their day-to-day experiences of teaching and learning in orchestra at Lorenzo. Though Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney discussed many things that were important to them over the course of the data generation period — such as repertoire, personal relationships, ensemble size—that I could have developed into analytic themes, I elected not to discuss these potential themes in the interest of clarity for my analysis. I will briefly discuss possibilities to explore these unexamined themes in Chapter 6.

### **Question One: External Structures**

The first question I posed for this study was, “what *external* structures shape the encounters of this teacher and these students?” Stones (2005) divided *external* structures into two categories: *independent causal influences*, and *irresistible causal forces*. *Independent causal influences* “have the kind of causal influence on agents' lives that those agents do not have the physical capacity to control or resist” (p. 112). In other words, individuals have no control over these structures. *Irresistible causal forces* are “more qualified in that the feeling of the relevant agents that they cannot control or resist a particular causal influence is dependent upon their hermeneutic frame” (p. 112). Although agents may have the power to control or resist these structures, they may

*believe* they cannot for a number of reasons. I begin my discussion with two *independent causal influences*—open enrollment and curricular requirements—followed by three *irresistible causal forces*—college and career readiness, scheduling policies, and district assessment policies—and discuss how each structure I identified enabled and constrained the participants.

### **Independent Causal Influences**

**Open enrollment.** Because open enrollment was codified in Arizona state law (A.R.S. §15-816.01, 1994; Ryman, 2015), the four participants in this study could neither change the policy nor avoid its potential effects. San Lorenzo was the neighborhood school for Portales, a lower-SES and predominantly Latino town within the Kanab Union High School District. According to estimates from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), Portales residents, 62% of whom identified as Hispanic, had a median annual household income of approximately \$28,500 in 2017. On the other hand, Kanab residents, only 22% of whom identified as Hispanic, had a median annual household income of approximately \$52,000 in 2017. Although Steve did not begin teaching at Lorenzo until 2012, he believed—based on stories he heard from his colleagues who were present during the enrollment policy changes—that open enrollment had been the catalyst for a substantial demographic change at Lorenzo, as wealthier White families sent their children to charter schools or other district schools to avoid the less wealthy Latino students.

Trends in school enrollment data since the legislature instituted the open enrollment policies lend credence to some of Steve’s beliefs. When the Arizona Legislature enacted the policy in 1994, Lorenzo began to experience a demographic shift.

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), Lorenzo had a total enrollment of 2,035 students in 1994, 64% of whom identified as White, 21% of whom identified as Hispanic, and 15% of whom identified as either Native American, Black, or Asian. Twelve years later, total enrollment at Lorenzo was 2,009 students, 44% of whom identified as White, 32% of whom identified as Hispanic, and 24% of whom identified as Native American, Black, or Asian. Although the demographic makeup of the school had shifted noticeably, the total enrollment was relatively stable.

During this period, students living within Kanab Union High School District boundaries were required to attend their neighborhood school if they wanted to remain in the district. But in 2006, the district began allowing students living within district boundaries to change their enrollment to other district schools. By 2016—the most recent year for which data were available—Lorenzo’s enrollment had fallen to 1,452 total students, 25% of whom identified as White, 47% of whom identified as Hispanic, 28% of whom identified as Native American, Black, Asian, or Pacific Islander. Nearly all of this net drop of 557 students can be accounted for by the net change in White students over the same period: a loss of 514 students.

Thus, the enrollment data support Steve’s description of the demographic shift at San Lorenzo: the school’s total student population decreased in the time period following the introduction of the district open enrollment policies, and the racial profile of the student body shifted from predominantly White to predominantly Hispanic. But while the data make a circumstantial case for Steve’s characterization of open enrollment policies as the cause of an exodus of White students, the data do not and cannot indicate a causal

relationship. Unlike the data collected by Bifulco et al. (2008) in Durham, NC, the available Lorenzo enrollment data do not indicate where White students may—or may not—have transferred to, nor the motivations behind the actions of those students that may—or may not—have transferred out of Lorenzo. Nor are the available enrollment data situated within the context of broader trends in the regional population. In other words, it is impossible to directly link the open enrollment policies in Arizona to the Lorenzo student demographics with the available data. Nevertheless, Steve and his colleagues *believed* that open enrollment had driven this change as an *independent causal influence*, and that these policies continued to influence the demographics of the Kanab district in such a way that San Lorenzo’s student population was predominantly Latino, and predominantly low-SES.

The school choice policy also gave students and parents increased leverage over school cultures and curricula. If students and parents found a nearby school that had a more desirable culture or curriculum—a higher achieving orchestra program, for example—they could easily change their enrollment to that school, taking their state education funding allotments with them. Because he feared this reaction, Steve always had keeping students and parents happy in the back of his mind, and this may have caused him to second-guess decisions he believed students and parents would find undesirable. Open enrollment, however, also enabled Steve to recruit students from outside the Lorenzo neighborhood boundaries. Both Jack and Britney utilized open enrollment to attend Lorenzo. While Jack made his decision for social reasons, Britney elected to attend Lorenzo because of the comparatively strong arts program.

**Curricular requirements.** Given the prevalence of national and state standards in American educational discourse, I was surprised to find that none of the participants in this study—particularly Steve—discussed or made reference to curricula or standards. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, state-level standards can carry the threat of negative sanctions if teachers do not comply with them. But these negative sanctions are only effective as constraints if they are enforced by other agents. In this case, the fact that Steve was not routinely concerned with his compliance with standards or a specific curriculum suggested that the standards and curricula were not strongly enforced by his building or district administrators. Most likely, this was due to the strong adherence of the Lorenzo community to the “college and career readiness” discourse which defined music as a lower priority subject. I will discuss specific manifestations of this discourse at Lorenzo in more detail below. If the Lorenzo administrators prioritized “core” academic subjects for supervision, Steve may not have felt that he was likely enough to experience sanctions for him to be concerned with his implementation of the standards or a curriculum on a regular basis.

### **Irresistible Causal Forces**

The distinction between *independent causal influences* and *irresistible causal forces* is the believed ability of an agent to resist or control that influence. I categorized the following three structures—college and career readiness, scheduling policies, and assessment policies—as *irresistible causal forces* because Steve attempted to resist each of them at one point or another, indicating that he felt some degree of agency relative to those structures. But in each case, he ended up complying with the structures because he felt that it was easier to comply than to attempt to resist what he eventually came to feel

was inevitable. The students also complied with these *irresistible causal forces*, and they were generally not aware of any possibility they may have had to resist these structures.

**College and career readiness.** While each of the participants had their own particular worldview of education, the “college and career readiness” discourse shaped their experiences through building and district policies. None of the participants made explicit reference to “college and career readiness,” but I chose this label because of the resonance between the experiences they described to me and the ideas within this discourse I discussed in Chapter 2. The Lorenzo administration published a hierarchy of the subjects students should prioritize when planning their time for Academic Laboratory. Elective subjects—including orchestra and other arts courses—were at the bottom of that list, most likely because these subjects did not overtly prepare students to be “college or career ready.” This posed an obstacle to students like Jack, who may have had lower grades in some of their “higher priority” academic classes, to regularly avail themselves of extra practice time during Ac-Lab. This lower prioritization of music as an academic subject resonates with previous findings (e.g., Elpus, 2013; Koza, 2010) that music was often relegated to secondary status relative to the “core” academic disciplines.

**Scheduling policies.** Building administrators in the United States are typically responsible for creating the master schedule of courses and teaching loads within their building, as was the case at Lorenzo. Steve was scheduled to teach three sections of orchestra and a section of mariachi during the academic day. Concert Orchestra was split into two sections. While Steve felt that this split schedule enabled him to give students more individualized instruction, he also felt that it constrained him from regularly working with the entire ensemble. Symphony Orchestra, on the other hand, had one

available section, and this increased the size of the group. Steve felt that this larger class size impeded his ability to provide regular individualized feedback to students. But the single group also allowed him to work with the entire ensemble on a consistent basis and, therefore, to introduce musical concepts such as ensemble blend in a more authentic way.

Unlike the other ensembles, Chamber Orchestra took place during Zero-Hour, a 45-minute time block before the official school day began. Because this course met before the busses arrived at school, Chamber Orchestra students needed to provide their own consistent transportation to school. This schedule was a substantial obstacle for some students, like Jack, as they were unable to arrive at school for Zero-Hour, and hence, were much less likely to be able to participate in Chamber Orchestra.

The building administrators at Lorenzo did not allow Steve to schedule pull-out lessons with his students, an instructional format he had become accustomed to during his formative years as a student and in his teaching experience in Quincy. While this enabled students to participate in orchestra without sacrificing class time in other subjects, Steve viewed this policy as a constraint on his ability to provide in-depth individual instruction. Jack thought individual or small-group pull-out lessons might be a good addition to the program. But he added that if it happened, the policy would probably be implemented at Lorenzo in a way that blocked students with lower grades, like him, from participating. In other words, Jack felt that the administration would prevent students who had lower grades in “core” subjects from participating in what they would see as “extra” time in “lower priority” arts subjects. This was additional evidence of the “college and career readiness” discourse at work.

Doerksen and Delzell (2000) found that approximately 74% of districts in the West region of the United States utilized pull-out lessons for elementary string students (p. 60). Steve, however, spoke of a generalized culture across Arizona that resisted pull-out lessons. Doerksen and Delzell noted that the number of districts that allowed pull-out lessons decreased for the secondary grades, which could be one potential explanation for the disconnect between their findings and Steve's experiences. Doerksen and Delzell also conducted their study nearly two decades ago, prior to the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and the Common Core Standards (NGA CCSSO, 2010). In all likelihood, the number of districts that allow pull-out lessons has substantially decreased because of the increase in high-stakes testing brought on by these two policy changes (Walker, 2014), though I was unable to find a study with more recent data pertaining to the prevalence of pull-out lessons as an instructional model in secondary instrumental education.

The only other studies I was able to find that systematically examined scheduling practices and pull-out lessons were conducted even earlier than Doerksen and Delzell's study (Kvet, 1985; Wallick, 1998). Kvet (1985) found no significant difference in district academic achievement scores between students who were pulled out of regular coursework for music instruction. Though Wallick (1998) observed no significant difference in math or writing scores on the standardized Ohio Proficiency Test, he found that students pulled out of regular classes for instrumental music instruction had significantly *higher* reading and citizenship scores than students who did not participate in pull-out music instruction.

If, as Steve believed, the Lorenzo administration did not allow him to schedule pull-out lessons because they felt it would jeopardize the academic performance of students in their “core classes,” Kvet’s (1985) and Wallick’s (1998) studies suggest that pull-out lessons may not have posed the academic risks the Lorenzo administration feared. But given the age of these studies and the substantial change in the social climate of American education since they were conducted, music education researchers and practitioners advocating for pull-out lessons as an instructional model may need to revisit this area to build a larger and more current knowledge base from which to have an informed discussion of the utility and viability of pull-out lessons in public school instrumental music education. More importantly, Steve’s insistence that the lack of pull-out lessons at Lorenzo was an instructional obstacle indicated that he assumed pull-out lessons were the most ideal or desirable instructional model for teaching strings, a *conjuncturally-specific* structure I will discuss in more detail below.

**District assessment policies.** San Lorenzo used an ordinal A through F scale correlated with percentiles (A = 90% and above, B = 80% - 89%, etc.) as the grading system for every course offered at the school. Therefore, teachers were required to report both a numeric grade and a letter grade for each student, and to regularly enter grades into the online grade book system. Steve received a minor sanction in the form of a verbal reprimand from his building administrator when he attempted to resist this structure by not his inputting grades consistently. Steve found it easier to accept this structure rather than continue to resist through non-compliance, and therefore created assessments that produced numeric grades.

Kanab Union High School District also started an initiative that required each academic department to have unified assessments across all six high schools in the district. This initiative was most likely a result of the standardization and data-driven instruction movements, as standardized assessments that are easily converted to numerical data are cornerstones of the discourses that underpin those movements (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Wang et al., 2006). Again, Steve found it easier to comply with this mandate rather than resist through non-compliance. But Steve also found a way for this policy to enable him to give more valuable feedback to students. Through their work in the orchestra teacher PLC, Steve and his colleagues drew upon their professional expertise to develop a rubric they could use to evaluate student performances. While this rubric complied with the district mandate for numeric grades, it also provided students with detailed descriptors that matched each numeric grade, and gave space for teachers to write specific feedback. In other words, while the district constrained teachers to A-F and percentile grades, Steve and his colleagues drew on their resources to build an assessment tool that enabled students to, in Steve's words, "understand better what an A meant."

### **Question One Summary**

In Chapter 1, I argued that understanding the structures that shape the contexts in which a music teacher exists is the first of four goals music education researchers should pursue to understand how a music teacher is *becoming* a music teacher. In strong structuration theory, *external structures* help to describe those contexts. State laws, district and building policies, and national education discourses shaped the pathways by which these participants pursued possibilities in ways they either could not control—

*independent causal influences*—or in ways they felt were too difficult to circumvent—*irresistible causal forces*.

In Arizona, state laws regarding open enrollment had a powerful influence on public education. Both Jack and Britney were able to attend Lorenzo—even though they lived outside of the neighborhood boundaries—because of the open enrollment policies. But the ability of students to easily leave and enroll elsewhere if they were unhappy with their experiences was an ever-present concern for Steve, and this concern influenced his decision making regarding possibilities for the Lorenzo orchestra program. Although state and national curricular standards can potentially shape the experiences of music teachers and students, the participants in this study did not mention—nor did I observe—any strong influence of outside curricular requirements at Lorenzo.

However, I was able to observe the subtle influence of the “college and career readiness” discourse in the building policies at Lorenzo. Regardless of how Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney prioritized orchestra in their lives, the building policies at Lorenzo framed music and the arts as second-class subjects. This, in turn, limited some students, like Jack, from more regularly participating in “extra” musical opportunities. Steve wanted to schedule regular pull-out lessons for the Lorenzo students—as he did in Quincy, NY—but the district and building scheduling policies prevented him from doing so. The building schedule also limited Jack from participating in Chamber Orchestra because the administration always scheduled Chamber during Zero-Hour. The administration in the Kanab district required all teachers to report numerical grades for their courses, and this requirement shaped how Steve designed his assessments and grading schemes. But Steve also found an opportunity through the district-mandated PLC

program to pursue a desirable possibility for assessing students that still resonated with the district's grade reporting policies.

### **Question Two: Internal Structures**

The second question I posed was, “what *internal structures* shape the encounters of this teacher and these students?” *Internal* structures are within an agent's control, though they may or may not be consciously aware of how a given structure shapes their thoughts and actions. Stones (2005) divided *internal* structures into two categories: *general-dispositional* structures, and *conjuncturally-specific* structures. *General-dispositional* structures are “transposable skills and dispositions” such as world-views, cultural schemas, and classification systems (p. 88). In other words, *general-dispositional* structures are the broad interpretive and normative schemas that guide an individual's understanding of the world. *Conjuncturally-specific* structures “involve an agent's knowledge of the specific context of action” (p. 90). They are how an agent applies their general knowledge to a particular set of people, settings, and interactions. I begin my discussion of internal structures with four *general-dispositional* structures followed by six *conjuncturally-specific* structures. I also discuss the relationships of these structures to the *external* structures I outlined above, and discuss how these *internal* structures enabled and constrained the participants.

#### **General-Dispositional Structures**

*General-dispositional* structures are an individual's overall schemas that guide their understanding of the world. These structures can manifest as unconscious physical routines or broad assumptions about meaning that an individual uses to interpret a range of specific circumstances or contexts. Often, individuals are not consciously aware of

how they apply these schemas, drawing on them in “taken-for-granted” or unnoticed ways (Stones, 2005, p. 88). While they may be influenced by *external* structures, *general-dispositional* structures are not deterministic; once agents become aware of *general-dispositional* structures, they have the ability to change them. In other words, as difficult as it might be, agents can change the way they understand the world in general. Below, I explore four prominent *general-dispositional* structures—adolescent development, meritocracy, the purpose of assessment, and leadership—that became relevant to my inquiry.

**Adolescent development.** Steve had a particular view of adolescent development that underpinned his belief that “the social [aspect] becomes important” in high school orchestra: teens prioritize and sometimes struggle with social relationships. He described his students as “figuring out how to have relationships” and noted that it was important that he “model appropriate adult relationships.” Because of this, he felt that part of his job as a teacher was to be a mentor to students who had difficult home lives and to those who lacked a strong or consistent adult role model. He based these beliefs on the similarities he observed between the students he taught in Quincy, NY, and the students he taught at Lorenzo. This led Steve to form broader generalizations about the kinds of social supports adolescents needed. Social psychologists suggest that Steve’s worldview may be accurate. In their literature review on social relationships in adolescence, Brown and Klute (2005) argued that during adolescence, teens must “negotiate a much more complex and elaborate system of peer relationships,” (p. 343) and that these experiences can be “bewildering . . . if relationship experiences in childhood are inadequate” (p. 333).

Because of this worldview, Steve felt that his *position* as an orchestra teacher had two equally important responsibilities. While he recognized that the school and community expected him to teach students how to perform music on string instruments—generally in a large ensemble setting—he felt it was equally important that he provide personal and social support to students. Thus, Steve worked toward two intertwined but distinct sets of goals in his interactions with students. I categorized these goals, or *intended outcomes*, as technical/musical goals and personal/social goals. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the implications of these parallel sets of goals in more detail.

The high value he placed on social development in addition to musical development led Steve to incorporate a number of social activities into the Lorenzo orchestra program, such as the retreat for Chamber Orchestra. Steve dedicated time to casual conversations with students after school hours, and made sure to ask individual students about their lives outside of school whenever possible. However, his personal/social goals for teaching occasionally conflicted with his technical/musical goals for teaching. I will discuss these conflicts in greater detail below.

**Meritocracy.** All four participants in this study expressed beliefs based on an underlying assumption of meritocracy: beliefs that rewards and status should be given to those who earn them. This worldview underpinned each of the three structures I placed at the center of the structuration process in this study: the orchestra placement hierarchy, the seating hierarchy, and assessment in orchestra. Lena, for example, “didn’t think she was talented” until her middle school teacher placed her in first- or second-chair. She saw sitting in the first- or second-chair as a status position for those who had “talent.” Jack

expressed discomfort with Steve's adjustment to the seating hierarchy because the person sitting first-chair "didn't earn it;" they were given a reward without proving they were worthy. Britney expressed indignation at her friend's attempt to circumvent the hierarchical orchestra placement structure by "getting on Davis's good side" to be placed in Chamber Orchestra rather than investing the effort necessary to achieve the requisite technique. All of these statements reflect beliefs that individuals with more "talent," "ability," "musicianship," or "technique"—terms which I will group under the umbrella of "technical proficiency"—should be rewarded or given social status through some kind of hierarchical structure. These views resonate with Saa Meroe's (2014) definition of meritocracy as a system of interpretive and normative schemas where prestige, rewards, and responsibilities are distributed based on ability, talent, or effort.

