"It's Obvious Who Plays an Instrument and Who Doesn't": Using Doxa and Illusio to Explore Inequities in English School Music Education

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Abstract

This thesis investigates Bourdieu’s concepts of doxa and illusio in English secondary school music education, using data collection from a comparative case study undertaken at two contrasting schools in a rural county, Stonefarm High School and Friars Hall School. Data were gathered over five months in 2018, using lesson observations, student focus groups and teacher interviews. Three classes were invited to participate at each school.

The data were analysed using Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977), especially the field mechanisms of doxa and illusio. Doxa, the unwritten rules of a field, and illusio, belief in the game being played in the field, are rarely acknowledged and articulated, which perpetuates the reproduction of social inequalities. Additionally, Rist’s (1977) summary of labelling theory in education demonstrates how labels contribute to preserving social structures that favour the dominant classes.

The music teacher at Stonefarm High School was focused on creating a doxa and illusio relevant to the students, most of whom occupied a rural, working-class habitus. Whilst this school music experience was well-received by the students, the music teacher was concerned that their school music education would place them at a disadvantage when approaching the middle-class focused requirements of the national music education field. The student participants also perceived a physical and cultural distance from music education policymakers.

The Friars Hall School music department was aligned with the national music education field. Students who excelled in school music viewed the music department as a
supportive “family” that helped them access more prestigious musicking opportunities.

However, some other students perceived an “inner circle” from which they were excluded.

Both groups believed that the school recognized musical worth based on the formal labels of graded music examinations and other Western classical music practices.

Findings from both cases draw attention to the doxa and illusio of the national music education field. The case study schools highlight how exclusion occurs on micro and macro levels. This demonstrates how representative student and teacher voices are necessary to identify and challenge these exclusions, raising concerns about whose voices remain unheard in the current national political climate.

Keywords

Bourdieu, case study, doxa, England, illusio, music education, secondary school.
Summary for Lay Audience

This thesis presents data about music education in two English secondary schools, Stonefarm High School and Friars Hall School, which I visited from January-May 2018. At each school I regularly observed three music classes, interviewed the music teachers, and facilitated student focus groups. I gathered data about the student and teacher participants’ musical interests and their experiences of school music education. The student participants were aged 11-17 and, whilst the younger students were studying music as a compulsory school subject, those aged 14-17 had chosen to continue studying music.

Stonefarm High School serves a rural, working-class community and the music teacher focused on creating a music education experience that engaged the students. Music lessons encouraged risk-taking, creativity and inclusivity. Whilst this approach was popular with the student participants, the teacher expressed concern that it did not facilitate transition to other music education settings, many of which require participants to demonstrate skills generally acquired through private instrumental lessons. In contrast, at Friars Hall School, a more affluent school community, the music department prioritized curricula and activities that benefited those children who had individual instrumental lessons. The participants who excelled in this system saw the music department as a supportive “family”, but some other students described being excluded from an “inner circle.”

I analysed the data using concepts developed by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, supported by labelling theory. Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977) is used to identify and explain the reproduction of inequity within social fields. Within this theory, doxa are
unwritten and often unconscious rules within a field and illusio is the belief in the game being played within a field. By uncovering the doxa and illusio in the Stonefarm and Friars Hall music departments, I have highlighted how social class influences student success in music education at the two schools. The cases also provide insight into how doxa and illusio operate in the national field of music education, which includes structures such as GCSE Music and ABRSM graded exams. These systems are examples of how labelling contributes to the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education.
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1. Introduction

1.1. Arriving at the study

This study was prompted by my own experiences as a music teacher in a variety of English school settings. Over ten years I witnessed wide variety within English school music education and became increasingly aware of inequalities within the subject. In my first job, working in a secondary school in Hillyon (the county where the data collection for this study occurred), I saw how rurality influenced access to musicking opportunities and how these opportunities, or the lack of them, became cumulative. I vividly remember, as I counted the school choir onto a bus to attend a local music event, a 13-year old girl saying excitedly “I haven’t been to Hillchester [the county town] since last year’s choir festival, Miss.” As a professional adult with a car and disposable income, I popped into Hillchester at least once a week, yet the realities of rural poverty meant that for many of my students it was inaccessible unless through a school trip.