Within the Lorenzo orchestra program, however, this meritocratic worldview became problematic when the students extended the underlying logic. For example, Lena's belief that she was not talented until she received a high chair ranking was the contrapositive of the explicitly stated meritocratic system. Because students who had technical proficiency were rewarded with high chair placements, Lena also believed that students who were *not* rewarded with high chair placements did *not* have technical proficiency. This conclusion was an oversimplification that did not account for myriad additional factors, many of which I will discuss as *power capacities* below (see also Mijs, 2016; Saa Meroe, 2014). Steve's concern about students making this specific logical interpretation—equating low chair placements with a lack of technical proficiency—was one of his reasons for changing the hierarchical seating structure.

**Purpose of assessment.** The contemporary discourses surrounding educational assessment and testing shaped the general attitudes of the participants in this study toward assessment, though not in ways that the participants outwardly expressed or may have been consciously aware of. As I discussed in Chapter 2, current assessment practices in the United States are often closely linked with teacher accountability measures (Wang et al., 2006). In other words, the purpose of assessment within this discourse is to determine whether teachers have fulfilled their responsibilities to teach students specific content, and to legitimize sanctions that policy makers and administrators issue to teachers based on assessment results. This discourse, however, deemphasizes assessment as a feedback mechanism to inform students' learning and teachers' instruction (Rodberg, 2019).

The students—Britney and Jack in particular—all held views that resonated with assessment as an accountability measure. Although Britney and Lena claimed to use the feedback they received on their playing tests to guide their practice sessions, Britney was dismissive of the feedback she received, given that she usually performed well on playing tests; as long as her composite score remained high, the feedback was secondary. Jack went so far as to discard the written comments after looking at his composite score. Rather than a means to get feedback on their learning, the students associated assessment with systems of rewards and sanctions, particularly markers of social relationships and status. The grades Steve gave them, the seat Steve assigned them, and the orchestra Steve placed them in were rewards for their acquisition—or sanctions for their lack—of technical proficiency. Indeed, Jack seemed hard pressed to think of any other purpose a playing test could serve: “I just feel like there’s no point in having a test for it if we’re not

going to get seated where we've earned up to." In other words, if Jack did not receive a tangible reward or sanction from the assessment, the assessment was moot. This paradigm resonated with the students' overall meritocratic worldview, and was reinforced by the emphasis Kanab Union High School District placed on cumulative numeric grades. Thus, the students' *general-dispositional* structures regarding the purpose of assessment resonated with Pellegrino et al.'s (2015) first two purposes of assessment: meeting school mandates, and providing documentation of grades.

Steve's worldview, on the other hand, emphasized assessment as a means to provide feedback to students. For Steve, numeric grades were a necessity imposed on him by the *external* structures of district and building mandates. Instead, Steve wanted students to focus on the specific comments he wrote because he felt this would better support their technical/musical progress. To provide higher quality feedback, Steve used his position as the chair of the orchestra teacher PLC as an opportunity to design a rubric that would give more meaning to the numeric grades he needed to assign, to help students understand "what an 'A' means." Looking forward to the possibilities this rubric offered, Steve imagined this rubric could enable him to give higher quality feedback to the students on playing tests, even speculating about increasing the frequency of playing tests and decoupling them from the grading system in order to focus students' attention on the written feedback rather than their numeric score. In other words, in contrast to the students' views, Steve's *general-dispositional* structures regarding the purpose of assessment aligned more with Pellegrino et al.'s (2015) second two purposes of assessment: improving individual musicianship, and improving instruction.

**Leadership.** A corollary of the meritocratic worldview is that those who are positioned higher and rewarded within meritocratic hierarchies also bear a degree of responsibility (Saa Meroe, 2014). In other words, the students who were most technically proficient and placed in higher chairs or orchestras should be leaders. However, “leadership” was an unstable concept for the four participants in this study. Steve’s personal definition of leadership was a roughly equal combination of high technical proficiency and what he called “citizenship.” Musical leaders needed to have good technique, model that technique for others, demonstrate good preparation, perform with melodic and rhythmic accuracy, enthusiastically participate in class, and make technical decisions independent of a teacher. In other words, to be a “leader” was to perfectly embody Steve’s expectations for his students, expectations I will discuss in more detail below as *conjuncturally-specific* structures. This meant that Steve believed he could potentially apply the label “leader” to *all* of his students.

Both Britney and Jack believed being a leader was, first and foremost, about “playing the parts right.” Lena’s definition of leadership was more detailed than either Jack’s or Britney’s, most likely due to her participation in JROTC. In addition to high technical proficiency, Lena listed discipline, problem solving, and confidence as important leadership traits. All three students mentioned modeling proper technique, musicianship, and preparation as necessary leadership traits. Thus, the students and Steve had similar conceptions of musical leadership, though the students placed a greater emphasis on high technical proficiency.

But this subtle difference opened an important gap in understanding between Steve and his students regarding expectations of who the students were and who they

were becoming. Because Steve believed “citizenship” was just as important as technical proficiency in his definition of leadership, he openly encouraged all of his students to be leaders regardless of their placement within the seating or orchestra placement hierarchies. But this was in tension with the students’ meritocratic assumptions, especially for students like Jack who defined leadership primarily through technical proficiency. In their view, the students who “earned” top ranks within the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies were more capable of leadership and, therefore, deserved the label of “leader” more than other students. Steve exacerbated their confusion when he told students that the first-chair player in the randomized seating needed to be the “leader for the day.” If this was true, leadership must have been directly linked to the seating hierarchy. These mixed messages contributed to the resistance the students—Jack in particular—had to Steve’s attempt to change the seating hierarchy.

Music education practitioners (e.g., Lautzenheiser, 2006, 2010) have addressed leadership as traits for large ensemble directors, and have discussed practices for how to design an instructional environment that encourages student leadership (e.g., Shieh, 2008). And while the views of Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney resonate with some of the views expressed by these authors, I was unable to find a research study that systematically examined definitions of student leadership and applications of those definitions in ensembles. Jacobson (2013) compared leadership traits of eight organizational leaders who had participated in public school music education programs to eight who did not, but the participants in his study were well removed from their music education experience, and his focus was on leadership in workplaces, not ensembles.

Given the prevalence of “leadership” as a concept in contemporary American education discourses, student leadership in musical ensembles may be an area for future research.

### **Conjuncturally-Specific Structures**

*Conjuncturally-specific* structures “involve an agent’s knowledge of the specific context of action” (Stones, 2005, p. 91). They are how an agent applies *general-dispositional* structures to particular situations within the context of *external* structures. Stones argued that researchers could group *conjuncturally-specific* structures into the three categories of structures Giddens initially proposed: *interpretive schemas*, *power capacities*, and *normative expectations* (pp. 91-93). For this study, I found it useful to discuss interpretive schemas and normative expectations as bundles of schemas under this heading—*conjuncturally-specific* structures—and to discuss *power capacities* as a separate research question. In this section, I discuss six specific interpretive and normative schemas the participants applied to their encounters in orchestra. The first three—orchestral tradition, music teacher position, and student position—pertain to how the participants understood who each other were and what they did in orchestra at Lorenzo. The last three structures are the three organizational structures I placed at the center of the process of structuration in this study—the orchestra placement hierarchy, the seating hierarchy, and the assessment structures.

**Orchestral tradition.** While the Western European orchestral tradition is a discourse that stretches beyond the control of the participants in this study—and, hence, could be classified as an *external* structure—I chose to group orchestral tradition as *conjuncturally-specific* for my analysis because the participants rarely discussed tradition in the abstract. Rather, they discussed specific routines and understandings that applied

within the specific context of orchestra at San Lorenzo. Therefore, I will discuss the particular understandings these participants had of two specific orchestral traditions—string pedagogy and concert performances—and the relationships of those understandings to the broader Western European orchestral tradition.

*String pedagogy.* Each of the participants believed that one-on-one instruction was the most desirable and most efficient way to teach and learn a string instrument. Steve consistently expressed his disappointment that Lorenzo did not allow individual or small-group pull-out lessons like his district in Quincy, NY, which he felt would offer the greatest opportunity to provide individual feedback to students and, by extension, best help students reach their technical and musical goals. In the absence of a pull-out lesson instructional model, Steve wished that more of the students at Lorenzo would take private lessons outside of school, though he acknowledged that many of his students did not have the financial resources to afford private lessons. Steve also lamented the pervasive belief in the Lorenzo community that private lessons were akin to academic tutoring: remediation for struggling students rather than enrichment opportunities for students interested in more intensive study.

The student participants, however, did not seem to share that supposedly pervasive belief. Lena took private lessons outside of school, and Britney taught private lessons to a friend's younger sibling. Jack expressed a potential desire to take private lessons, though he also said that his family's financial situation precluded him from doing so. Again, Steve was aware that many of the students at Lorenzo were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and had financial constraints that prevented them from taking private lessons—a situation that resonated with Miksza and Gault's (2014)

nationally representative findings that students of lower socioeconomic status had less access to music instruction outside of school—so he neither required nor pushed students to seek private lessons unless he was confident their family was in a stable financial situation. To compensate for the need that he believed was unmet by his lack of regular one-on-one or small-group instruction, Steve sought opportunities to introduce more individualized feedback into his teaching routines. The randomized seating presented one such opportunity and possibility.

Steve's determination to find an alternative to pull-out lessons was predicated on an assumption—or a *general-dispositional* structure—that pull-out lessons would be the most effective means of teaching string instruments, regardless of the immediate—or *conjuncturally-specific*—school context. And while this assumption appears, at first glance, to resonate with Hamann and Frost's (2000) findings, their data compared the practice efficiency of students who studied privately outside of school with those who did not; they did not examine the effects of public school pull-out lessons. As I noted above, there is a lack of current research that examines pull-out lessons as an instructional model in public schools, so it is difficult to substantiate the assumption that pull-out lessons are inherently desirable independent of the specific teaching and learning context. Steve's focus on replicating the individual feedback that would result from a private or small-group pull-out lesson may have also blinded him to other possibilities for meaningful musical learning that could have happened in a large-ensemble setting.

Steve's ensemble teaching practice mirrored many of the common pedagogical traditions of public school large-string-ensemble education in the United States (e.g., Benham et al., 2011; Cooper, 2004; Dillon & Kriechbaum, 1978; Hamann & Gillespie,

2013). Each rehearsal began with scales and a warmup sequence, a routine Steve insisted was productive even when he felt pressed for time before a concert. He dedicated the majority of rehearsal time to working through repertoire with the entire orchestra. He spent most of his time standing on the conductor's podium, although he occasionally stepped off and circulated around the orchestra to listen from different vantage points. Steve's instruction consisted of verbal descriptions, frequent modeling on his violin, and isolation and repetition of problematic spots in the music. From the students' point of view, these were all legitimate and productive means of teaching orchestra; they were how orchestra, in Gage's words, "was supposed to be."

Although these pedagogical traditions enabled Steve and the students to meet many of their performance goals, tradition potentially constrained them in ways they did not recognize. For example, omitting a scale or warmup regimen may have enabled Steve to introduce other types of social bonding activities into orchestra with that time. Breaking students into small groups on a regular basis might have enabled Steve to increase contact time with individual students. But these potential changes would have also introduced other potential constraints, depending on how Steve and the students prioritized their goals. I will discuss how the participants prioritized their goals in more detail under Question Four below.

*Concert performances.* Formal public concert performances are a mainstay of the orchestral tradition, and the four participants in this study accepted concerts as inevitable and desirable activities. Although regular concert performances enabled Steve to market his program to large segments of the community, he occasionally felt that the pressure of preparing for concerts limited his ability to provide high quality instruction. As the

concerts approached, he felt increasing pressure to craft a high-quality performance rather than teach to what he saw as the students' technical or musical needs.

Steve felt that it was unwise to resist the concert tradition due to the deeply ingrained expectation he had observed within the Lorenzo community that the orchestra present formal concerts on a quarterly basis. This structure, then, resembles an *irresistible causal force*. I categorized this structure as *conjuncturally-specific*, however, because Steve had made changes to this structure in his second year at Lorenzo by introducing the Prism concert. In other words, he recognized his agency relative to this structure and was able to exert a measure of control over it. His changes with the Prism concert ran afoul of many of the specific schemas that defined this structure in the community at the time: concerts were formal events, concerts had applause breaks, concerts took place on the stage, etc. Steve experienced immediate backlash from the students because of this change, but he was ultimately successful in shaping the community's expectations for concerts over several years. Thus, while concert expectations were a shared and contested structure, they were ultimately an *internal* structure for Steve.

**Orchestra teacher position.** Many of the expectations Steve had for himself as an orchestra teacher—his *self-concept* as an orchestra teacher—resonated with expectations illuminated by prior researchers (L'Roy, 1983; Millican, 2009; Mills & Smith, 2003; Powell & Parker, 2017). Steve felt he was responsible for providing feedback to students on their technical and musical development, which required that he be, in his words, “well trained in his craft” both as a performer/musician and as a pedagogue. The students also confirmed that they expected Steve to be a strong musician

and to help them to improve their performance on their instruments, a finding that resonated with Kelly's (2008) survey of high school students.

Both Lena and Britney expected Steve to select the repertoire for the orchestras; Lena felt that it was Steve's responsibility to select music he "thought was best," and Britney felt Steve needed to "pick music that we like." Embedded within these expectations is a belief that while Steve should consult students on their preferences, it was his responsibility as the teacher to set learning goals, select instructional materials, and plan the experiences that would help students achieve those learning goals. This suggests that the students had a *general-dispositional* expectation that defined the teacher as an authority figure in a school setting, a finding that resonates with previous research (Brewer, 2009; Curren, 2004).

Steve also believed that, in addition to teaching technical and musical content, it was equally important that he be a personal role model and mentor for students. This belief was informed by his *general-dispositional* structure on the social needs of adolescents. Steve's own experiences with his teachers during his undergraduate degree—his supportive studio teacher and her opposing sabbatical replacement—also shaped this expectation for himself as a teacher. Having experienced a teacher who personally nurtured him and a teacher who focused on his technical development at the expense of his personal comfort, Steve knew first-hand the potential negative effects a teacher who neglected emotional support could have on students. Other researchers (e.g., Powell & Parker, 2017) have also characterized caring for students as a trait of music teachers they identified as "successful."

The students expressed a similar set of expectations for Steve. Lena thought that one of Steve's goals as a teacher was to "make students feel at home" and to foster an environment that resembled a "family" in the orchestra program. Britney felt that she had grown closer with Steve over her two years in orchestra, and that he was the kind of person you could "tell anything to." She believed that the ability to trust and build a rapport with the teacher was an important aspect of being in an orchestra program. All three students felt Steve and his mentorship were a primary reason they continued to participate in the orchestra program at Lorenzo.

Both Steve and the students, then, defined Steve's *position* as an orchestra teacher in similar ways; his *self-concept*—his internal knowledge of himself—and the expectations of his students were similar. Notably, Steve's *identity* as a music teacher had two distinct but intertwining sets of interpretive schemas: teacher as technical and musical instructor, and teacher as personal and social mentor. None of the research I reviewed on the multiple positions music teachers occupy (Austin et al., 2012; Bouij, 1998; Brewer, 2009; Froehlich & L'Roy, 1985; Isbell, 2008; L'Roy, 1983; Pellegrino, 2009; Roberts, 1991; Russell, 2012; Woodford, 2002) foregrounded the position of music teacher as personal and social mentor. This dual positioning meant that Steve created two sets of goals for himself as a teacher: one set that addressed technical/musical goals, and another set that addressed personal/social goals. While these goals and expectations often worked in tandem, they occasionally conflicted in ways that required Steve to renegotiate the structures that defined the orchestra experience at Lorenzo. I will discuss this negotiation in more detail below.

**Student position.** Steve codified many of his expectations for students in the orchestra handbook he distributed at the beginning of the year. He expected students to play with proper technique and to play the music they were given as accurately as possible. He defined these technical expectations more specifically in the rubrics he used to assess the students in their performance exams, including categories such as right-hand technique, left-hand technique, intonation, rhythm, and musicality. These expectations resonate with the behavioral criteria outlined in music education assessment literature (e.g., DeLuca & Bolden, 2014; Wesolowski, 2015; Wesolowski et al., 2018). Steve also expected students to practice at home five times per week, bring their instrument and supplies to class on a regular basis, and demonstrate enthusiasm and actively participate while in orchestra.

But Steve was also flexible with many of these expectations. He recognized that depending on the technical proficiency they started with, students would have to put in comparatively more or less effort to reach the technical and musical goals required by the repertoire. Steve also knew that students' lives outside of orchestra shaped how much time they could dedicate to practicing at home or attending social events. Thus, he did not impose many sanctions against students who failed to meet these expectations, particularly in cases where he knew a student had more external constraints preventing them from meeting expectations.

The three student participants seemed to internalize and agree with Steve's expectations of them. Each of the students recognized the expectation that students should practice on a regular basis, although Jack admitted that he did not consistently meet this expectation. Each student also acknowledged that students should actively

participate during rehearsals and demonstrate enthusiasm. As Lena phrased it, students needed to “bring their all, leave their drama at the door, and not take the easy way out.” Lena also felt that the most important thing for new students to understand about the Lorenzo orchestra was that it was a “family,” implying that she expected other students in the orchestra program to have a close personal and social connection to one another. Britney expressed a similar sentiment about her peers in Chamber Orchestra.

Despite being able to discuss what they expected of themselves and their peers, the students were unable to explain how they knew these expectations and where they were codified, indicating support for Stones’ (2005) and Giddens’ (1984) contentions that agents draw upon internal structures without being consciously aware of those structures. Rather than through explicit instruction, the students seemed to learn the expectations for themselves through their interactions with others, a process which resonates with traditional socialization theories (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Because of this, Steve’s attempt to develop student “leaders” that outwardly demonstrated these expectations was particularly important in sustaining and communicating the general expectations for orchestra students at Lorenzo.

As with Steve’s position, the students’ expectations of themselves resonated with the expectations Steve had for them. Thus, both Steve and the students had congruent expectations for each other as an orchestra teacher and orchestra students. This congruence contributed to the overall stability of the orchestra program at Lorenzo, as each of the members of the program—regardless of their *position*—had similar knowledge on which they based their understandings; they agreed, in a most general

sense, on “what orchestra was” at Lorenzo and what it meant “to be in orchestra” at Lorenzo.

**Orchestra placement hierarchy.** From Steve’s perspective, the orchestra placement hierarchy was an *internal* structure: he controlled the official definitions of this hierarchy as codified in the school course catalog, and he controlled the placement of students within the hierarchy. The students had comparatively little agency in shaping this structure, which suggested that the orchestra placement hierarchy was an *external* structure from their perspective. But I grouped this hierarchy as a *conjuncturally-specific* structure because it involved, as Stones (2005) put it, the students’ “knowledge of the specific context of action” for the orchestra program at Lorenzo (p. 91).

In his information brochure for parents, Steve wrote that Concert Orchestra—the lowest orchestra in the hierarchy—was “designed for the intermediate string player who [was] interested in refining fundamental skills and gaining advanced training” on a string instrument. Steve emphasized that Concert Orchestra was meant to be a training orchestra, and his goal was to cultivate a strong foundation of technique and musicianship upon which students could build. Symphony Orchestra—the group in the middle of the hierarchy—was “designed for advanced string players ... [who were] required to maintain a high standard of musical excellence.” Steve intended this group to be for students who were “becoming independent musicians,” an opportunity for students who had demonstrated adequate technical proficiency to begin developing “higher level thinking and technique skills.” The Chamber Orchestra—the top of the hierarchy—was “the premier orchestral performing group and [required] the highest level of high school string performance.” Steve wanted this group to be an opportunity for technically

advanced students to apply their knowledge and skills independently, a setting in which he as a teacher could, in his words, “step off the podium and let them play.”

The students had a similar understanding of each orchestra. Jack described Concert Orchestra as the orchestra for “beginners.” While inaccurate according to Steve’s formal definitions of the orchestras—students in Concert Orchestra were rarely in their first year of playing their instruments—Jack’s impression was that Concert Orchestra was for students with comparatively lower technical proficiency. Lena believed that being in Symphony Orchestra showed that you were, in her words, “beyond Concert.” In her view, Symphony Orchestra was for students who demonstrated enough technical growth on their instrument and a strong enough desire to continue honing their skills in orchestra that they had earned a promotion to the next level of orchestra. Britney felt that in addition to demonstrating strong technical ability, students needed to prove that they were “mentally prepared” to be in Chamber Orchestra because of the higher demands Steve placed on students in that ensemble.

Steve felt that this hierarchical orchestra placement structure enabled him to more efficiently teach students because he could tailor the concepts he taught to better fit the technical and musical proficiency of each group of students. The students were aware of the pedagogical purpose this hierarchical structure served—Lena described the orchestras as “strategically leveled”—and accepted it as an appropriate way to enable everyone to achieve their desired technical and musical goals. Not only did this structure resonate with the students’ meritocratic *general-dispositional* structure, they had experienced a hierarchical orchestra placement system in every school they previously attended; it was the only organizational design for an orchestra program they had ever experienced.

But in addition to enabling the participants to more efficiently reach their technical and musical goals, the orchestra placement hierarchy enabled participants to make broad generalizations about the kinds of students that belonged in or participated in each ensemble. For example, Steve broadly characterized the goals of students in Concert Orchestra as primarily “social.” Britney believed that Symphony Orchestra had a “range” of kids that “took orchestra seriously,” whereas the members of Chamber Orchestra were “mentally ready” for greater challenges. In a similar assessment, Steve believed that the Chamber Orchestra students were generally “more cognizant of their own musical ability level” than the students in Concert or Symphony Orchestra. In other words, the orchestra placement hierarchy became an additional interpretive schema for student *identity* labels that *positioned* orchestra students according to their technical proficiency and goals for participating in orchestra.

Identity labels based on technical ability or learning goals have the potential to both empower and limit students. Tarrant, MacKenzie, and Hewitt (2006) found that strong identification with specific social groups—or labels—correlated with higher self-esteem in teenagers (p. 635). Britney, for example, felt a strong bond with the other members of Chamber Orchestra and this membership, or label of elevated technical and musical status, emboldened her participation in the orchestra program at Lorenzo. But as Roberts (1991) pointed out in his study of music education undergraduate students, identity labels can also become social stigmas. Jack based his definition of Concert Orchestra, the lowest ability group, as a group for “beginners” on having “heard them play,” implying that his assessment of their technical and musical performance was below the level he felt was acceptable for experienced players. Britney had a similar

negative association with Concert Orchestra and Symphony Orchestra: students in those groups did not “take orchestra as seriously” as the students in Chamber Orchestra, and were therefore less invested in the program.

Steve was well aware of the potential implications of the orchestra placement hierarchy for student identity labels and negative social stigmas. When he first began teaching at Lorenzo, he actively worked to dismantle a pervasive social stigma that labeled students in Concert Orchestra as less capable or less valuable to the orchestra program. Each year, Steve prepared the students for placement auditions by reminding them that their placement did not reflect their worth as a player, that he valued each group and each student equally, and that he determined their placements based not only on their ability, but on where he thought they would be “most successful” and have the “most opportunity to grow.” To some extent, the students accepted this line of reasoning. Lena argued that the group a student was placed in “did not define them as a player,” an argument that reflected Steve’s point of view. Nevertheless, Lena attributed the distinctive formal outfits that Chamber Orchestra wore to the winter concert to the fact that the Chamber students were “the special ones.” In other words, while Lena did not believe that the orchestra placement hierarchy determined the entire worth of a student, she could not help but feel that being placed in a higher group was a reward and that—by extension—being placed in a lower group carried a degree of social sanction.

Thus, the orchestra placement hierarchy both enabled and limited Steve and the students. While Steve was able to more effectively tailor his instruction to groups of students with similar technical and musical proficiencies, his grouping of students by ability created an interpretive schema that, when paired with a meritocratic normative

schema, labeled students in lower orchestras as less proficient or less valued than students in more advanced orchestras. The students felt that being placed in a higher group was a reward for their effort and skill in orchestra, and looked at “moving up” into a higher group as an incentive to improve their technical and musical skills. But while they understood that a lower orchestra placement was not indicative of their whole musical worth, none of them wanted to be labeled as a member of a lower orchestra because of the lingering social stigma associated with the lower orchestras. In other words, while the orchestra placement hierarchy enabled the participants’ progress toward their technical and musical goals and possibilities in orchestra, it potentially placed limiting definitions on their personal and social goals and possibilities within the Lorenzo program.

**Seating hierarchy.** The seating hierarchy within each orchestra at Lorenzo was the structure that I placed at the center of the process of structuration in this study. Again, Steve had the ability to change the seating policy while the students did not, but I categorized the seating hierarchy as a *conjuncturally-specific* structure because it involved how the students understood their actions in the specific context of the Lorenzo orchestras. Steve designed the initial seating hierarchy at Lorenzo to conform with traditional seatings in Western European orchestras (see Yi, 2018). The most technically and musically proficient player in each section sat on the outside of the first stand—the stand in the front row—in each section. The remaining players sat in descending rank order, with the second-ranked player on the inside of the first-row stand, the third-ranked player on the outside of the next stand in the second row, etc. The students accepted this structure not only because it conformed to what they knew was the broader orchestral tradition, but because their orchestra teachers in elementary and middle school used the

same hierarchical system to seat students; it was the predominant seating model across their entire experience with orchestra. As Jack put it, ranked seatings were “the way things have always been done.” The students’ entrenchment in this hierarchy resonates with traditional *socialization* literature (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966)

The seating hierarchy enabled the students to receive what they interpreted as feedback on their short-term and long-term progress toward their technical and musical goals. Britney described sitting in the front row as having “made it” and having “proved yourself.” In other words, being placed in the first row was evidence that she had achieved a desirable goal; sitting behind the first row meant that she needed to keep working in order to meet that goal. Lena saw her placement in the first row in middle school as confirmation that she was “talented.” Both Britney and Jack associated top chair placements with a higher probability of being promoted to the next orchestra in the hierarchy. Jack felt that in order to move up to Chamber Orchestra, he would need to be consistently ranked in the first four chairs. Britney believed that her middle school orchestra teacher suggested she audition for a higher orchestra because of her placement in the first row. Thus, the seating hierarchy functioned as a feedback mechanism for both short-term and long-term technical and musical progress.

The students’ belief that the hierarchical seating was a form of feedback on their technical and musical progress, however, led students to interpret their growth in a way that was troubling to Steve. Steve knew the students associated their seating placement with achievement: the seat ranks were, after all, based on technical and musical proficiency. But the seating hierarchy was also fundamentally comparative; Steve determined seat ranks based on a student’s achievement relative to other students, not

relative to an absolute achievement standard. This meant that the students were judging their individual technical and music growth *against* one another, and Steve believed this was thwarting his efforts to support students' emotional well-being and build community in the orchestra program.

Additionally, Steve knew that he was complicit in fostering this competitive environment through the seating hierarchy. To “reward” or acknowledge a student’s technical or musical growth, Steve needed to promote that student within the seating hierarchy. But one student’s “promotion” was necessarily another student’s “demotion,” even if both students made progress against a fixed standard. Thus, if Steve rewarded one student for their achievement with a higher seat rank, he also needed to sanction another student with a lower seat rank which the demoted student would likely interpret as a personal failure, even if Steve did not intend to send that message.

As with the orchestra placement hierarchy, chair placements also became *identity* labels that carried social status and stigma based on a meritocratic worldview. Each of the students described “first-chair”—the individual who supposedly possessed the greatest technical and musical proficiency—as the leader of the section. As an embodiment of their broader worldview of leadership, the students expected the first-chair player to perform accurately and musically, to be consistently engaged in rehearsal, and to model these traits for the rest of the section. Steve actively encouraged this label, frequently reminding students of the importance of “being the leader for the day” when they sat first-chair in the randomized seating.

But along with the label “first-chair” came the opposing label: “last-chair.” Steve was concerned that “certain kids based their self-worth in orchestra on where they sit,”

particularly students who fell near the bottom of the hierarchy. Given his belief that adolescents could struggle with social interactions and needed emotional support, Steve found the public sanction of last-chair—and the social stigma it carried—particularly detrimental to students’ social and emotional development. Lena acknowledged this stigma in the abstract, worrying that students sitting last-chair might struggle with feelings of inadequacy and frustration that their effort went unrewarded. Although she sat in a low-ranked seat in Chamber Orchestra, Britney did not view this position as bad, most likely because she had already reached the top of the orchestral placement hierarchy and, therefore, had less to “prove” than Jack or Lena, who were still in Symphony Orchestra. Jack, however, spoke of the stigma associated with lower seat ranks from experience. He was upset with his low chair rank for the Prism concert because he had invested a great deal of effort in practicing his music. That David, his friend who openly admitted to not practicing or putting in effort, sat above him for the concert deeply offended Jack’s sense of meritocratic values—he felt David had benefited from a lucky break, and that his own efforts had gone unrecognized.

The seating hierarchy, then, both enabled and constrained Steve and his students. Steve believed that chair placements could be an incentive for students to practice which enabled him to motivate his students to pursue their musical and technical goals. He also felt that the first-chair label enabled students to demonstrate their leadership skills. The students believed that the seating hierarchy provided them with valuable feedback on their progress toward their musical goals and enabled them, as Britney put it, to “know their place” in orchestra. They felt that chair placements validated their technical and musical proficiency as well as the effort they invested in practicing. Lena and Jack,

however, acknowledged the strong social stigma of last-chair and the potential constraint it placed on self-esteem and, in turn, personal and social goals. Steve was aware of this strong social stigma, and felt that this stigma constrained his ability to reach his personal and social goals for students. He also acknowledged his participation in reinforcing those stigmas and sanctions through promoting and demoting students within the seating hierarchy, a requirement Steve no longer wanted to be part of his *position* as an orchestra teacher. In Steve's view, the seating hierarchy was guiding him toward *becoming* a music teacher that he no longer wanted to become.

**Assessment practices.** As with the orchestra placement and seating hierarchies, Steve had a high degree of agency relative to the assessment structures in orchestra, whereas the students did not. While I discussed both the *external* structures and the participants' *general/dispositional* structures regarding assessment above, I have included assessment practices again as *conjuncturally-specific* structures in order to discuss how the intersections of those structures manifested as specific practices in the immediate context of the San Lorenzo orchestra program.

Steve designed his program's assessment structures to be generally compliant with the *external* structures acting upon him at Lorenzo. He assigned students an overall percentage grade along with the correlated A-F grade for each quarter, which he then averaged to calculate final grades at the end of each school year. Because the school required him to issue numeric grades and to enter those grades into the online system on a regular basis, Steve scheduled periodic playing tests which he graded with a rubric that generated a quantitative score. Initially, Steve used a strings performance rubric he found online to measure the students' performances. This rubric had five indicators—tone,

intonation, rhythm, technique, and musicality—each rated on a scale from one to five with qualitative descriptors: 5-Superior, 4-Excellent, 3-Good, 2-Fair, 1-Unprepared. He then totaled the five indicator scores to generate a composite score out of twenty-five total points for each student. This enabled him to assign a numeric grade, and to provide students with feedback on what they might be able to improve. This design is similar to many other assessment designs music education (e.g., DeLuca & Bolden, 2014; Wesolowski, 2015; Wesolowski et al., 2018)

But Steve also thought the descriptors for each indicator on this rubric were too general, which constrained him from giving the kind of detailed feedback he thought would be most beneficial for students. When the district started an initiative to standardize assessments across the six high schools in the district, Steve used the orchestra teacher PLC as an opportunity to develop a rubric with more detailed indicators, a rating system with language that focused on growth rather than evaluation, and an expanded comments section where he could provide additional feedback. He felt that this rubric, which he designed and piloted with his colleagues, would enable him to give students more productive feedback, and that it resonated better with his overall beliefs regarding assessment as primarily for feedback. Steve’s efforts also resonate with DeLuca and Bolden’s (2014) call for “high-quality criteria that both enable performance possibilities and that provide sufficient structure to guide student learning” in music education performance assessment tools (p. 75).

As I discussed above, Steve hoped his students would focus on the written feedback he gave them in the playing tests, and while Lena consistently used the written feedback to enable her technical/musical progress, neither Britney nor Jack focused

primarily on the comments they received. Rather, all three students—in accordance with their meritocratic worldview and beliefs linking assessments with rewards and sanctions—saw the playing tests as enabling the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies. Ultimately, they felt their placements within these hierarchies were the most important sources of feedback on their technical/musical progress. This meant playing tests became high-stakes events in which students had a single opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency and earn the appropriate reward or sanction. Because of this, the playing tests were also anxiety-inducing events for Lena and Jack. Both described incidents where their nerves caused their bows to shake while recording their test performances. Steve knew that many students experienced similar anxiety surrounding the playing tests, and thus viewed them as constraints on his personal/social goals for students. In other words, Steve’s *position* as an orchestra teacher contained two contrary expectations: he needed to provide assessment feedback as a technical and musical instructor, but the process of providing that feedback ran counter to his responsibilities as a personal and social mentor.

Because they believed the playing tests primarily served the orchestra placement and seating hierarchies, the students were unclear about the connection of the playing tests to their overall course grades. Jack thought that while the playing tests measured technical/musical proficiency, his grade in orchestra was usually based on whether or not he showed effort. Lena expressed a similar belief, arguing that her grade in orchestra was primarily based on whether or not she attended mandatory events—such as concerts—and “put forth effort” in rehearsals. Neither she nor Britney were concerned enough to track their cumulative grade in orchestra on a regular basis. Jack summarized the

students' views regarding their course grades best: "As long as you're in there and you're playing, then you're good." In other words, the students had an underlying assumption that orchestra was an easy-A class, a view reinforced by the *external* structure of college and career readiness and the comparatively low academic status of orchestra and the other arts electives at Lorenzo.

The students' comparative lack of concern for their cumulative course grades may have been due to the fact that they did not perceive receiving a high numeric grade in orchestra as a prestigious reward. Three factors could have lessened their impression of the reward for high cumulative grades in orchestra. First, if they believed their grades were simply indicators of attendance and whether they had met a baseline of necessary effort, a high grade should not be difficult to maintain. Second, if every orchestra student could be expected to receive a high grade, there was no elevated social status to be gained by earning a high grade. Third, the students already saw their ranks within the orchestra placement and seating hierarchies as the primary feedback on their technical and musical goals. Thus, the students viewed a high numeric grade in orchestra only as the avoidance of an embarrassing sanction rather than feedback or a reward for earning a desired status.

### **Question Two Summary**

Researchers seeking to understand how a music teacher is *becoming* a music teacher must understand how that music teacher defines themselves within specific contexts, and the expectations others have for that music teacher within those contexts. These were the second and third goals I outlined for music teacher identity research in Chapter 1; in strong structuration theory, *internal interpretive* and *normative schemas* function as a frame to understand these goals.

I was able to infer four broad worldviews—*general-dispositional* structures—that shaped how Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney understood themselves and their activities in the context of the orchestra program at San Lorenzo. Steve believed that teenagers generally needed social support during adolescence. Given this belief, he believed that music teachers needed to be both personal/social mentors and technical/musical instructors for students. Each of the participants had underlying meritocratic assumptions that shaped how they interpreted themselves and others in the Lorenzo orchestra program. In particular, these meritocratic assumptions informed their understandings of their *positions* within the orchestra placement and seating hierarchies, the assessments Steve administered, and notions of leadership in orchestra. Steve and the students also had substantially different understandings of the purpose of assessment, which led them to differently interpret the connections between the assessments and the placement and seating hierarchies.

At the beginning of my time with them, the participants each had similar understandings of the activities and people they encountered in the specific context of the San Lorenzo orchestra program—*conjuncturally-specific structures*. Many of the routines in which they participated—pedagogical procedures and concert performances—resembled traditional public-school orchestra routines in the United States, and each of the participants assumed that these were the basis for “what orchestra was” in general. Both Steve and the students understood Steve’s *position* as an orchestra teacher to be someone who was both a technical and musical instructor, and a personal and social mentor. Steve and the students all recognized the students’ *positions* by the enactment of specific technical behaviors, and their compliance with Steve’s expectations. Thus, the

participants had shared and mutually understood expectations of one another at the beginning of my inquiry.

Three *conjuncturally-specific* structures which defined—in the participants’ view—how the orchestra program was organized at Lorenzo became entangled in the process of structuration I placed at the center of this study. Steve grouped the students by technical and musical proficiency into three, hierarchically ranked orchestras. Within each orchestra, he placed students into a ranked-seating hierarchy by technical and musical proficiency; he measured their proficiency through quarterly individual playing assessments. The students interpreted their placement within these hierarchies as feedback on their technical/musical growth, and often used their position within these hierarchies as *identity* labels.