After four years in Hillyon I moved to teach in the home counties, working with a particularly diverse group of children aged 7-18. Some of the pupils regularly went to stadium gigs and musical theatre in London’s West End, whereas others experienced music almost solely through their mobile phones. In appraisal meetings I spoke enthusiastically about how school music should be accessible for all children, then lay awake at night trying to work out how on earth to create curriculum and performance

1 Hillyon and all other place names associated with the study are pseudonyms.
2 The counties surrounding London, which include some of the most affluent communities within the UK.
opportunities that actually delivered that. I became increasingly aware that “what the examiners want to see” in GCSE and A Level Music\(^3\) and in graded music exams\(^4\) was not what many of these children wanted to *do*. Was my responsibility to help children find joy in music, or to guide them towards the best grade possible?

More recently, I taught in both the primary and secondary departments of a large, selective, independent school in London. The children in this school had frequent access to curriculum music, and co-curricular music included regular performance opportunities in central London concert venues alongside professional musicians. These opportunities were almost entirely based around the Western classical tradition and its elitist definition of musical success. Individuals who ‘shone’ in graded exams were given performance opportunities which offered further chances to shine. Simultaneously, the alignment of curricular music with these skills meant children who did not have private instrumental lessons often felt ‘behind’ in whole-class, compulsory music education, and rarely chose to take part in other forms of school musicking.

I enjoyed working at each of these schools and learnt a great deal about how diverse music education can be within the structures of the English school system. Despite having the same job of *music teacher*, what I actually did in each school varied hugely. Funding, physical resources, location and student demographic all influenced the

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\(^3\) In most English schools, the post-14 music curriculum is structured around the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations taken at the age of 16 by almost all children, and Advanced Level (A Level) examinations taken at the age of 18 by approximately half of the population.

\(^4\) Organizations such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) offer graded examinations on a variety of instruments. These examinations have a considerable influence on individual instrumental tuition and other aspects of formal music education in the UK.
development of both curricular and co-curricular music in each school. One commonality amongst the three schools was that each had an active music department that was supported by the Headteacher, and that pupil uptake of post-compulsory music education was above the national average. I am lucky that I have never had to fight for music’s continued existence in a school.

Less significant to me at the time, but glaringly obvious with the benefit of hindsight, was which children got involved in music. In each of these very different communities, it was often the most advantaged children who participated enthusiastically in school musicking. That advantage was contextual, of course. The star musicians at one school might not have been encouraged at all at another, and certainly most of them would not be considered as special when compared to the children studying at nationally-recognized schools and centres for advanced training. But in each school, musical success was most easily achieved by those who got to curriculum music lessons (which often requires good health, good behaviour elsewhere in the school, and a good support network at home) were confident participating once there (unlike the kids who were terrified of appearing vulnerable in front of their peers and/or their teachers), and could then join in with other, extra-curricular musicking. Even when this didn’t directly require money, it did often assume that children had time outside the school day and that their families had the time and resources to facilitate their attendance. Written down like that, it is perhaps unsurprising that music is often considered a minority subject accessible just to the gifted few!

Accordingly, this thesis began from my own realizations about what had previously been invisible. What happens in schools and their music departments that
results in the alignment of musical participation with social advantage? Why is this often unseen? And can it be changed by teachers who do see it? As I present in the remainder of this chapter, my own anecdotal experiences are in many ways reflective of the national field of music education and have therefore prompted a more formal framing of these questions.

1.2. Rationale and significance of the study

Numerical data about school music education in England are published periodically, telling us how many children take music and what social groups they belong to (Gill & Williamson, 2016; Ofsted, 2012b). These statistics consistently show that participation in music is correlated to social advantage at micro and macro levels. The most advantaged children within each school community are more likely to participate in music opportunities, and schools with an advantaged student demographic are likely to offer more of these opportunities to their pupils.