Steve, however, experienced a tension in his *identity* as an orchestra teacher, and had grown uncomfortable with the music teacher he was *becoming* with respect to these three structures, especially the seating hierarchy. When Steve provided students feedback through the assessments, he felt he fulfilled his responsibility as a technical/musical instructor; but when he used those assessments to rank students within the seating, he felt he reinforced stigmas and labels that were antithetical to his desire to be a personal/social mentor. His attempt to resolve this tension and change the trajectory of his *becoming* as a music teacher constituted the structuration process I will examine below.

### **Question Three: Power Capacities**

The third question I posed was, “what *power capacities* are available to this teacher and these students in their encounters?” Power capacities involve what Giddens (1984) defined as *allocative resources*: material goods that enable an agent to take certain

actions (p. 33). Power capacities also involve an agent's positional "power-to," authority to control or influence people and material goods (Stones, 2005, p. 89). This is similar to what Giddens (1984) defined as *authoritative resources*: the ability to control objects and others (p. 33). Stones (2005) categorized power capacities as *conjuncturally-specific* structures, but I found that analytically separating power capacities from other structures made it easier for me to organize and interpret the data in this study. Thus, while they function as *conjuncturally-specific* structures, I have separated power capacities for the sake of my discussion. In this section, I discuss the material goods and authoritative resources the participants had available to them, and the ways in which those *power capacities* enabled and constrained their actions.

### **Technical Proficiency**

Each student felt gaining technical proficiency was a primary goal of playing in orchestra, though they referred to it by several terms including "skill," "ability," or "knowledge." But technical proficiency also functioned as a resource for the students in the Lorenzo orchestra program. While they saw technical and musical growth as a goal in and of itself, the students also saw acquiring technical proficiency as a means to advance within the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies. Students with greater "skill," "ability," or "technique" were more likely to be placed—and, in their meritocratic worldview, more deserving of being placed—in a higher chair or higher orchestra. Thus, technical proficiency was a currency that enabled students to climb these hierarchies, and one of their goals was to acquire this currency. This, in turn, justified their use of the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies as a feedback mechanism for their individual technical and musical progress.

The students had two fundamental views on how they could acquire technical proficiency. Jack attributed much of technical proficiency to inborn talent. His interactions with Britney during Ac-Lab reinforced this notion, as he described Britney as “just understanding the notes” better than he did. To be sure, music learning came easily to Britney, but Jack may not have been aware of other resources—such as financial capital or time—that enabled Britney’s musical growth to which he did not have access. Thus, he may have over-emphasized the role innate ability played in Britney’s superior technical proficiency.

Lena, on the other hand, was convinced that “if you’re putting forth effort, then you’ll definitely get the skill,” a view that Britney shared as well. In other words, Lena believed that there was a definite causative relationship between effort and technical proficiency. While in some cases this may be true, there are a number of mitigating factors that could influence the relationship between effort and skill. Music education researchers (e.g., Austin & Berg, 2006; Geringer, MacLeod, & Lofdahl, 2015; Leon-Guerrero, 2008; Miksza, 2007) have identified a variety of practice procedures and circumstances that can affect the end result of a practice session. Similar to the overarching meritocratic logic that underpins this assumption, Lena’s beliefs regarding effort could also be invalidly extended as the logical contrapositive: students who do *not* have skill are *not* putting forth effort. While this belief resonates with the general meritocratic worldview these students had, it ignores myriad resources beyond effort that contribute to how an individual can cultivate technical proficiency.

### **Financial Capital**

Each of the participants in this study discussed the availability of financial capital in their orchestra experiences. Steve frequently mentioned that many of the students in his program were unable to afford private lessons outside of school, a generalization he made based on the socioeconomic profile of the Lorenzo community and his direct conversations with students. As I noted above, this assumption resonates with the findings of Miksza and Gault (2014) that students of lower socioeconomic means have less access to musical instruction outside of school. The students in this study represented a range of possible socioeconomic experiences. Although she did not directly address financial resources, Britney talked about her participation in a community youth orchestra, which would have required her family to pay the annual tuition fee. She also noted that her parents would have supported private lessons if she wanted to take them. However, Britney chose not to take private lessons and to stop playing in the youth orchestra because of time constraints.

Lena, on the other hand, said she was unable to participate in youth orchestra because “some things take money,” which implied that her family was unable to afford the tuition payment. Lena was not forthcoming about her family’s financial situation, and I declined to press her on it because the oblique references she made to finances in our conversations suggested to me that it might be an uncomfortable subject for her. But she did mention that she took private lessons with Jason—and private lessons have the potential to be a heavy financial burden—so I was left with an unexplained ambiguity in Lena’s situation relative to financial capital as a *power capacity*.

It is possible that Lena’s financial situation required her to make a choice between lessons with Jason and participating in the youth orchestra, and that she made a strategic

decision to pursue lessons because Jason provided personal and moral support in addition to technical and musical feedback. Another explanation might be that Jason was willing to tailor the cost of lessons to fit Lena's needs, whereas the youth orchestra would not make such an accommodation. If this was the case, Lena's rapport with Jason would have functioned as an additional *power capacity* that allowed her to leverage her financial capital to pursue additional technical and musical feedback outside of school. Regardless of the explanation for why she was able to participate in private lessons and not a youth orchestra, Lena's access to Jason provided additional help in addressing the feedback she received from Steve through the playing tests.

Jack, however, was unable to access either private lessons or youth orchestra. Because he knew how expensive groceries were for his family, he refused to ask his parents to pay for additional music items, such as private lessons, even though he was somewhat interested in the possibility. This, in turn, limited his access to additional opportunities to develop technical proficiency outside of the Lorenzo orchestra program. Jack's circumstances resonated with the situation Yi (2018) observed in her high school orchestra: students who could not afford private lessons because of their socioeconomic status were placed lower in the hierarchical seating system. The students in Yi's study, however, were conscious of and openly acknowledged the relationship between financial capital and their seating positions. Jack did not explicitly discuss those connections, and it was not clear to me how he had—if he had at all—reconciled his positions in the orchestra placement and seating hierarchies with his family's finances.

It is possible that Jack was not aware of a connection between his financial situation and his position in the orchestra placement and seating hierarchies. But this

explanation struck me as unlikely given his acute insight into other aspects of the Lorenzo orchestra program during our conversations. Another possibility is that Jack was aware of the possible connection and had resigned himself to the effects of his socioeconomic status on his positions within the hierarchies because they had always been part of his experience. This explanation would imply that Jack had given up his agency relative to the hierarchies in the Lorenzo orchestra program because he lacked financial capital as a *power capacity* to pursue his desired possibilities. It is also possible that the limitations of his financial situation did not bother Jack because, as he put it, orchestra “wasn’t his priority” and they were not a prominent constraint on his overall life goals. This explanation would imply that, rather than sacrificing his agency, Jack made a strategic decision to reprioritize his goals and pursue possibilities that were more achievable given what he interpreted as his available *power capacities*.

### **Time**

Time enabled Steve to shape the orchestra program at San Lorenzo into the kind of program he felt reflected who he wanted to be as an orchestra teacher over seven years. During his first year, he became familiar with the specific expectations the Lorenzo community had for him. In his second year he began to make changes, but experienced strong resistance from upperclassmen invested in what they saw as the traditional Lorenzo orchestra culture. While these students greatly constrained Steve’s ability to make immediate changes, they graduated at the end of that academic year. This meant that Steve was able to continue implementing changes his third year, building upon the underclassmen who were not as attached to the previous traditions and who were committed to Steve and the kind of program he wanted to build. In other words, Steve

was able to use his long-term employment at Lorenzo as a resource to wait out student resistance to the structural changes he wanted to make.

On a daily basis, however, Steve's time was scarce. The community's quarterly concert expectation created a "time crunch," a demand that the orchestra prepare new repertoire to appropriate performance standards approximately every ten weeks. Steve felt this demand restricted the amount of time he could allocate to direct instruction on technique which—he believed—slowed students' progress toward their technical and musical goals. To compensate for this, Steve built a daily technique routine into rehearsals. Although this routine cost him approximately ten minutes per rehearsal, Steve felt this investment would help his students reach their technical and musical goals more efficiently than working on repertoire alone.

Steve thought that individual or small group lessons—like the ones he taught in Quincy—would have been the most effective means of mitigating the rehearsal "time crunch" and addressing students' individual needs. The scheduling practices at Lorenzo, however, constrained him from pursuing this possibility. Steve's belief that this created a dearth of individualized instructional time became one of the primary reasons for him to change the seating from a hierarchical structure to a randomized structure. Because he could easily see and interact with students in the front row, Steve could provide individualized feedback to those students in rehearsal. By rotating different students into the front row each rehearsal, he believed he would be able to provide a small measure of individualized instruction to every student throughout the semester.

Each of the students discussed ways they managed the time they devoted to viola outside of class. While Steve officially required students to practice five days a week, he

also acknowledged the need to be “realistic,” noting that some students would have difficulty meeting this requirement because of other priorities that placed greater demands on their schedules. Lena, for example, participated in the school’s JROTC program, which required an hour of her time after school every weekday and additional time for drill competitions on weekends. She also enrolled in a program that allowed her to take college courses on the weekends, further reducing the time she could dedicate to other activities like community orchestras. Despite these demands, Lena regularly scheduled time to practice viola at home, and made time in her schedule to take private viola lessons. Britney made a similar commitment to allocating time for viola in her schedule. As she put it, “I make orchestra a priority, and I make that known to my parents.” In other words, Britney explicitly communicated her desire to reserve time for viola, which her parents respected by not scheduling additional activities that would infringe on that time.

Jack, however, lacked the same time resources. Because of his family’s financial situation, Jack needed to work to have discretionary income and pay for gas. Jack also helped his mother by transporting his siblings to and from school in the mornings and afternoons, which put an additional demand on his time and ultimately limited his potential participation in Chamber Orchestra because he was unable to arrive at school in time for Zero Hour. In other words, his comparative lack of financial capital also led to a comparative lack of time. But Jack also chose to spend his free time on other activities. He played video games and worked on building a computer from scratch; rather than practicing viola, he wrote raps as a recreational musical activity. Thus, while Jack may have had less time as a *power capacity* to devote to viola than either Britney or Lena, he

also spent the time he had on other things, indicating that he made a strategic decision regarding his goals for viola relative to his overall life goals.

Because Steve was concerned about his own lack of individual time with students, and because he believed that many students struggled to find time to practice at home, he encouraged students to use Ac-Lab as an additional time resource. Jack used Ac-Lab as an opportunity to work with Britney, who helped him learn the orchestra music. Lena did not frequently practice during Ac-Lab, though this is most likely due to the fact that she, unlike Jack, had access to private lessons and therefore did not need Ac-Lab for additional time in orchestra. But whether the students had access to Ac-Lab time for orchestra was contingent on their grades in other subjects. Of all the subjects for which students could use Ac-Lab as a resource, orchestra and the other arts subjects were at the bottom of the prioritized list published by Lorenzo administrators. Lena noted that if another teacher requested a student come in for additional help during Ac-Lab, the student would have to sacrifice their orchestra practice time even if they had already reserved that time to practice with Steve. Even when he imagined individual pull-out lessons as a possibility, Jack felt that if Lorenzo were to have this opportunity, it would be reserved for students who had A's in all of their subjects, unlike him. Thus, the *external* structure surrounding college and career readiness and the prioritization of traditional academic subjects at Lorenzo constrained some students from using Ac-Lab as a resource for orchestra.

Several researchers in music education have previously examined time as a phenomenon in public school instrumental music education. But much of the literature is dedicated to examining time from the perspective of music teachers, including the effects

of *external* structures—particularly assessment mandates—on the instructional time allotted to music classes (e.g., Spohn, 2008; Williamson, 2014), and how music teachers use rehearsal time in various contexts (e.g., Dorfman, 2010; Kelly, 2003; Orman, Yarbrough, Neill, & Whitaker, 2007). I was unable to find, however, a systematic study of time as a phenomenon from the perspectives of students in music education. Given the importance of time to Lena, Jack, and Britney, this may be an area music education researchers could explore in greater depth.

### **Significant Relationships**

**Outside relationships.** Steve found his Lorenzo colleagues to be an indispensable source of moral support during his second year as he endured backlash from students over the changes he tried to implement in the orchestra program. Without their encouragement, Steve was sure that he would have quit teaching altogether. Steve also worked with the other string teachers in the Kanab Union High School District to develop the rubric in the PLC. Their additional professional expertise helped to sharpen and refine his own ideas on how to assess students. This finding resonates with Gray's (2011) and Russell's (2012) findings that colleagues can be significant *role supporters* for music teachers.

Lena found support in Jason, her private teacher. While he provided support for her technical and musical goals, Lena also credited Jason with helping her “overcome shyness” and teaching her “to set her goals higher.” In other words, Jason was also a resource for Lena to meet her personal and social goals. The significance of Lena's relationship with her private studio instructor resonates with the findings of several previous researchers (Austin et al., 2012; Dolloff; 1999; Isbell, 2008; Kruse, 2013).

Neither Jack nor Britney had access to a private teacher. Despite “making orchestra a priority,” Britney had too many other commitments—Orchestra Council, Key Club, homework for AP Classes—that consumed her time. However, her decision to forego lessons was likely a strategic one, given that she seemed to have adequate financial capital to afford lessons, and she claimed to “make her priorities known” to her parents which suggested that her parents would have supported lessons if she indicated that this was something she wanted. Because Britney had always been able to climb the orchestra and seating hierarchies without additional help from a private teacher in the past, it is possible—though she did not explicitly say—that she felt she did not need private lessons to achieve her musical and technical goals as long as she continued to consistently prioritize individual practice time in her schedule. As I discussed above, both financial and time resources constrained Jack from participating in private lessons.

**Rapport.** As in Chapter 2, I will use the term “rapport” to suggest a positive relationship characterized by mutual support and understanding. But I also recognize that “rapport” can have a negative aspect; I will discuss the potential for those types of relationships as “authority and compliance” below. For the purposes of this discussion, I grouped rapport into two categories: relationships between Steve and the students, and relationships among the students themselves.

*Teacher/student rapport.* All four of the participants in this study discussed a positive and mutually beneficial teacher/student relationship. For Steve, the positive mentoring relationship he had with students was an end itself: given his worldview on adolescent development, he believed students needed a positive adult role model and strived to support his students both academically and socially. For their part, the students

recognized and appreciated his efforts. Britney felt that her experience in orchestra was better because Steve “made it fun,” indicating that she felt Steve did a good job of connecting with students and giving them a positive experience. Jack acknowledged that having Steve as a teacher was one of the distinguishing positive elements of being in orchestra at Lorenzo. Previous researchers (e.g., Isbell, 2008; Madsen & Kelly, 2002; Nichols, 2013; Russell, 2012) have also observed and described the positive and mutually beneficial potential of the relationship between music teachers and students.

But in addition to being a goal in itself, the positive rapport Steve had with students also functioned as a *power capacity*. He was able to make decisions regarding the orchestra program—such as changing the seating hierarchy—because the students trusted him. They recognized Steve’s good intentions and expertise as a musician and teacher, and they believed that Steve’s decisions would have a positive impact on their experience because he had proven this to be the case over several years. Even when they disagreed with his decisions, Lena, Britney, and Jack were willing to follow Steve because he “knew what he was doing.” In his second year of teaching at Lorenzo, however, Steve had not yet built that resource with the students; they did not trust that his structural changes to the orchestra program would positively affect their experience. As a result, they resisted his introduction of the Prism concert.

*Rapport among students.* Not only did Steve want to be a positive adult mentor for students in the Lorenzo orchestra program, he wanted students to feel as though they were a part of a positive and supportive community of peers. Previous researchers have discussed the benefits of this type of environment in public school music programs (e.g., Adderley, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003; Parker, 2014), and Steve was largely successful at

cultivating this community. Lena described the orchestra program at Lorenzo as first and foremost “a family.” For Britney, the social connection between members of the Chamber Orchestra was one of the principal benefits of playing in that group.

Not only did close social connections among the students constitute a realization of Steve’s social goals for students, their rapport amongst themselves helped students achieve their technical and musical goals. For example, Britney believed that Chamber Orchestra was able to perform together better after the social bonding that took place during the retreat. Lena’s friendship with one of the cellists in Symphony Orchestra enabled her to perform a chamber piece at the Prism concert which, in turn, gave her an additional opportunity to develop her technical and musical skills. Jack, however, was overlooked by his orchestra friends when they wanted to perform a chamber piece. This did not necessarily mean that Jack was precluded from performing a chamber piece with another group; he could have asked Steve to place him in a group with other students, which may have also presented Jack with an opportunity to build an additional friendship. But, as he said himself, building additional friendships was not one of Jack’s priorities in orchestra.

**Authority and compliance.** As I discussed in Chapter 2, teachers in the United States typically have the capacity to issue sanctions against students according to a variety of normative schemas in their specific context. Students, in turn, have the capacity to grant or withdraw their compliance with those normative schemas. None of the participants in this study discussed instances where they needed to draw upon these resources in the interactions they had while I was with them. They did, however, refer the possibility of using these resources in the abstract. Steve, for instance, noted that he could

have required students to attend orchestra during Ac-Lab if he felt they needed additional help or practice. He never availed himself of this resource, instead allowing students to decide when they needed to attend for extra help. But even if he wanted to draw on this resource, the administration's prioritized list of subjects for Ac-Lab undermined his authority because it required students to attend any other subject before attending orchestra. Thus, if students found another teacher to call them in at the same time, they could have easily circumvented Steve's attempt to assert his authority.

Because of the positive rapport Steve built with his students, they generally complied with his requests or mandates. In other words, Steve preferred to *have* authority by "procuring [students'] cooperation through [their] belief that [the teacher] knows what is best" (Curren, 2004, p. 197). This compliance, in turn, became an additional resource for Steve in the form of social pressure, particularly in the days leading up to concert and the orchestras were in "concert mode"—when time was short and he needed students to follow his directions quickly to run an efficient rehearsal. Steve felt that this was preferable to using overt punishments or sanctions to compel students to comply with his directions.

Ultimately, however, the students had the strongest *power capacity* available to them—their enrollment. If students did not approve of Steve's decisions or no longer found that participating in orchestra was working toward their goals, they could withdraw from the class and leave Steve with little or no recourse. This power capacity was amplified in this case by the open enrollment policies in Arizona. Withdrawing from orchestra at Lorenzo did not mean that students would have no access to orchestra—they could change their enrollment to another school that provided the kind of experience they

were looking for. None of the students in this study, however, considered using this power capacity. Jack openly admitted that, while he disliked the change to randomized seating, it “wasn’t something he’d quit orchestra over.”

But even if the three students in this study did not indicate that they would draw upon their compliance or enrollment as *power capacities*, the possibility that they could was always in the back of Steve’s mind. Indeed, the students he taught during his second year at Lorenzo had engaged in a coordinated effort to use these *power capacities*. In response to Steve’s introduction of the Prism concert and changes in the style of repertoire that the orchestra performed, the students planned a “mass exodus” from the program, plotting to all turn in their drop forms on Steve’s birthday. In order to prevent this from happening again, Steve made a concerted effort to proactively develop a positive rapport with students so that they would communicate their dissatisfaction to him prior to drawing upon this resource.

### **Question Three Summary**

In Chapter 1, I argued that music education researchers pursuing questions of music teacher identity needed to understand how a music teacher negotiates and reconciles the expectations and structures within their contexts with their own understandings in order to pursue possibilities for themselves as a music teacher. *Power capacities* offer a framework that might help researchers begin to approach this understanding by illuminating the material and social resources music teachers and students have at their disposal. For Lena, Jack, and Britney, technical proficiency was the currency with which they earned their places in the orchestra placement and seating hierarchies and pursued possibilities for who they wanted to become as violists. While

participating in orchestra was the primary way for them to develop their technical proficiency, they were also able to develop proficiency through private lessons, youth orchestra, and practicing at home and in Ac-Lab. But the students' abilities to access these other means of developing technical proficiency were contingent on other resources, such as financial capital and time. Steve was aware that the students had different levels of access to these resources, and sought ways to change the design of the program and his instruction to best help students pursue their goals.

In his everyday interactions with students, Steve relied on his positive rapport to influence students to follow his directions, meet the program requirements, and work together to realize possibilities for themselves as musicians and himself as a teacher. Steve made sure to build personal connections with students, and made rehearsals enjoyable for the students while ensuring that they were still making progress on their technical and musical goals. The students, in turn, trusted Steve's pedagogical expertise and willingly followed his lead, even in cases where they were initially skeptical of the possible outcomes of his plans. This included Steve's attempt to change the seating hierarchy.

#### **Question Four: Pursuing Possibilities**

The fourth question I posed was, "how do this teacher and these students *draw upon structures* to pursue possibilities for who they might become as a music teacher and students?" As I discussed in Chapter 2, identity negotiation is a process of strong structuration. In this section, I analyze the interactions of Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney surrounding Steve's decision to change the hierarchical seating structure as a process of strong structuration and identity negotiation. First, I outline the broad goals—desired

*outcomes*—the participants had for being in orchestra at San Lorenzo, and how they strategically prioritized their individual goals. Next, I summarize the chain of encounters that took place as Steve changed the seating from a hierarchical structure to a randomized structure, and connect the decisions the participants made and enacted through their *active agency* to the *internal* and *external* structures available to them, and to their desired *outcomes*. Finally, I examine the intended and unintended *actual outcomes* of their interactions, and discuss future possibilities open to the participants as a result.

### **Desired Outcomes**

As I briefly discussed above, I grouped the goals—which I use synonymously with desired outcomes and *intended outcomes*—of the participants into two broad categories: technical/musical goals, and personal/social goals. In this section, I explore these goals in more detail, and how the participants prioritized their goals. I begin with technical/musical goals, followed by personal/social goals.

**Technical/musical goals.** I grouped the participants' goals pertaining to performing or creating music on string instruments as technical/musical goals. I found two primary goals within this group: gaining technical proficiency on string instruments, and producing and presenting artistic products. While these two goals were closely related, the participants—Steve in particular—distinguished between these two goals and occasionally shifted the priority of these goals in their interactions.

*Technical proficiency.* All four participants discussed acquiring technical proficiency on string instruments as their main purpose for being in orchestra. From Steve's perspective, proper technique was the most important thing he could teach students. As he put it, "if you teach them technique, it's going to be better in the long run

for the music.” Based on his experiences, especially his extensive training in performing and teaching the traditional Western European orchestral tradition, Steve saw technical proficiency—proper posture, proper hand position, strong aural skills, strong standard notation reading skills, good tone quality—as the basis of musical independence later in life. In other words, if he could teach students to develop strong technical habits, he would enable them to continue performing on their instruments beyond high school. Steve’s prioritization of technique resonates with L’Roy’s (1983) finding that preservice teachers ranked “produce proficient performers” highly among a list of possible outcomes for music education.

For their part, the students also saw acquiring technical proficiency on viola as their most important goal, though they referred to it through various terms such as “knowing how to play,” “ability,” or “talent.” With the exception of vibrato—which was a specific technical goal for both Lena and Jack—the students focused on general individual improvement rather than on specific technical benchmarks. In other words, rather than striving to achieve different levels of technical proficiency codified in a formal set of benchmarks or curriculum document, the students felt that as long as they were climbing the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies, they were meeting this goal.

*Artistic production.* In addition to acquiring technical proficiency, Steve wanted students to be able to create “musical” performances. He used this as a catch-all term for what he viewed as learning “higher-order” artistic concepts such as dynamics, phrasing, articulation, and ensemble cohesion. For Steve, creating musical performances was closely related to technical proficiency: students needed to develop adequate technical

proficiency in order to properly execute artistic concepts. But Steve also recognized that if he or the students focused exclusively on learning technical concepts in isolation, they would never have the opportunity to apply that technique to artistic concepts. In other words, Steve needed to balance these two goals within the time constraints he had.

The students also wanted to make sure they produced musical performances, though they tended to focus on the accuracy of notes and rhythms as the primary criteria for whether a performance was musical. While none of the students spoke directly about this goal in detail, their discomfort with the seating change revealed some of their concerns regarding artistic production. All three students felt that concert seatings—unlike rehearsal seatings—should be rank-ordered. Even though she accepted the value of the randomized seating in rehearsal, Lena was concerned that if a weaker player ended up in first-chair for the concert, “people would be all over the place.” In other words, Lena was concerned that the randomized seating could potentially jeopardize the integrity of the performance. This indicated that the students acknowledged multiple technical/musical goals and shifted their priorities depending on their immediate context.

Notably, none of the participants mentioned formal curriculum documents or sets of codified standards that influenced how they set, prioritized, or measured technical/musical goals. As I mentioned above, this surprised me, given the prevalence of standards and standard-based performance in current American education discourse. But, as I also suggested above, this might be due to the Lorenzo administration’s loose monitoring of the arts curriculum. Steve based much of his understanding of technical/musical goals on his past experiences as a music learner, music teacher, and music performer. This resonates with the findings of traditional music education

socialization literature (Woodford, 2002) and Pellegrino's (2014) findings regarding string teachers' music making activities. Regardless of the source of these understandings, Steve knew the general technical/musical level he wanted students to obtain to be in each orchestra in the placement hierarchy. These generalized levels of technical ability, reflected by their position within the orchestra placement hierarchy, functioned as the goals for students in the absence of a codified curriculum.

**Personal/social goals.** I grouped the participants' goals pertaining to emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing together as personal/social goals. Each of the participants had slightly different personal/social goals in orchestra, though creating and maintaining a positive social environment in the orchestra program was a common thread that ran through the experiences of all four participants. I discuss this in addition to their unique personal/social goals below.

*Positive social environment.* Because he felt students could struggle with social development during adolescence, Steve felt it was important to create a positive and welcoming social environment in the orchestra program. He wanted the orchestra room to be a place students could "find a home in school where they could feel comfortable being themselves." To accomplish this, Steve worked hard to build a positive rapport with students: he allowed them to spend time in the orchestra room before and after school or during their free periods, engaged them in casual conversations about their lives outside orchestra, and integrated social activities like the Chamber retreat into the program to encourage students to build friendships and social connections. Steve also acknowledged that "some kids were there for the social [aspect]" in Concert Orchestra and accepted that as a legitimate reason to participate in orchestra, provided those students did not actively

inhibit the technical/musical goals of other students. Thus, Steve equally prioritized developing a positive social environment with his technical/musical goals for students.

The students, however, were mixed on the priority of the social environment in orchestra relative to their other goals. While Lena and Britney both had friend groups outside of orchestra, they felt that the positive social environment was an important part of the Lorenzo orchestra program. Jack, however, was satisfied with his social network outside of orchestra, and thus did not see making social connections in orchestra as a high priority. To be clear, Jack had friends in orchestra, and he felt that a positive social environment in orchestra was important. But because he had a strong friend group outside of orchestra, Jack did not need orchestra to be the primary means by which he built a social network. Thus, Jack's technical/musical goals took precedent in orchestra.

*Emotional regulation and recreation.* Lena spoke extensively about how performing on viola at home and in orchestra made her “feel sane.” Through playing viola, Lena learned to overcome shyness, fear, and anxiety, and felt that she was an overall “better person.” She credited her rapport with Steve, the positive social environment he had built in the Lorenzo orchestra program, and Jason—her private teacher—with helping her to do this. Britney had a similar experience. She noted that practicing viola at home made her feel happier, and though she did not notice it, her family told her that practicing viola “changed her” for the better each day. Both Lena's and Britney's experiences resonate with Nichols' (2013) and Kruse's (2013; 2016) findings that engaging in music can be an emotionally supportive and identity affirming activity for students.

But when Britney and Lena talked about viola as an emotional regulator, they primarily spoke about playing viola at home. And while participating in orchestra helped them develop the technical and musical skills they needed to play at home, emotional regulation was an extension of their participation in orchestra at school, not their priority in the group context. This contrasts with Gabriella's (Kruse, 2013) story, in that she primarily valued the school ensemble experience. And while Britney's and Lena's focus on individual music making as emotional regulation resonates with the stories of Rie (Nichols, 2013) and JJ (Kruse, 2016), both Rie and JJ primarily participated in individual music making because their marginalized sexual or racial identities inhibited them from participating in large-group musical activities in public schools. Neither Britney nor Lena discussed being marginalized in these ways. But the resonance in their experiences supports the idea that individual music performance can be an emotionally supportive and identity confirming experience for students.

Jack described the positive effect of playing in orchestra as recreation or leisure rather than emotional regulation. For him, orchestra was a place where he could "come in the morning and play [his] instrument and get on with the rest of [his] day." In other words, orchestra was a way for him to start his day right, a place where he could come to enjoy himself without worrying about meeting the demands of teachers or tests. He enjoyed learning new repertoire that posed challenges he had not encountered before, and liked the feeling of gradually overcoming those challenges. Jack's recreation goal, then, was closely connected with his technical/musical goals: learning new techniques and creating artistic products was enjoyable, as long as the challenges were within his reach and eventually surmountable.

## **The Structuration Process: Changing the Seating Hierarchy**

In this section, I walk through Steve's reasons for changing the seating hierarchy and the actions he took through *active agency* to make that change. I also discuss the perspectives of and corresponding *active agency* of the students regarding this change. Throughout this section, I integrate the language of strong structuration theory and identity, drawing on the various *structures* I outlined above.

Steve had two equally important sets of goals for himself and his students: increase students' technical/musical proficiency and create a positive social environment to support students' personal/social development. Steve had been largely successful in meeting these goals in his seven years at Lorenzo. He felt that the leveled hierarchy of three ability-based orchestras allowed him to more effectively tailor his instruction to students' needs. Most importantly, Steve had succeeded in shaping his students' expectations so that they now expected the same things he did from the program: they wanted to learn, they wanted a positive community, and they trusted that Steve would be able to help them meet those goals. In other words, Steve and the students had similar *conjuncturally-specific* expectations for who Steve was as a teacher—his *identity* as a teacher—who they were as students, and what the orchestra experience at Lorenzo should be. They also had similar *intended outcomes* for participating in the orchestra program.

But Steve still saw things he wanted to improve in the Lorenzo program. Because he believed that building students' technical proficiency would provide the foundation for their continued growth and participation in music, Steve felt he needed to maximize his technique instruction, and the best way he knew to do this was through individual instruction and personalized feedback. But the *external structures* governing scheduling

and academic priorities at Lorenzo limited his ability to schedule pull-out lessons with students, and he did not believe that Ac-Lab provided enough consistently available time for him to meet with all of his students. Steve knew that most of the students did not have the money to pay for private lessons, so he felt that it was his responsibility to provide that individualized instruction and feedback to all of the students in the Lorenzo program.

Steve began to consider changes he might make to the program to pursue this possibility. Performing fewer concerts might give him more opportunities to teach technique directly to individual students without worrying about preparing them to present performances every ten weeks, but Steve felt this possibility would cause more trouble than it was worth. The Lorenzo community had a *conjuncturally-specific* expectation that the orchestra would perform regular concerts, and getting rid of a performance would require Steve to convince his administrators, his colleagues, and the students and parents of the value of—in their minds—fewer opportunities for the students to share their learning. The last time Steve had attempted to change the concert routine by adding the Prism concert, he experienced strong resistance from students and parents, and the enrollment in the orchestra had dropped noticeably the next year. If adding an informal concert had caused students and parents to be angry with him, he imagined their reaction would be even worse if he eliminated a formal concert. And if the students and parents disliked his decision to drop a concert enough, the *external* structure of open enrollment enabled students to easily transfer to other local schools where the orchestra met their expectations. In other words, Steve felt that dropping a concert from the performance schedule posed too great a potential risk to the community he had built when compared to the potential benefit of increased individualized instruction time.

After attending a professional development conference and learning about alternative seating practices, Steve found a possible solution: restructure the rehearsal seating as a randomized rotation. Randomizing the seating every rehearsal would enable him to see different students in the front row every rehearsal. And when they sat in the front row, Steve could spend time giving them individualized feedback on their playing during that rehearsal. Within two weeks, he was likely to see every student in the front row at least once. As they randomly moved around the section, the students would also be able to hear the orchestra from multiple vantage points, further contributing to their ability to listen across the ensemble, and offering an additional opportunity to grow their technical/musical proficiency.

More importantly, eliminating the seating hierarchy was a possible solution to another problem Steve had struggled to solve. Steve had always believed ranked seating inhibited his desire to create a positive social environment. While first-chair status was an incentive to practice for some students, he did not like the competition it bred and he did not like the social stigma the students associated with lower chair ranks. Try as he might to offer students alternate explanations for their seating positions, Steve knew he was complicit in reinforcing the competitive atmosphere and stigmas every time he placed students within the ranked seating hierarchy. And if his goal was to create a community in which every student felt valued and safe, he counteracted that goal every time he placed a student in last-chair. Thus, Steve had been experiencing a tension in his *position* or *identity* as a music teacher: being a music teacher meant he needed to assess students and provide them with feedback, but doing so through the seating hierarchy violated his own expectation that music teachers should provide students with personal and social

support. In other words, by continuing to design the orchestra seating as a hierarchical structure, Steve felt he was *becoming* a music teacher that he no longer wanted to be.

By changing the seating hierarchy, then, Steve saw an opportunity to simultaneously pursue two desirable possibilities for himself and his students. He would be able to more efficiently provide substantive feedback to students, working toward his technical/music goals. He would also eliminate the last-chair stigma, working toward his personal/social goals. By altering the *conjuncturally-specific* seating structure in the Lorenzo orchestra program, Steve might be able to become what he saw as a more ideal music teacher: one who supported students' technical/musical growth *and* their personal/social growth.

Knowing that many of his students would be skeptical of what they saw as an unorthodox seating model, Steve foreshadowed the change he would make to the seating structure. He drew on his rapport with the students as a *power capacity* to convince them this would be a positive change, and that if they were willing to give it a chance, he believed they would soon see the benefits. As Steve predicted, Lena, Jack, and Britney initially had mixed feelings about the change. But the students trusted Steve, and they decided to go along with the seating change to see if his idea would work.

The students' discomfort with the seating change stemmed from their interpretation of the seating hierarchy as a form of feedback on their technical/musical goals. Because there was no *external* structure of a codified curriculum or published set of technical benchmarks to serve as measurable goals, and because of their *conjuncturally-specific* understanding of the low value of grades in orchestra, the most tangible evidence of technical improvement the students had was their position within the

seating and orchestra placement hierarchies. In their view, if they were placed in a higher seat than they sat for the previous concert, they must have improved their playing. This, in turn, forecast their likelihood of being placed in a higher orchestra for the next school year. In other words, their place within the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies functioned as *conjuncturally-specific* identity labels that helped them determine their *position* in the orchestra and their progress toward who they wanted to become as violists.

As they began to use the randomized seating on a regular basis, Steve continued to reinforce an *interpretive schema* from the traditional seating hierarchy by telling the students that whomever was sitting first-chair was the “leader for the day,” and that they needed to be prepared to lead the section for that rehearsal. Steve felt that this might provide all the students with a leadership opportunity, and incentivize them to practice so that they were always prepared to lead the section on any given day. But this argument did not resonate with the students’ *general-dispositional* meritocratic assumptions. If the person sitting first-chair had additional responsibilities, then it would be in the best interest of the orchestra to find the most capable individual and place them in first-chair full time. And if the most capable player did indeed bear additional responsibilities above and beyond the other players, they should be rewarded with the status of sitting first-chair, rather than having the label randomly assigned to individuals who had neither earned nor wanted that distinction and responsibility. In other words, the students interpreted Steve’s simultaneous elimination of the seating hierarchy and insistence on the responsibilities of the first-chair player as contradictory messages regarding the *identity* labels that applied to them in orchestra.

More importantly, while the students appreciated that it was no longer possible for them to be assigned the stigmatized last-chair label, the random seating disrupted how they gauged their progress on their goals. Without knowing where they ranked in the seating, the students felt they were unable to tell if their playing had improved since the last concert. And because they no longer knew who was sitting near the front of the section, Lena and Jack found it difficult to predict how likely they were to be promoted to Chamber Orchestra at the end of the year. In other words, they needed to find a new way to tell if they were *becoming* the kind of violists they wanted to be. Moreover, if the concert seating was randomized and a less-than-capable player was placed first-chair, the students worried that the integrity of their performance would be at risk, which worked against their goal to produce a well-refined artistic product.

But the more experience they had with the randomized seating, the more Steve, Britney, and Lena grew to appreciate the benefits. Steve was able to provide small doses of individualized feedback to the students in the front row, as he had hoped. He also found that some students in his Concert Orchestra—students who had always sat in the back of the orchestra—started to engage more in rehearsal. Their realization that they could make a positive contribution to the orchestra had galvanized them to practice more regularly. The possibility of sitting in the front row and leading their section for a day had indeed incentivized their technical/musical growth. In other words, Steve found that the seating change had produced the positive outcomes he *intended*. He felt that he was *becoming* more of the music teacher he wanted to be, and he believed many of the students who had previously been constrained by the seating hierarchy were able to pursue new possibilities for who they were *becoming* as string players.