Arguments are regularly made for music’s inclusion in the school curriculum, both for its own sake and for other reasons. Improved literacy and numeracy skills, wellbeing, school attendance and social cohesion are all often cited by school teachers and policy-makers as reasons for music education (Halliday, 2017; Schellenberg, 2006). With the current trend of prioritizing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects in curriculum developments and school accountability models, these justifications are increasingly necessary to safeguard music provision. Furthermore,
although several government and Non-Government Organization (NGO) initiatives over
the last 20 years have been aimed at increasing access to music education in England (for
example, *Musical Futures, Sing Up, and Widening Opportunities*, as mentioned by
Adams, McQueen & Hallam [2010]), much about school music education in England
continues to be elitist, with understandings of success linked to middle-class norms. This
is clearly demonstrated in statistics about entries for national examinations such as the
General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) taken at the age of 16. National
analysis of the 2015 GCSE results shows that children who choose to study music after it
becomes optional at the age of 14 are likely to be high-attaining, live in areas of low
deprivation, and attend independent or selective schools (Gill & Williamson, 2016).
Historical data support these findings, and also show that children who choose to
participate in music are unlikely to have special educational needs or a disability (Bray,
2000; Ofsted, 2012b).

In recent years, however, additional concerns have been raised about the
continued availability of school music education to all children. Since 2010, funding has
been reduced or cut from many local authority music services and other community
music organisations (Ballantyne, Hanley & Widdison, 2015). For families of lower
socioeconomic status, school music is increasingly the only opportunity for formal music
education, and yet this is also being reduced or removed from many school curricula as
head teachers direct their own diminishing budgets towards areas that will affect
compulsory performance measures. There is increasing concern that formal music
education is becoming the preserve of those who can afford to pay.
England is therefore a site of social inequity, which has become more pronounced since the global recession. By exploring how music education is experienced within English secondary school education, this thesis highlights how class privileges are perceived and/or disguised by music teachers and their pupils.

1.3. Research questions

The research questions were created using Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977), which is discussed below. They focus on English secondary school music education from a sociological perspective:

1. How do the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education in England compare to those of the subfields of case study secondary school music departments?

2. How do doxa and illusio influence student and teacher perceptions of success in these subfields?

3. What are the implications for students and teachers who challenge the doxa and illusio of music education?

In the sections below I briefly introduce the context, theoretical framework and methodology of the research project.
1.4. Background to the context

Chapter 2 introduces the literature about music education, situating it more broadly within current education policy in England. Children attend school from the age of 5-16 and must remain in some form of education until the age of 18 (gov.uk, n.d.-a). This thesis is particularly focused on secondary school education, which begins at the age of 11 and is dominated by the GCSE examinations taken by almost all children at the age of 16. Most students take GCSEs in about ten subjects, and their results in these exams influence the paths then available to them for further education. Approximately half of 16-year olds choose to study for A Levels, considered to be the most academic route after GCSEs and a direct route to university. A Level candidates study three or four subjects in depth, taking examinations at the end of a two-year course (Department of Education, 2018). Across secondary education, music is frequently considered a minority subject. Although compulsory until the age of 14, it receives relatively little curriculum time. Only six percent of children continue with music when it becomes an optional GCSE subject, dropping to one percent of those who study for A Levels (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019).

The repertoire and pedagogies experienced in English school music education are varied. Many teachers have embraced organizations such as Musical Futures, Sing Up and Widening Opportunities, all of which offer resources and approaches that increase equity within music education (Hallam & Creech, 2010). However, much government curriculum policy, such as the national curriculum for children aged 5-14 and the GCSE and A Level exam requirements, continues to privilege Western classical musics and
practices which are most accessible to children from socially-advantaged backgrounds. Thus, music remains an area of schooling where social inequity is particularly pronounced (Gill & Williamson, 2016; Ofsted, 2012b). I conclude Chapter 2 by drawing on the sociological work of Savage et al. (2015) and Lareau (2002), both of whom provide useful ways to understand how social class intersects with educational contexts.