Lena realized that the randomized seating allowed her to get to know people she had previously never sat with in rehearsal. This enabled her to build more social connections with people in her section, though she felt that she did not get to know her stand partner as well as when she had been sitting with them full-time. Chamber Orchestra already had a close social bond, so this benefit was not as prevalent for Britney. But, having sat near the front of the section for most of her school orchestra career, Britney noticed that sitting in the back changed her experience. She appreciated the ability to hear new perspectives, and believed this strengthened her ability to play in the group from wherever she was sitting. In other words, both Lena and Britney found positive *unintended outcomes*; though they had not foreseen these possibilities, they believed the randomized seating opened pathways for them to become violists and orchestra members in different ways.

Jack, however, remained skeptical of the randomized seating. He understood the purpose behind Steve's decision, but he was not interested in pursuing new social connections with his section members. Being randomly placed in first-chair seemed more of a burden to Jack than an opportunity. He had not earned his way to the top of the section, so why should he be expected to carry the responsibility of leading the section? In other words, Jack felt as if he was being assigned labels and expectations that did not resonate with his *self-concept*. Rather than act as an incentive, the possibility of having to carry out those responsibilities functioned as a new *sanction* for Jack—first-chair was now all responsibility and no reward. Although he might have wanted to become a first-chair violist, the randomized seating was not the pathway he wanted to follow to pursue

that possibility. He wanted to *earn* his seat, not have it *assigned* to him before he felt he was ready.

But none of this made Jack feel as though he should draw upon his *power capacity* to quit orchestra. As much as he wanted to know his standing relative to the other Symphony Orchestra viola players, it would only satisfy his curiosity. Even if he was ranked high enough, he would probably not be able to participate in Chamber Orchestra because of his limited time and financial capital as a *power capacities*. And in the grand scheme of Jack's life, pursuing the possibility of being in Chamber Orchestra and being a first-chair violist were secondary goals. He had other career and social goals that he was more interested in and more concerned about. Orchestra was something he did for fun, and the enjoyment he got from playing in the orchestra far outweighed the inconvenience of having to play first-chair every other week.

### **Unintended Outcomes**

Steve's decision to change the seating hierarchy accomplished many of the results he intended. He provided more regular individualized feedback to students, removed the last-chair stigma, empowered students who had previously been relegated to the back of the orchestra, and allowed students to experience playing in different parts of their section. Most of all, Steve eliminated the tension he experienced in his *position* as a music teacher; he felt that he was now more able to become the kind of music teacher he wanted to be. But his decision to change the seating hierarchy also had several consequences that neither Steve nor his students anticipated. By "unintended," I do not mean that these outcomes had a negative impact on the participants; I simply mean the participants did not plan for or foresee these outcomes to the seating change. Below, I

focus on five unintended outcomes—social environment, leadership, sanctions, feedback, and assessment—and discuss how they set the stage for continued encounters between Steve and the students.

**Social environment.** Both Lena and Britney found that by moving around the section, they had the opportunity to encounter and get to know more of their peers. But Lena and Jack felt that this randomization also prevented them from building a stronger relationship with a stand partner they would have had for many weeks at a time. In other words, while the randomized seating encouraged students to make *more* social connections, it may have also prevented them from making *deep* social connections. Neither Jack nor Lena saw this as a critical flaw in the randomized seating; they suggested that if they rotated less frequently—perhaps every other day—this might enable them to make deeper social connections and still gain the benefits of sitting with many different peers.

Additionally, while the randomized seating had eliminated the stigma on the last-chair player, it did not completely eliminate social comparison. Lena found that she was irritated when a weaker player that did not demonstrate the ability or desire to be a leader was seated in first-chair, an indication that Lena was not yet ready to abandon the meritocratic assumptions she held about seating positions. While the randomized seating no longer legitimized long-term labels such as “first-chair” and “last-chair,” it may have enabled short-term resentments among the students.

**Leadership.** As I mentioned above, the randomized seating introduced contradictory expectations into students’ *identity* label of “leader” and exacerbated an existing tension in how Steve and the students defined “leadership.” While Steve felt it

was beneficial for every student to be able to experience being the section leader, the students felt it was questionable to place a student into a leadership position who did not earn it. This was particularly important to the students for performances, when a lack of leadership in first-chair could potentially jeopardize the artistic product they presented. Thus, the randomized seating exposed a tension between two possibilities for Steve as a music teacher: giving students the opportunity to *earn a single* leadership position, and giving *all* students the opportunity to *experience* a leadership position.

**Sanctions.** While the randomized seating allowed Steve to remove the long-term social sanction against the last-chair player for each concert, he also opened the possibility of a new short-term social sanction against the first-chair player for each rehearsal. Some students, such as Lena and Britney, enjoyed sitting first-chair and the leadership opportunity it afforded. Jack, on the other hand, felt that sitting first-chair was a burden of responsibility he neither wanted nor earned. The rotating seating also meant that each student could, on any given day, be sitting directly underneath Steve's watchful eye. While Steve felt that this was a positive opportunity to give individualized feedback, Jack interpreted this as an opportunity for Steve to surveil him: if he did not practice regularly, Steve could catch him unprepared if he was sitting first-chair that day. Lena felt this possibility was a positive consequence, as it forced every student to take responsibility for practicing. Jack, however, felt this put undue pressure on him in an activity he primarily engaged in for personal enjoyment.

**Feedback.** One of Steve's primary goals for implementing the randomized seating was to be able to give individual verbal feedback to more students more frequently, a goal he was able to achieve. What he did not anticipate was that removing

the seating hierarchy eliminated a different form of feedback the students were already receiving: their comparative position within the hierarchy helped them to know if they were making long-term progress on their instrument, and helped them forecast their chances of being promoted to the next orchestra at the end of the year. In other words, while Steve could now give short-term verbal feedback to students, the students could no longer interpret their seating as long-term feedback. The difference in the nature of that feedback made this exchange acceptable to Steve. His verbal feedback was *individual* to that player; the seat-ranks were *comparative* feedback, pitting each student against the others without offering them detailed information on their individual proficiency. But this did not change the fact that from the students' perspective, they no longer felt that they could gauge their progress over multiple concerts or years. Thus, Steve now needed to find a new way to provide long-term feedback to students.

**Assessment.** By changing the seating structure, Steve inadvertently undermined the legitimacy of the playing tests, his primary form of assessment in orchestra. While he saw the playing tests as an opportunity to provide individual written feedback to the students, the randomized seating now offered a more regular means of providing that individual feedback as verbal comments. The randomized seating also, in the students' minds, eliminated the fundamental purpose of the playing tests: to be placed into the seating hierarchy. After the change to the randomized seating, the only distinguishing aspect of the playing tests for the students was the opportunity to receive a numeric grade. And this, in their minds, was only a potential negative sanction. A high grade on a playing test was next to meaningless because their grades in orchestra—from their perspective—were based primarily on attendance and participation. A low grade,

however, would lower their cumulative grade in a class that was supposed to be an easy-A. Thus, the randomized seating had removed the only potential reward students received from playing tests, and left only the possibility of sanction. Steve now needed to change his assessment structure in order to legitimize it with the students and meet the *external* mandate of the school district's grading policies.

### **Future Possibilities: Structuration Begins Again**

As Stones (2005) argued, the outcomes of one set of actions within a period of structuration become the conditions and structures that set the stage for the next round of structuration (p. 86). In this section, I explore possibilities open to Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney based on the outcomes of Steve's seating change, and speculate on potential paths they may be able to pursue. While my speculations are based on my conversations with the participants, I would like to emphasize that they are speculations—my own assumptions based on my analysis of the process of structuration I discussed above. My speculations do not necessarily reflect the intentions or plans of the participants, nor the actions they may or may not have taken since the end of my study.

**Goals.** Initially, each of the participants had resonant expectations for each other; they generally understood what the other participants wanted for themselves and the orchestra, understood how they fit within those various interpretive schemas, and acted accordingly. While the rapport Steve had built with the students facilitated this shared understanding, and while he frequently communicated *his* goals to students, he never explicitly asked students to communicate *their* goals to him. Given his desire to provide students with individualized feedback, knowing students' goals might improve Steve's ability to tailor his instruction to individual students. Steve was in the process of

formulating plans to do this: he considered plans to open individual conversations with students on Canvas about their technical/musical goals and was preparing to implement the rubric he and his colleagues had developed in their PLC. But might Steve also ask students to outline their personal/social goals? Knowing their specific personal/social goals and how the students prioritized those goals relative to their technical/musical goals might have helped Steve anticipate some of the outcomes of the seating hierarchy change. It might also help him to make other future decisions, such as how to integrate social activities like the Chamber retreat into the program.

**Social development.** If Steve found that students prioritized personal/social goals in addition to technical/musical goals the same way he did—which Britney and Lena indicated could be likely—he might consider the possibility of expanding the social activities offered to the orchestras. The retreat Steve hosted for Chamber Orchestra was an exclusive experience that benefitted the students both socially and musically. Creating similar opportunities for Symphony and Concert Orchestra might expand Steve’s ability to reach his personal/social goals for students. But pursuing this possibility might also decrease the social prestige of Chamber Orchestra. Thus, to pursue this possibility, Steve might need to consider additional changes to preserve the comparative status of Chamber Orchestra while creating new opportunities for Symphony and Concert Orchestra.

**Orchestra hierarchy.** To completely eliminate the possibility of issuing social sanctions to students, Steve might consider eliminating the orchestra hierarchy. This would remove the social stigma against students in the “lower” orchestras. But Steve felt this possibility would constrain too many of his technical/musical goals to warrant the potential personal/social benefits. The orchestra hierarchy allowed him to program

repertoire that addressed the potential needs of narrower ranges of technical proficiencies, which made his technique instruction more efficient. And while he felt that the orchestra hierarchy could potentially stigmatize the Concert Orchestra students, Steve felt that his other methods of providing a positive social environment—building a rapport with students—counteracted the stigma enough to justify preserving the social status that came with Chamber Orchestra. Thus, changing the orchestra hierarchy would be a remote possibility.

**Seating.** Lena, Jack, and Britney eventually accepted the pedagogical purpose behind the randomized seating structure. But they remained skeptical about using the randomized seating for the concert performances because they felt having a strong leader in first-chair was an important enabler for a quality performance. Unbeknownst to the students, Steve had strategically moved stronger players into the front row for the winter concert, but left the remainder of the section randomized. Even though he made this decision without the students' knowledge, he most likely had the rapport with the students to make this decision openly. The students trusted Steve enough to accept his professional judgement of technical proficiency without the need to legitimize that judgement through a quantitative evaluation such as a playing test.

But this opens another possibility that the students had also considered: randomizing rehearsal seatings, then using playing tests to rank-order the concert seating. Pursuing this possibility might mitigate the students' concerns regarding performance integrity, and might reconcile a degree of the tension surrounding what it meant to be a "leader." This alternative would once again legitimize and incentivize the importance of first-chair and leadership with a degree of social status. But it would also reinstate the

sanction of last-chair, if only for a brief period of time. To pursue this possibility, Steve would need to carefully consider if the potential benefit of openly acknowledging leadership and performance integrity would be worth reviving the short-term sanction against last-chair.

**Assessment.** The most substantial unanticipated outcome of the process of structuration I discussed was the effect on Steve's assessment structures. While the seating change enabled him to give individualized short-term feedback, he had eliminated what the students saw as long-term feedback and undermined his primary means of assessment. Steve began planning more changes to address these gaps. Rather than design his primary assessments as formal, quarterly playing exams, Steve considered more frequent, less formal playing tests. Students could submit videos of themselves playing every few weeks on Canvas, and Steve could use the new rubric to efficiently provide detailed individual feedback on these videos. This would enable him to provide specific individual feedback, conduct quantitative assessments he could submit as grades, build a consistent record of feedback his students could look at over the long-term, and reduce students' anxiety surrounding the previous high-stakes playing tests.

To pursue this possibility, however, Steve would need to overcome several obstacles, three of which I will highlight here. First, watching and grading 110 student videos every two to three weeks would require an enormous time investment, and finding this additional time in Steve's schedule would be a significant challenge. Second, the students would need to accept the idea of more frequent assessments. As long as the mode of assessment was private, Lena was open to exploring alternative possibilities to playing tests. Jack thought that less formal, more frequent assessments were preferable to

high-stakes playing tests, even if he needed to publicly perform as a pair with his stand partner in orchestra.

Third, and perhaps most challenging, Steve would need to change his students' attitudes toward assessment in orchestra. He recognized that the changes he was considering for the playing tests would require a "culture shift" in his program; he knew that he and his students had fundamentally different *general-dispositional* structures regarding assessment, as I discussed above. For his planned changes to be successful, Steve would need to somehow convince the students to change their *general-dispositional* structures linking assessment to systems of rewards and sanctions, or help them formulate new *conjuncturally-specific* structures that defined assessment in orchestra as an explicit exception to their *general-dispositional* structures regarding the purpose of assessment. Although Steve had strong *power capacities*—time and rapport—available to him to attempt to pursue this possibility, the influence of national assessment discourses as *external* structures would be substantial obstacles to achieving this *intended outcome*.

The challenge Steve faced to change the students' *general-dispositional* structures regarding assessment is reminiscent of the concerns Kohn (1993) raised in his analysis and critique of what he called "pop behaviorism." In the psychological literature he reviewed, Kohn found evidence that the effect of incentive programs—such as grades—disappeared once rewards were removed; the behavior the incentive was meant to encourage was based mostly on *extrinsic* rewards rather than *intrinsic* motivation. In this case, once Steve removed the seat rank reward for their performance on the playing tests, the students failed to see the purpose of the test. In other words, the students believed the

purpose of the assessment was to legitimize the distribution of an *extrinsic* reward, and no longer felt the need to practice for the test in the absence of that reward. Despite Kohn's concerns, the current discourse surrounding the purpose of educational assessment in the United States does not appear to be changing. Tyner and Petrilli (2018), for example, recently argued that an essential function of assessment was to provide an extrinsic motivator for students in order to "hold them accountable." Thus, Steve was likely to experience continued resistance from *external* structures in his attempt to change his students' *internal* structures.

#### **Question Four Summary**

Music education researchers interested in examining how a music teacher is *becoming* a music teacher can use the process of structuration as lens to interpret how that music teacher negotiates and reconciles expectations and contextual structures with their own understandings to pursue possibilities for themselves as a music teacher—the final goal for music teacher identity research I outlined in Chapter 1. Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney each participated in the orchestra program at Lorenzo for different reasons, but I was able to group their reasons for participating into two general categories: technical/musical goals, and personal/social goals. Each of the participants was satisfied with their goals and the possibilities they were pursuing when I first began working with them. But Steve had become increasingly dissatisfied with the limited individual feedback he gave to students on a regular basis, and he was uncomfortable with the music teacher he was *becoming* when he placed students into the seating hierarchy.

In order to redirect his *becoming* as a music teacher, Steve decided to change the seating hierarchy. He felt that this change made an immediate positive impact on who he

was as a teacher, and on who his students were as musical learners. Steve provided more frequent personalized feedback to students, he removed the social stigmas of low-chair ranks, gave all of his students the opportunity to be a leader, and inspired some students to pursue new possibilities for themselves in orchestra. While Lena, Jack, and Britney felt some of these new possibilities were desirable, Steve's removal of the seating hierarchy disrupted their understandings of who they were as orchestra members relative to others, how they understood who they were *becoming* as violists, and confounded their ideas regarding leadership and assessment in orchestra. But despite their initial discomfort with the new seating model, Lena, Jack, and Britney each believed that being in orchestra at Lorenzo was something they would continue to pursue.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this section, I briefly summarize my findings and interpretation using the language of identity and strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005). The *external* structures of open enrollment, college and career readiness, scheduling policies, and assessment policies shaped the social context in which the participants interacted and negotiated their identities. The participants had similar *conjuncturally-specific* understandings of who they were, who others were, and what they did in orchestra.

Steve had two equally important sets of goals that described his *position* as an orchestra teacher: guide students' technical/musical growth, and provide students with personal/social support. He derived these goals from his past experience and his *general-dispositional* structure surrounding adolescent development. Each time he assessed students and placed them within the orchestra's seating hierarchy, Steve experienced a tension in his *position* or *identity* as a music teacher. He felt that even though he was

providing students with feedback on their technical/musical growth, he was personally/socially sanctioning some students by placing them in last-chair. To relieve this tension, Steve drew on his rapport with students as a *power capacity* to change the seating from a hierarchical structure to a randomized structure.

Based on their *general-dispositional* structures regarding meritocracy and the purpose of assessment, Lena, Jack, and Britney were initially skeptical of Steve's plan. But because they trusted Steve, they decided to comply with his decision. Steve's continued insistence that the first-chair player was the "leader for the day" conflicted with the students' *general-dispositional* structures regarding leadership and meritocracy, and this disrupted the *conjuncturally-specific identity* labels they used to understand who they were and what they did in orchestra. But as they continued to participate in the randomized seating over time, each of the students felt that the beneficial *outcomes* they experienced from being in orchestra outweighed the negative *outcomes* of Steve's decision to change the seating.

The seating change, however, resulted in some *unintended* outcomes. By removing the first-chair reward from the playing tests, Steve delegitimized his primary form of assessment. In order to meet the *external* grading policies, Steve would need to change his assessment structures, which would likely mean attempting to change the students' *general-dispositional* structures regarding the purpose of assessment. This was likely to be Steve's next process of structuration.

## CHAPTER 6

### POSSIBILITIES FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

This document represents my attempt to understand more about music teachers' identities: who music teachers are, and how they are *becoming* music teachers together with their students. In the previous five chapters, I reviewed traditional literature on music teacher identity, outlined the problems and opportunities I saw in this field, and reinterpreted select studies through strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) to inform my study. Then, I outlined the methodology that guided my inquiry, describing the *bricolage* of case study, ethnographic, and narrative methods I used to investigate this phenomenon. Finally, I presented a narrative of a veteran orchestra teacher and three of his students as they mutually negotiated their identities, and interpreted that narrative using strong structuration theory. In this chapter, I discuss possibilities for music education and music teacher education based on my findings. I begin by providing a brief summary of my research. Then, I discuss implications of my findings for music education and music teacher education practice. Finally, I review both practical and theoretical limitations of my study, and possibilities for future research.

#### **Summary of This Study**

Music teacher education is a process of shaping identities. Thus, it is crucial that music teacher educators understand how music teachers negotiate their identities as music teachers. The traditional frames of *role* and *socialization* that guided previous investigations of music teacher identity have normative underpinnings that, when left unexamined, can frame identity negotiation as the acquisition of normative traits and characteristics. *Becoming*—continual pursuit of possibilities for being in the world—is an

alternative framework that positions music teacher identity negotiation as a continual process that does not have a normative pathway or endpoint.

Previous researchers documented that music teachers negotiate their identities throughout their career (e.g., Abramo & Austin, 2014; Gray, 2011; Natale-Abramo, 2014), but none of these studies examined identity negotiation from the perspective of both music teachers *and* their students. Assuming that music teachers and students negotiate their identities through the same interactions, how do music teachers and students together shape their social context and continually pursue possibilities for who they are becoming? I conducted an instrumental case study to explore the encounters of one veteran orchestra teacher—Steve—with three of his students—Lena, Jack, and Britney—to understand how they negotiated their identities together and pursued possibilities for who they were *becoming*. I used ethnographic (Kruger, 2014) and narrative (Stauffer, 2014) techniques to generate data over a period of approximately four months, and used strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005) as a theoretical lens to organize and explore my findings.

The *external* structures of open enrollment, college and career readiness, scheduling policies, and assessment policies shaped the social context of the encounters between the participants. Initially, the participants had congruent expectations of who they were and what they did in orchestra. Steve had two equally important sets of goals that described his *position* as an orchestra teacher: guide students' technical/musical growth and provide students with personal/social support. Each time he assessed students with playing tests and placed them within the orchestra's seating hierarchy, Steve experienced a tension in his *position* or *identity* as a music teacher. He was providing

feedback to students as a technical/musical instructor, but he felt he was issuing some students a social sanction by placing them in last-chair. This conflicted with his *position* as a personal/social supporter. Thus, Steve was uncomfortable with the music teacher he was *becoming* when he enacted these conflicting expectations. To relieve this tension in his *identity*, Steve changed the orchestra seating structure from a hierarchical-ranked structure to a randomized-rotating structure. This allowed Steve to provide individualized feedback to students as they rotated into the front row without issuing social sanctions, and reconciled the tension in Steve's *identity* as a music teacher.

But this structural change also disrupted some of the students' *identities* as musicians. Because of their underlying meritocratic assumptions and their lack of a codified set of benchmarks as goals, the students interpreted their placement in the seating hierarchy as feedback on their musical progress. Without this hierarchy, the students could no longer gauge "where they stood" in their progress toward who they wanted to become as musicians. Additionally, Steve's continued insistence that the student sitting in first-chair was the "leader for the day" blended an element of the old hierarchical seating with the new randomized structure in ways that conflicted with the students' understandings of meritocracy and leadership. In other words, Steve's changes sent contradictory messages to the students on how they should apply "leader" as an *identity* label to themselves and others in orchestra.

But as they continued to participate in the randomized seating over time, the participants each found that the beneficial *outcomes* they experienced from being in orchestra outweighed the negative *outcomes* of Steve's decision to change the seating. The seating change also resulted in *unintended* outcomes the participants would

encounter as they continued to pursue possibilities for themselves. By decoupling his feedback and the students' seating placements from the playing tests, Steve delegitimized his primary form of assessment. In order to meet the school's grading policy expectations, Steve would need to change his assessment structures. This would mean attempting to change the students' *general-dispositional* views regarding the purpose of assessment.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

Based on my findings and interpretations, I will discuss implications for music teachers and music teacher educators to consider in their future practice on five topics—social justice in music education, music teacher education curricula, professional development for music teachers, goals and resistance to change in music education, and assessment in music education.

#### **Social Justice**

The findings of my study supplement and expand upon Yi's (2018) findings regarding social justice and alternative seating practices in secondary orchestras. Yi's primary motivation for introducing a randomized-rotating seating structure into her orchestra program was to flatten a hierarchy that amplified socioeconomic differences between students who could afford private lessons and those who could not. Based on her findings, she recommended alternative seating practices as a productive means of pursuing social justice in secondary orchestras. Jack's experiences initially seemed to support Yi's conclusions, as his comparatively limited *power capacities*—particularly financial capital and time—constrained him from climbing the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies at Lorenzo in the same ways Lena or Britney could.

But of the three students that participated in my study, Jack consistently *disliked* the seating change the most. In other words, the person who, from a social justice perspective, should have benefitted the most from this change was the person who most opposed the change. Sitting in and enacting the responsibilities of first-chair was not a goal Jack aspired to meet, and having to sit in that position when he had not earned it was more of a burden for Jack than an opportunity. This finding complicates Yi's conclusions. While alternative seating practices *may* be a means to pursue social justice in secondary orchestras, students will likely interpret the effects of alternative seating practices relative to their specific purposes and goals for participating in orchestra.

This finding likely applies to any given structure in music education programs. Music educators interested in changing structures to pursue social justice should thoroughly examine those structures not only from their perspective, but from their *students'* perspectives as well. Understanding how students regard the structures in question may help music educators to make changes that better preserve enabling aspects of the structures while eliminating constraining elements. It might also help music educators plan how they might convince students to adopt social justice as a possible goal in music education settings.

### **Music Teacher Education Curricula**

As I argued in Chapter 1, research investigating music teacher identities within the *role* and *socialization* frames can inform music teacher education curricula by generating lists of normative knowledge and skills preservice music teachers must acquire or master. This, in turn, aids the standardization and efficiency of music teacher education. Dall'Alba (2009) noted that this prioritization of knowledge and skill

acquisition is a common characteristic of teacher education curricula in general. But while knowledge and skills are valuable information for preservice teachers, they are “insufficient for skillful practice and for the transformation of the self that is integral to achieving such practice” (p. 34). Steve’s experiences resonate with and support Dall’Alba’s argument. While the randomized seating structure initially appealed to his desire to provide more individualized feedback to students, Steve ultimately made his decision to change the seating plan based on who he believed he was *becoming* as a music teacher, and how he believed he was shaping who his students were *becoming* as musicians. In other words, Steve acted to transform himself into the kind of teacher he more readily wanted to become, knowing that his decision was in tension with his prior knowledge of teaching strings in public school settings, and in tension with his students’ assumptions about what orchestra was supposed to be at Lorenzo.

To prepare preservice music teachers for these “transformations of selves,” Dall’Alba urged teacher educators to have preservice teachers “interrogate what [they] take for granted about [their] world and [them]selves,” in addition to teaching specific competencies (p. 37). Music teacher educators frequently offer opportunities for preservice teachers to experience “authentic contexts” (e.g., Haston & Russell, 2012; Paul et al., 2001; Powell, 2011) to practice executing competencies. In conjunction with these authentic context experiences, music teacher educators might ask preservice teachers to critically reflect on the social contexts of those experiences, how those experiences resonate with or are in tension with their assumptions about music teaching and learning, and potential explanations for those resonances and tensions (for examples of research on reflections in music teacher education, see Henninger & Scott, 2010;

Silveira, Beauregard, & Bull, 2017). Such reflections could illuminate ambiguities in meaning that might open preservice music teachers to new possibilities for who they might become as music teachers, and prepare them for subsequent *identity* negotiations and *becoming* later in their careers.

But music teacher educators should be wary of implementing these reflections in ways that reinforce normative structures in music education. Dall'Alba's (2009) purpose for asking preservice teachers to interrogate their own assumptions was to open new possibilities for their *becoming*, not to identify areas into which preservice teachers must be properly *socialized* by teacher educators. Instead, music teacher educators might encourage preservice music teachers to investigate normative structures that define music education in their specific contexts. For example, while Steve's decision to change the seating hierarchy challenged one of the assumptions he and his students had regarding what orchestra was supposed to be, he and his students stayed within the boundaries of many other normative assumptions that define orchestra in American public schools. What might have been possible if Steve had challenged the necessity of concert performances at Lorenzo? What might have been possible if Steve had looked beyond the large ensemble as a mode for students to engage with music on string instruments? While these questions may or may not have opened desirable possibilities for Steve and the students at Lorenzo, preparing music teachers to ask these questions may indeed open possibilities in contexts where new possibilities are warranted or desired.

### **Professional Development**

If music teacher educators wish to prepare preservice music teachers to continually interrogate their assumptions and pursue possibilities for who they are

*becoming* within different contexts, music education researchers need to consider professional development—inservice learning—opportunities that support music teachers' *becomings* throughout their careers. In this case, Steve's district placed teachers within professional learning communities, and his PLC guided Steve's thinking about assessment tools and procedures. Steve's experiences resonate with Sindberg's (2016) findings regarding seven teachers that participated in a professional learning community she facilitated for two years. She found that the PLC served as the bridge between participants' knowledge of teaching and the changes they implemented in their practice (p. 212). The participants also felt that Sindberg provided valuable insight as a music education researcher and the facilitator of the group—they asked her to continue facilitating the PLC for two additional years. Together, Sindberg's findings and Steve's experiences suggest that music education researchers might explore opportunities to build continuing connections with practicing teachers as a means of supporting music teachers' continual *identity* negotiations and *becomings* through inservice learning.

### **Goals and Resistance**

Steve's experiences in this study indicate that if music teachers imagine new possibilities for who they are *becoming* as music teachers, they may encounter resistance when they attempt to pursue those possibilities. Indeed, if music teacher educators assume that music teachers have agency to pursue possibilities for themselves, they must also assume that others have agency to pursue alternate possibilities that may not resonate with the possibilities music teachers see as desirable. If this is the case, music teacher educators should prepare preservice teachers to think through and negotiate those resistances. In other words, music teacher educators need to help preservice teachers

establish and clarify their goals—their *desired outcomes*—for teaching music, and prepare them to investigate possible goals that others in their contexts, especially students, might have. Incorporating interviews and reflections about student goals into field experiences may be a productive means of encouraging preservice teachers to begin such investigations.

In all likelihood, asking students to articulate their *desired outcomes* for participating in music will reveal a plurality of potential outcomes. If this is the case, music teachers might explore ways to coach students on setting individual learning goals, to differentiate their instruction for students' individualized goals, and to measure progress and provide feedback on students' individualized goals. Music teacher educators, then, should introduce preservice music teachers to diverse methods and techniques for student goal setting, differentiated instruction, and assessment; and lead discussions and explorations around how music teachers might make decisions regarding the potential plurality of student goals and possibilities they will encounter.

Enacting individualized goal-setting and instruction plans poses significant challenges for music teachers, two of which I will briefly address here. First, the *power capacities* needed to implement individualized instructional systems—particularly time—may preclude some music teachers from doing so. Music education researchers have developed a significant body of literature that examines how to make efficient or effective use of group instructional time or individual practice time (e.g., Austin & Berg, 2006; Geringer, MacLeod, & Lofdahl, 2015; Leon-Guerrero, 2008; Miksza, 2007). These studies, however, assume that the goals music teachers and students are pursuing align with traditional performance goals. I was unable to find a study that examined

instructional or practice efficiency toward context-specific, student-generated goals. This, however, would be a difficult study to design, given that different goals would have different definitions and measures of efficiency. Rather, the question of time as a *power capacity* in relation to individualized instruction and goal-setting plans may be one of instructional *prioritization* rather than instructional *efficiency*. If this is the case, music teacher educators and researchers might examine ways in which music teachers make strategic decisions regarding how they prioritize their goals and instructional activities, particularly in settings where music teachers have attempted to individualize their instruction to individual students' goals and needs.

A second challenge regarding individual goal-setting and instructional plans is negotiating *external* structures, such as curricula or standards, that mandate particular goals as higher priorities. Steve did not reference a curriculum or standardized set of benchmarks that guided his goal setting in this study, and other music teachers may encounter more resistance from supervisors or colleagues that insist on adherence to particular *external* structures than did Steve. But while standardized benchmarks or curricula—in both music education practice and music teacher education—can be *external* structures that reinforce normative goals as higher priorities, the absence of codified goals or outcomes led the students at Lorenzo to use comparative seating as the primary means of gauging their learning instead of their individually measured progress toward a fixed benchmark. Establishing and codifying standardized benchmarks may have helped Steve to more efficiently provide feedback on students' individual *progress*. But this would have also undermined an attempt to prioritize students' individual *goals* for learning.

Thus, there are tensions between the need for music teachers to establish clear goals and use their instructional time efficiently, and the need for music teachers to differentiate their instruction and empower students to set their own learning goals. Music teacher educators should directly address the tensions between standardized and individualized instruction with preservice teachers, and help them to think through these tensions in their field experiences.

### **Assessment**

Once they establish their desired goals and outcomes, music teachers need to carefully consider how they will measure progress toward those goals, how they will provide formative feedback to students as they pursue those goals, and how they will report summative evaluations on how students met those goals. In this study, the *manner* of feedback was a central concern; the students focused on seating and orchestra placements as feedback, whereas Steve focused on his written and verbal comments as feedback. In order to preempt this kind of confusion, music teachers might have explicit conversations with students about 1) the purpose of assessments—what goals the teacher will measure; 2) the mode of assessments—how students will demonstrate learning and the metric the teacher will use; and 3) the results of assessments—the feedback, rewards, and/or sanctions students will receive. Doing so might reveal how students prioritize their goals, and the types of feedback students feel would be valuable and productive for them to reach those goals. Music teacher educators might help prepare preservice music teachers to have these conversations by introducing them to a variety of assessment and feedback strategies, and assessment policies they may encounter in their future profession.

## **Limitations**

Although my investigation and findings allowed me to discuss the four research questions I posed, my study also had limitations. In this section, I will first discuss three technical limitations to my study. Then, I will discuss the theoretical limitations of strong structuration theory and tensions of using this theory in conjunction with qualitative methods.

### **Technical Limitations**

I identified three technical or logistical limitations to this study. First, as with all studies working from qualitative paradigms, the results of my study are not generalizable to other contexts. Even within the orchestra program at San Lorenzo, I only spoke with three out of the 110 students who participate. While readers and I are not able to generalize the experiences of Steve, Lena, Jack, and Britney to the other members of the Lorenzo orchestra program or to other orchestra programs and settings, the questions I was able to raise based on their experiences might guide further investigations into the experiences of other participants in other programs.

Second, the student participants in this study all played viola. While this is not inherently problematic, it did not allow me to describe the experiences of students in other sections. The social dynamics of seat-ranking within those sections may have been different than the viola section. Additionally, orchestras working within the Western European orchestral tradition generally have two sections of violins: first and second violins. This is an additional hierarchical structure that I was unable to explore through the experiences of these student participants.

Third, none of the participants in this study were active members of Concert Orchestra, the lowest group in the orchestra placement hierarchy. Each of the student participants knew other students who were in Concert Orchestra, and Lena had previously played in Concert Orchestra, but I was unable to describe the Concert Orchestra students' experiences with the seating hierarchy change. These experiences may have been different from Jack's and Lena's experiences in Symphony Orchestra, or from Britney's in Chamber Orchestra.

### **Theoretical Limitations**

Although I found strong structuration theory to be a fruitful means of organizing my findings, interpretations, and discussion in this study, I experienced some challenges while using the theory as an interpretive lens. I will briefly discuss three of these interpretive challenges. Then, I will discuss a broader tension embedded in the language of strong structuration theory, and how that tension was present in my inquiry.

**Interpretive challenges.** The first interpretive challenge I experienced was how to categorize *external* structures. While the difference between *independent causal influences* and *irresistible causal forces* is the degree of agency an individual believes they have relative to the structure in question, this distinction leaves open a great deal of interpretive latitude which can have important consequences for how a researcher conceptualizes the *agency* of the individuals in question. For example, I decided to categorize the open enrollment policies in Arizona as *independent causal influences*. From my perspective, Steve and the students had little chance to change this statewide policy that had been in effect for nearly 25 years. But that does not mean they could not *attempt* to change this policy. If they organized a political action group and petitioned the

state government, Steve and the students could have exercised agency that may have changed this policy. Again, this was highly unlikely from my perspective as a researcher. But if this had been the case, open enrollment might have been an *irresistible causal force* because the individuals in question *did* have a pathway to exercise agency. From an interpretive standpoint, how much evidence of agency or probability of success in achieving an intended outcome must an agent have relative to a structure for a researcher to categorize said structure as an *independent causal influence* or an *irresistible causal force*? What criteria should researchers use to make such a decision?

The second interpretive challenge I encountered was my inclination to place some structures into multiple categories. Assessment posed a particular challenge for me in my analysis. There were some elements of assessment that I categorized as *external* to the participants, such as state or district policies. But I also categorized some elements of assessment as *internal general-dispositional* structures, such as the participants' general beliefs surrounding the purpose of assessment in general. And I categorized still more elements of assessment as *internal conjuncturally-specific* structures because they were the participants' specific understandings of how they enacted assessment in orchestra at San Lorenzo High School. My struggle to adequately account for the complexity of assessment in this study suggests that strong structuration theory may oversimplify analytic interpretations by necessitating that researchers separate and categorize different aspects of multi-faceted phenomena.

I encountered a similar obstacle—my third interpretive challenge—in my discussion of goals and intentions. While I was able to discuss the complexity of Steve's intentions as a single individual, I began to reduce and simplify the goals and intentions

of Lena, Jack, and Britney to fit them together as representative of the collective goals of the students. Students—including Lena, Jack, and Britney—each participate in orchestra and find meaning in their musical experiences for a variety of complex reasons.

Inevitably—reminiscent of my critique of quantitative methods to investigate identity negotiation in Chapter 1—the complexity of these meanings gets lost when researchers attempt to aggregate them into a single representative collection, as I did in this case.

This suggests that strong structuration theory may lead researchers to simplify the motives, goals, and intentions of heterogeneous or pluralistic groups of agents.

These three challenges suggest that there is an underlying and unresolved tension within strong structuration theory. Stones (2005) advocated for researchers to apply strong structuration theory to “*in-situ* questions about the hermeneutics of agents in combination with structural diagnostics” (p. 117, emphasis in original), which implies that researchers deploying strong structuration theory should design their investigations around qualitative rather than quantitative methods. But if strong structuration theory leads researchers to be overly reductive, as I suggested in my discussion of interpretive challenges, the results of the eventual analysis will contradict the paradigms that underpin qualitative—particularly narrative—approaches to research, especially the assumption that qualitative researchers examine complex and multi-faceted phenomena as their object of study. Thus, music education researchers considering strong structuration theory as an interpretive lens must carefully examine their epistemological assumptions; consider how their assumptions resonate with or are in tension with assumptions embedded within the theory and their chosen methods; and make concerted efforts to avoid overly reductive analyses.