1.5. Theoretical framework

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for this thesis, which is based on Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), particularly his concepts of doxa and illusio. I also draw on the central components of his theory, habitus, capital and field, and make reference to his work on charisma, hysteresis, and symbolic violence. Bourdieu’s work is then linked to labelling theory as developed by Rist (1970/2010; 1977) and Lareau’s (2011) concepts of concerted cultivation and natural growth.

Bourdieu created his Theory of Practice around three core concepts. A field is a social space with its own rules and players. Many fields operate simultaneously. They can be further divided into subfields, and also contribute to the maintenance of the overarching field of power (Thomson, 2014). In this research study I applied the concept to individual schools as fields and their music departments as subfields. A person’s habitus is their way of being in and seeing the world. It is influenced by their past interactions and experiences, and continues to influence their present and future actions. Habitus is unconscious, yet it has a significant impact on how a person experiences the
fields in which they are operating (Maton, 2014). In this study it appears that the national field of music education is most easily navigated by those with a middle-class habitus. Capital is the assets available to players within a field. Bourdieu identified economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals, of which cultural capital is particularly important in this study of music education experiences (Moore, 2014). He also identified charisma as an ideology that is constructed from capitals and which, by disguising capitals as “natural gifts”, masks the uneven distribution of capital amongst a field’s players (Bourdieu, 1984/2010).

Habitus, field and capital constantly intersect to maintain or alter individuals’ status within the field of power. Bourdieu also identified further mechanisms that support the reproduction of field conditions, of which doxa and illusio are central to this thesis. Doxa are the unwritten rules of a field, unconscious and undemocratic regulations that maintain stability within the field. In the education field, doxa legitimize the knowledge and values of the dominant classes (Deer, 2014a). Illusio is a belief in the game being played in the field, which also serves to endorse and legitimize the field. Those who succeed within a field are unlikely to identify or question its illusio (Grenfell, 2014). Doxa and illusio therefore contribute greatly to the maintenance of a field and its power dynamic. This thesis is focused on identifying the doxa and illusio of two school music departments in relation to the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education. I also draw on Bourdieu’s concepts of symbolic violence and hysteresis. Symbolic violence is the maintenance of social hierarchies through invisible and unidentified forms of domination. Unlike physical violence, symbolic violence often goes unrecognized by
perpetrators, victims and observers within the field (Schubert, 2014). Hysteresis is experienced by individuals who find that their own habitus is no longer aligned with the field in which they operate. This can occur when field conditions change but an individual does not possess the capital required to successful navigate the changing field (Hardy, 2014).

This thesis uses labelling theory to aid the identification of doxa and illusio in the music education contexts being discussed. Rist (1970/2000, 1977) applied labelling theory to his work in education as a way to identify what happens in schools to influence children’s achievements. He argues that labels such as fast or slow are unconsciously formed by teachers based on social class indicators, but then influence a child’s educational experience to the extent that they are likely to end up embodying the label. In this thesis I propose that music education has a particular abundance of labels, many of which help to maintain the doxa and illusio of the field. Lareau’s (2011) conceptions of concerted cultivation, the middle-class tendency to encourage children’s development of habits and skills that increase their capital within the field of power, and natural growth, in which working-class children are given space to pursue their own interests, help to unveil the extent to which labels contribute to the doxa and illusio of the music education field.
1.6. Overview of methodology

The methodology for the study is discussed in Chapter 4. The research took the form of a dual comparative case study involving two contrasting schools (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Three classes at each school were invited to participate. The classes were in different school years, and the student participants at each case study school therefore varied not only by age but also by whether they were studying music as a compulsory or optional part of the curriculum. I undertook safeguarding training at each school and followed their own guidelines for interacting with children in addition to ensuring that the methodology complied with the requirements of my university’s Research Ethics Board (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2018).