**Tensions in language.** If the strength of strong structuration theory—in this case—was that it illuminated how music teachers and students could pursue possibilities for themselves within a dynamic social environment, the weakness was that the language of the theory could lead readers to attribute social change to structures rather than to the agents themselves. Indeed, Stones’ (2005) category of *external* structures—structures over which an agent has no control—is almost antithetical to Giddens’ (1984) assertions that “structure is not ‘external’ to individuals” (p. 25), and that “structure has no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity” (p. 26). The language of *external* structures, then, encourages what Giddens called a “reified discourse” in which “the ‘facticity’ [of] social phenomena confront individual actors in such a way as to ignore how they are produced and reproduced through human agency” (p. 180).

To a certain degree, even the broader language of *structures* aids and abets the creation of a reified discourse. The term *structure* calls to mind a physical entity with material substance that can limit, restrict, or guide an agent in what they do. Researchers and analysts can easily—perhaps unknowingly—slip into language that attributes change or social action to *structures* rather than to *agents*. For example, I often struggled to depict how the participants understood themselves and their situation without implying that *the structures positioned* the agents, or that *the structures caused* participants to take a specific action. Perhaps, as Stones (2005) suggested with regard to the term *rules*, *schemas* might be a more appropriate term for *structures* in general, as it more readily invokes psychological schemas and understandings rather than material objects.

But, as Stones (2005) pointed out, there are times when agents *believe*—within their hermeneutic frame—that a *schema*, *structure*, or *rule* constrains them from pursuing a course of action independent of an agent that embodies or enacts that *schema*, *structure*, or *rule*. For example, when Jack discussed his comfort level with the seating hierarchy—and his corresponding discomfort with the randomized seating plan—he justified his feelings by saying that the hierarchy was “what we’re used to . . . so changing it now would be different from it always being like that.” In other words, Jack seemed to attribute his affinity for the hierarchical seating to tradition as an abstract entity, as if tradition could act to shape his beliefs and experiences independent of Steve or the other students that enacted that tradition. To avoid perpetuating a reified discourse that frames structures as independent entities with agency unto themselves, researchers might pair strong structuration theory with methods informed by critical or emancipatory approaches (e.g., Freire, 1970) to both identify and critically examine the structures agents encounter.

### **Paths for Future Research**

My findings and experiences in this study opened additional questions and opportunities for research. I will discuss seven of these opportunities here. First, repertoire emerged as a complex phenomenon that I chose not to address in this study because it was not directly related to Steve’s decision to change the seating hierarchy. Repertoire simultaneously functioned as (a) a *power capacity* for Steve and the students to reach their intended *outcomes*, (b) *interpretive schemas* for students’ technical proficiency and the levels of the orchestra placement hierarchy, and (c) an *identity* label for students. Exploring this phenomenon from a strong structuration perspective might provide valuable insight for music teacher educators and practicing music teachers.

Second, the students' abilities to generate or acquire technical proficiency as a *power capacity* was often contingent on their access to other opportunities or *power capacities*. But technical proficiency was also one of the means by which students gained access to those other opportunities. For example, Steve arranged for Chamber Orchestra to participate in a residency with a professional string quartet, and this gave Chamber Orchestra students an extra opportunity to refine their technical proficiency. But in order to access this opportunity, students needed to demonstrate a higher degree of technical proficiency in the first place. A closer examination of technical proficiency as a currency, and how *power capacities* and opportunities may be self-reinforcing for students in music performing ensembles, may be valuable contributions to discussions surrounding social justice in music education.

Third, Steve may not have pursued the possibility of changing the seating hierarchy as readily if he had been able to offer pull-out lessons. As I noted in Chapter 5, much of the research on pull-out instruction in instrumental music education was conducted before the current climate of high-stakes testing and accountability in American education. Additional research on the status and effects of pull-out instruction in music education may be valuable if music teachers wish to pursue it as an instructional possibility.

Fourth, the participants had a complex and somewhat contradictory view of playing tests as a mode of assessment. Each of the participants viewed the playing tests as a "necessary evil," an important means of measuring and evaluating the students' progress toward their goals and placing them within meritocratic hierarchies. But they also seemed to question the validity and reliability of the playing tests. Each participant

expressed some variation on the theme that the playing tests, while necessary to measure student learning, did not and could not adequately measure that learning. Exploring the complexity of music teachers' and music students' reliance on and mistrust of assessment methods in music education might have implications for future practice.

Fifth, as I noted in Chapter 5, "leadership" was an ambiguous term for the participants in this study. Most of the music education literature surrounding leadership discusses ways music teachers might provide leadership opportunities for students, and ways for music teachers to become effective leaders. I was unable to find a study that systematically explored various manifestations of and possibilities for "leadership" in music education. This may be an area music education researchers could explore to provide direction to discussions surrounding student "leadership" in music education.

Sixth, in addition to their positions within the seating and orchestra placement hierarchies, Steve and the students used a number of labels as *interpretive schemas* to understand who students were and what they did in orchestra. Examples included being an "orchestra council" member, being someone who "took orchestra seriously," and being someone who was "just there for the credit." Exploring the connections and tensions within this network of *interpretive schemas* could provide new insight into the experiences students have in music education settings and their *becomings* as music students.

Finally, Steve changed the seating hierarchy because of the tension he felt between his position as an assessor and his position as a personal mentor. None of the research I reviewed on the *roles* or *positions* of music teachers foregrounded these two labels or *interpretive schemas* as a primary concern. Additional research on these

*positions*, particularly an ontological examination of “being an assessor,” may be informative as music teacher educators open more possibilities to preservice music teachers for becoming music teachers.

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APPENDIX A  
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Active Agency: “The ways in which the agent either routinely and pre-reflectively, or strategically and critically, draws upon her internal structures” within the context of external structures (Stones, 2005, p. 85, emphasis added).

Agency: The capability to act in accordance with one’s knowledge and desires in order to achieve intended outcomes (Giddens, 1984; Stones, 2005).

Allocative Resources: Material objects and the ability to control materials (Giddens, 1984, p. 33).

Analysis of Narrative: Analysis which “seeks to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13).

Authoritative Resources: Other people and the ability to control people (Giddens, 1984, p. 33).

Becoming: An individual’s continual pursuit of possibilities for being in—existing in and interacting with—the world.

Bricolage: A pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4).

Conjuncturally-Specific Structures: Internal structures that “involve an agent’s knowledge of the specific context of action” (Stones, 2005, p. 90). How an agent applies their general knowledge to particular sets people, settings, and interactions.

Constitutive Rules: Norms and discourses that define people and things (Giddens, 1984, p. 20).

Domination: The unequal distribution of resources (Giddens, 1984).

Duality of Structure: The phenomenon that social structures are “both implicated in and reproduced by actors interacting with others through time and space in their daily lives” (Shilling, 1992, pp. 77-78). “Social structures almost always either have agents within them and/or are the product of the past practices of agents. And agents, for their part, have social structures within them, not least in the guise of [individual understandings of the world]” (Stones, 2005, p. 4).

Encounters: Face-to-face engagements which operate as units of focused interaction. The “guiding thread of social interaction, the succession of engagements with others ordered within the daily cycle of activity” (Giddens, 1984, pp. 71-72).

General-Dispositional Structures: Internal structures as “transposable skills and dispositions” such as worldviews, cultural schemas, and classification systems (Stones, 2005, p. 88).

External Structures: Structures over which an agent has—or believes they have—no control and cannot avoid (Stones, 2005).

Identity: An individual’s knowledge and beliefs about themselves, shared and continually negotiated with others. Such knowledge and beliefs serve as an interpretive frame to create meaning from experience, construct new knowledge, and direct social action.

Independent Causal Influences: External structures that “have the kind of causal influence on agents’ lives that those agents do not have the physical capacity to control or resist” (Stones, 2005, p. 112).

Intention: The knowledge or belief that an act “will have a particular quality or outcome.” Such knowledge is used to achieve the anticipated quality or outcome (Giddens, 1984, p. 10).

Internal Structures: Structures over which agents have a degree of control (Stones, 2005). “Generalizable stocks, schemas, and skills that provide the transposable basis of ‘how to go on’ . . . [and] specific knowledge of the norms, interpretative schemas, and power resources of the relevant agents within context” (Stones, 2005, p. 72).

Interpretive Schemas: Conjuncturally-specific structures of how an individual understands or defines a specific set of circumstances. This includes how an individual understands themselves, others, the actions of others, the context, and their knowledge of how others will understand or interpret their actions (Stones, 2005).

Irresistible Causal Forces: External structures that agents believe they cannot control or resist depending on their “hermeneutic frame” (Stones, 2005, p. 112).

Label: A collection of internal interpretive and normative schemas that can position individuals and contribute to their identities.

Legitimation: Structures grouped together as social norms, which enable moral judgements and sanctions against those who do not conform to those norms (Giddens, 1984).

Material Constraint: Limitations and enablements of the body and the physical environment (Giddens, 1984, pp. 174-175).

Narrative Analysis: Analysis in which a researcher attempts to “discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15).

Negative Sanctions: Social restrictions or punishments individuals experience based on specific normative schemas (Giddens, 1984).

Normative Expectations/Schemas: Conjuncturally-specific structures as values an individual applies to a certain situation, including how they understand others’ ideal values, and their beliefs about what actions would or would not be appropriate in the immediate context based on those values (Stones, 2005).

Outcomes: Results of an individual’s actions, both intended and unintended (Giddens, 1984). “The overlapping but differential effects of actions and interactions on both external and internal structures, as well as all other kinds of outcomes” (Stones, 2005, p. 85).

Position/Positioning: “Specific intersections of signification, domination, and legitimation which relate to the typification of agents. . . . The specification of a definite ‘identity’ within a network of social relations” (Giddens, 1984, p. 83). “Bundles of practices that are expected to be carried out by those occupying specific social places” (Shilling, 1992, p. 80).

Power: “The capacity to achieve outcomes” (Giddens, 1984, p. 257). The ability to mobilize resources (p. 15).

Power Capacities: Conjuncturally-specific structures as knowledge and beliefs an individual has about their ability to use or control resources in a given situation (Stones, 2005).

Regulative Rules: Norms and discourses that prescribe actions under certain conditions (Giddens, 1984, p. 20).

Resources: “Goods and services, and the authoritative power to control both these and influence the actions of others” (Shilling, 1992, p. 79).

Role: A socially defined set of specific actions and expectations that establish a shared definition of who people within a certain social position are and what they do. Knowledge of roles are “accessible to all members of a society” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 91).

Role-Identity: The “imaginative view of [one]self as he [sic] likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position” (McCall & Simmons, 1978, p. 65, emphasis in original).

**Role Models:** Individuals music teachers would like to emulate in their role as music teachers.

**Role Supporters:** Individuals who confirm and sustain the knowledge music teachers have of themselves in their role as music teachers.

**Rules:** “Techniques or generalizable procedures applied in the enactment and reproduction of social practice. They include knowledge of social conventions and their contexts of application” (Shilling, 1992, p. 78).

**Schema:** Sets of interpretive or normative understandings that guide social actions. Used by Stones (2005) as a less prescriptive substitute term for rules (pp. 67-69).

**Self-Concept:** “A system of affective-cognitive structures (also called theories or schemas) about the self that lends structure and coherence to the individual’s self-relevant experiences” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 955).

**Signification:** Structures grouped together as larger interpretive schemas that help individuals communicate ideas and concepts (Giddens, 1984).

**Socialization:** “The process by which an individual acquires the beliefs, values, skills and resources needed to live and participate in society” (Austin et al., 2010, p. 67).

**Strategic Conduct:** The ability of agents to prioritize their goals and intentions based on what they think is possible or advantageous, given their knowledge of the context and the intentions and capabilities themselves and others (Giddens, 1984; Stones, 2005).

**Structural Constraint:** Restrictions derived from the fact that social structures pre-exist individuals and are broader in scope than the individual’s direct control (Giddens, 1984, p. 176).

**Structures:** Understandings that guide an individual’s social interactions. Originally grouped by Giddens (1984) as rules and resources, and regrouped by Stones (2005) as internal or external interpretive schemas, normative schemas, and power capacities.

**Subjectivity:** “Our conceptual orderings of things and the deep investments summoned by such orderings” (Britzman, 2003, p. 71).

APPENDIX B  
IRB APPROVAL FORMS



APPROVAL: EXPEDITED REVIEW

Margaret Schmidt  
Music, School of  
480/965-8277  
Marg.Schmidt@asu.edu

Dear Margaret Schmidt:

On 8/21/2018 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Becoming Music Teacher
Investigator:	Margaret Schmidt
IRB ID:	STUDY00008274
Category of review:	(6) Voice, video, digital, or image recordings, (7)(b) Social science methods, (7)(a) Behavioral research
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participant Consent-Assent Form, Category: Consent Form;</li><li>• Interview Protocol, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li><li>• Parental Consent Form, Category: Consent Form;</li><li>• Recruitment Script, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li><li>• [REDACTED] Approval Notice, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);</li><li>• Research Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol;</li></ul>

The IRB approved the protocol from 8/21/2018 to 8/20/2019 inclusive. Three weeks before 8/20/2019 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 8/20/2019 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the "Documents" tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Timothy Nowak  
Timothy Nowak

## Parent/Guardian Consent Form

### BECOMING MUSIC TEACHER

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Margaret Schmidt, a professor in the Music Education department of the School of Music at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to examine the ways music teachers and students construct their identities through participating in orchestra.

I am inviting your child to participate in this study, which will involve ten (10) observations of the whole class during their regularly scheduled orchestra class throughout the Fall 2018 semester, and five (5) individual interviews after school. Interviews will be scheduled approximately monthly, depending on your child's availability. During the interviews, we will discuss your child's musical experiences in order to create their musical life story.

Your child's participation in this study will benefit the music education community by providing insight into how music teachers and students continually engage in orchestra. Personal benefits to your child include becoming aware of connections between events in their musical life and new possibilities for their music making. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to their participation.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child has the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. You also have the right to request that your child not participate, or stop participation at any time. Should your child choose not to participate, or choose to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Your child's grade in orchestra will not be affected by either their participation or non-participation in this study.

In order to facilitate my analysis, I would like to audio record the individual interviews with your child. I will also create transcriptions of these recordings. Interviews will not be recorded without your permission AND your child's permission. Please let me know if you do not want an interview to be recorded. Your child may also change their mind after the interview or observation starts, and I will immediately stop the recording. Audio recordings will be kept on a password-secured ASU cloud server and destroyed at the completion of the study. Classroom observations will NOT be recorded.

Your child's interview responses will be kept confidential. Due to observations taking place during orchestra, confidentiality of your child's actions in class cannot be guaranteed. Your child will be provided with a copy of written transcripts of the interviews to check their accuracy. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your child's name will not be used. Your child's name, along with any personally identifiable information, will be masked with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Dr. Margaret Schmidt at (480) 965-8277 or [mschmi2@asu.edu](mailto:mschmi2@asu.edu). If you have any questions about your or your child's rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

By signing below you are agreeing for your child to participate in **INTERVIEWS** with **AUDIO RECORDING**.

CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below you are agreeing for your child participate in **OBSERVATIONS**.

CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Participant Consent/Assent Form

### BECOMING MUSIC TEACHER

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Margaret Schmidt, a professor in the Music Education department of the School of Music at Arizona State University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study so I can learn about the ways music teachers and students construct their identities through participating in orchestra.

If you decide to participate, I will interview you five (5) times, scheduled approximately monthly depending on your availability. During the interviews, we will discuss your musical experiences so we can write about your musical life story. I will also observe your regularly scheduled orchestra class ten (10) times throughout the Fall 2018 semester.

By participating in this study, you will help music teachers and music education professors by helping them understand how music teachers and students continually develop their identities as they engage in orchestra. You will also benefit by becoming aware of connections between events in your musical life and new possibilities for your musical identity. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

You do not need to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you may choose not to answer any question, and to stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate, or you decide to stop participating, there will not be any penalties. Your grade in orchestra (or your employment at this school) will not be affected, whether you decide to participate or not. If you are under the age of 18, you must have your parents or legal guardian sign the Parent Consent form in addition to this form in order to participate.

To help me understand your experiences, I would like to audio record our individual interviews and create transcripts of these recordings. I will not record anything without your permission AND, if you are under the age of 18, your parent/guardian's permission. If you do not want an interview to be recorded, just let me know. You can also change your mind after an interview starts, and I will immediately stop the recording. I will give you a copy of the interview transcripts so you can make sure they're accurate. I will keep the audio recordings on a password-secured ASU cloud server and destroy them at the end of the study. My observations of your orchestra class will NOT be recorded.

Your interview responses will be confidential. I will not tell anyone else what you say to me. Because the observations will be in orchestra, I cannot guarantee that no one else will know what you do in orchestra. I may be using the results of this study in reports, presentations, or publications, but your name will not be used. Your name, along with any personally identifiable information, will be masked with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact Dr. Margaret Schmidt at (480) 965-8277 or [mschmi2@asu.edu](mailto:mschmi2@asu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

#### **Check ONE of the following lines:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I am over the age of 18 and do not need to complete an additional parent/guardian consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am under the age of 18 and must complete an additional parent/guardian consent form.

#### **By signing below you are agreeing to participate in INTERVIEWS with AUDIO RECORDING.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **By signing below you are agreeing to participate in OBSERVATIONS.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

### **Becoming Music Teacher**

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Margaret Schmidt in the School of Music at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to examine how participation in orchestra the identities of music teachers and students.

I am inviting [REDACTED] orchestra students to take part in this study by helping me tell stories about your musical lives and experiences. We will develop these stories together over the course of the Fall 2018 Semester as you talk with me every month, scheduled at your convenience. I will also be observing in your regularly scheduled orchestra class about twice a month.

I would like to invite you to consider being part of this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect your grade in orchestra. If you would like to participate, you must sign an assent form. If you are under the age of 18, you must also have a parent/guardian complete a parent/guardian consent form. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please ask them now, talk to me after class today, or e-mail me at [tenowak@asu.edu](mailto:tenowak@asu.edu).

APPENDIX C

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

What role has being in and/or teaching orchestra played in your life?

When did you start playing your instrument? How did you decide, and what was it like on your first day?

Who was your first teacher? What is your favorite memory of them?

Have you ever second-guessed your decision to play your instrument or be in orchestra?

Where do you see yourself musically in 1/2/5/10 years?

What other kinds of musical experiences have you had outside of school? What connections, if any, do you see to orchestra?

What have been some defining moments for you as a teacher/student in orchestra?

- Most inspiring moments?
- Most frustrating moments?
- Favorite memory of being in orchestra and/or teaching?
- Favorite memory of Mr. Davis and/or students?

What is your favorite piece you've ever played in orchestra?

- What kinds of pieces/music do you like or dislike?

What is the biggest thing you've learned in orchestra?

What does Mr. Davis / the students expect from you?

Let's pretend I'm a new student. What advice would you give me to help me be successful in orchestra?