Data were gathered using lesson observations, student focus groups and teacher interviews (Dowling & Brown, 2010). I also attended other music events, such as trips and concerts, when invited to do so. I took field notes in lesson observations and, where appropriate, checked my understanding of significant events within the lessons with staff and student participants during focus groups or informal conversations. The interviews and focus groups were video- and audio-recorded, then transcribed in full. The teacher participants checked the transcriptions of their interviews, and the student focus group participants were invited to review the themes of their discussions at the end of each group session (Cohen et al., 2018).
1.6.1. Ethical considerations.

A detailed account of the ethical considerations is included in Chapter 4. The study was approved by my university’s Research Ethics Board, and I also undertook safeguarding training at each of the case study schools and followed their policies for adult visitors. All participants were given detailed information about the study before being asked for their written assent or consent. Parents of the student participants were also asked to provide written consent for their children to participate. Verbal consent was then ongoing throughout the data collection period, and participants were regularly reminded of their right to remove themselves from the study at any point. All participants chose pseudonyms, and the case study schools and their local communities have also been anonymized (Cohen et al., 2018; Dowling & Brown, 2010; Yin, 2014).

The study was designed to avoid interruption to the normal teaching and learning routines in each case study school. I did not ask teachers to change their curricula or pedagogical approaches in any way, and all interviews and focus groups were scheduled out of lesson time. A further consideration was allowing the study to reflect the perspectives of all pupils who wished to participate. I consciously avoided linking participation to musical success or suggesting that I particularly wanted participants who enjoyed their school music lessons. Although all the participants were taking music as part of their school curriculum, several did not intend to continue with music in the next phase of their education. The data collected therefore represent a broader picture of student engagement with music at each of the case study schools than that which the schools themselves might have sought to present.
1.7. The cases

The data presented in this thesis were gathered in two English secondary schools between January and May 2018. Both schools are state-funded academy schools in the same county, Hillyon. Stonefarm High School is a small school for children aged 11-16, serving a rural, largely working-class community. Friars Hall School is an 11-18 boarding school of above average size, with a diverse but primarily middle-class pupil roll. The schools also vary in their approaches to resourcing and pedagogy for music. Data from field notes, teacher interviews and student focus groups are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The doxa and illusio of the two music departments were very different. At Stonefarm High School, the illusio was strongly influenced by a whole-school growth mindset policy which was further emphasized by a music department doxa focused on creativity and exploration. In contrast, the Friars Hall music department illusio was based on graded music exams, supported by a doxa of division between musicians and non-musicians.

The doxa and illusio of each school’s music department are then discussed in relation to national policies for music education, including the curriculum requirements for GCSE music and post-16 qualifications (Pearson, 2015; National Curriculum, 2013; Ofqual 2015a, 2015b), and the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education. The two contrasting cases highlight how doxa and illusio influence children’s

References withheld for confidentiality purposes.
engagement and perceptions of success in music education, both in their own school communities and within the wider field of power signified by symbolic capital (academic qualifications). The data show that whilst some of the teacher and student participants have attempted to recognize and critique their school’s musical doxa and illusio, their ability to do so is limited by structural forces from the wider field of power as they are represented in government policies. In Chapter 7 I compare the two cases and introduce Bourdieu’s theoretical understanding about charisma, along with other components of his Theory of Practice, to discuss the findings and their potential implications for music education policy.

1.8. Study significance and limitations

This is a small-scale study of two case study schools, chosen for their contrasts rather than to build a comprehensive understanding of secondary school music education. Both schools were unusual within the state sector. One is rural and far smaller than the average secondary school size, whilst the other is a boarding school. More specific limitations of the study mean that it may not be fully representative of the case study school communities. These limitations include the relatively small sample size, restricted ages groups approached for student participants, and lack of screening to ensure that the participant groups were representative of the schools’ demographics.

Despite these limitations, the study does uncover features of the national field of music education (as it is experienced in these particular school music department
subfields) that will be familiar to many other music teachers. These findings could be
used to prompt reflection on the part of music teachers and school leaders. The data from
the two case study schools also provide illustrations of how government policies related
to music education are experienced by individual students and teachers, and how these
experiences intersect with other aspects of their lives, including social class. The
qualitative data presented in this thesis may therefore be useful in the planning for
further, larger-scale studies of secondary school music education experiences.
2. Music Education

This chapter presents a review of the literature that has informed the study. The research questions focus on the doxa and illusio of English secondary school music education, asking how students and teachers in particular music department subfields participate in these doxa and illusio, how they influence perceptions of success, and whether the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education can be challenged within school music department subfields. The literature review therefore draws primarily on music education research from other English and British contexts, and on the sociology of music education literature. Additionally, reflecting music education’s interdisciplinary status, this thesis draws on research in the fields of education studies and sociology, with a particular focus on studies from other English and British contexts. After an introduction to school education in England, I will summarize current systems and policies, including the status of secondary school music, and link these to other pertinent aspects of music education as it is experienced in the UK. I then present the literature about social class and sociology of music education. Elitism and, correspondingly, alienation, are recurring themes in the chapter, demonstrating how success in school music education is often tied to cultural and economic capital. Indeed, the impact of the global neoliberal agenda is evident throughout the literature, reminding us of the extent to which hegemony controls the field of music education.
2.1. The English school education system

Children in England must attend school from the age of 5 to 16 and remain in some form of education until they are 18 (gov.uk, n.d.-a). They are grouped by age and usually progress through the school system with their age group. Schools are generally organized into two tiers: children attend primary school from the age of 5 to 11 and secondary school from the age of 11 until either 16 or 18. The national system of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEN/D) provision promotes inclusion.

Approximately 1% of children, those with the most complex needs, are educated at special schools (Welch & Ockelford, 2010).

Education is a devolved matter in the United Kingdom. As Jones (2003) writes, “they are four countries whose educational patterns have never been identical and whose trajectories now seem to be divergent” (p. 3). This thesis focuses on policies specific to the current English education system, some of which are also applicable in Wales and Northern Ireland (the Scottish education system is independent from the other three countries). Data provided by government and non-government statisticians about education policy are sometimes country-specific and at other times reflective of Britain or the United Kingdom.

The contemporary English education system is generally considered to begin with the 1944 Education Act, the main focus of which was secondary education for all (Bolton, 2012; Jones, 2003). Further significant developments occurred in each subsequent decade of the twentieth century. The 1950s saw the introduction of the
Ordinary Level (O Level) examination for some 16-year olds, a performance measure that contributed to the introduction of non-selective comprehensive secondary schools in the 1960s (Chitty, 2014). Further significant changes occurred in 1972 when the school leaving age was raised to 16, meaning that all children were entitled to at least 11 years of full-time school education (Chitty, 2014). This in turn prompted the replacement of O Levels with the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in 1986, intended to provide a single qualification system for all school leavers. The 1988 Education Act provided further cohesion in the school system, creating a compulsory national curriculum for children aged 5-16 (Chitty, 2014). This was swiftly followed in 1992 by the creation of Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills), intended to coordinate the inspection of all state-funded schools (Chitty, 2014). Although many of these historic policies have since evolved, their implications continue to influence education in England, including the policy developments introduced by governments from 1997 onwards which are discussed below.

2.2. Current systems and policies

The English education system divides children into Years 1-13 (preceded by Reception for 4-5 year olds), with school years then grouped into Key Stages. Most secondary schools are for pupils aged 11-16 (Key Stages 3 and 4, or Year 7-11) or 11-18.

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6 To work out the year group of a child, subtract five from their age. So, pupils in Year 7 will have their 12th birthday during that school year (1st September–31st August), whereas a pupil who has their seventh birthday during the school year will be in Year 2.
(Key Stages 3-5, or Years 7-13). Key Stage 4 (when GCSE examinations are taken) is Years 10-11, and full-time schooling ends at 16 when pupils complete Year 11. Approximately half of young people then leave school to study academic or vocational courses at a college, or to undertake work-based training such as an apprenticeship (Department of Education, 2018). National data shows that this choice appears to be influenced by social class. Students from poorer homes are less likely to choose institutions that promote continuation to university, and that those disadvantaged students living in rural communities have even less opportunity for post-16 academic study than their urban and suburban peers (Allen, Parameshwaran & Thomson, 2016). Within schools, where most continuing students will take the traditionally more academic Advanced Level (A Level) courses, Key Stage 5 is often known as the Sixth Form. The policy and curriculum implications of GCSE and A Level examinations are discussed later in this chapter. Also relevant is the EBacc, a recently-introduced school performance measurement based on Year 11 student results in certain GCSE subjects. Music is not an EBacc subject, which has negatively influenced its status in many secondary schools (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019; Devaney, 2018; Lenon, 2017).

Schools are generally referred to as being state (largely funded by the government, and free to attend), or independent (requiring the payment of tuition fees). Some independent schools are also known as private schools and some as public schools, but to avoid confusion I will use the term independent throughout the thesis. 6-8% of children in England attend independent schools, a figure that has varied little since the 1950s (Bolton, 2012; Power, Edwards, Whitty & Wigfall, 2003). Although independent
schools are often seen as “middle-class […] a main mechanism for preserving or acquiring social status” (Power et al., 2003, p. 6), the majority of middle-class children attend state schools. In both sectors, secondary schools vary considerably in size, funding per pupil, and academic achievement as measured by external examination results. Most secondary schools are managed on a daily basis by a headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), who are accountable to a governing body that generally includes co-opted community members, staff representatives, and elected parents.

In both the state and independent sectors there are schools that officially select pupils by academic ability and other measures, including musical skill, and schools that publicize themselves as being non-selective (Benn, 2012; Chitty, 2014). Regardless of a school’s admissions policy, it is common for children to be taught in sets or ability groups: these categorizations often correlate to social class, even when the social intake of a school is varied (Power et al., 2003). Thus, even in non-selective schools, children are frequently labelled (Chitty, 2014; Lenon, 2017) and make subject choices based on these labels (Van de Werfhorst, Sullivan & Cheung, 2003).

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, consecutive governments have developed the concept of consumer choice within the state education system (Power et al., 2003). Tony Blair’s 1997-2008 Labour government introduced specialist schools, academies and new school admissions procedures (Benn, 2012, xxi). When Labour left government in 2010 there were nearly 20 types of secondary school, each with different foci and admissions procedures (Chitty, 2014). This notion of choice is often irrelevant in rural areas, however, where local authority-funded transport is increasingly only offered to the
school closest to a child’s home (STC Ltd, 2016). And where choice does appear to exist, it generally becomes covert selection, with oversubscribed schools applying criteria including postcode, church attendance, and interviews to determine whether prospective pupils have “values […] in sympathy with [the school]” (Benn, 2012, p. 77) in order to attract those most likely to succeed. The neoliberal attitude towards fundraising and paying fees often further reduces apparent choice. Parents from low socio-economic classes may feel discouraged from applying to schools that have expensive uniforms, expect ‘voluntary’ payments for educational resources and visits, and consider themselves unable to participate in school-wide initiatives or generally encourage their child’s progress (Benn, 2012). This is apparent in Reay’s (1995) study about mothers’ attitudes and actions regarding their children’s schooling, which demonstrates how familial cultural and economic capital affects children’s experiences of state-funded education.

Public accountability systems are present in both the state and independent sectors. The government’s Department for Education (DfE) requires state schools to publish a significant number of policies and statistics online (DfE, 2017). These include information about the proportion of children in particular subgroups, for example, those with SEN/D, those receiving Free School Meals (FSM), and those who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). It is also common for schools to collate data analyzing achievements by gender and ethnicity. All schools are inspected by Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), both of which are accountable to the DfE and make their judgments and reports publicly available online. Secondary schools are also identified in public analysis of examination results by the DfE, qualification providers
and various research organizations. These data sources offer a range of comparative and historical statistics about achievement, nationally and in individual schools. For the purposes of this thesis, these various structures are both problematic and valuable. Whilst many of these processes contribute to an unhealthy focus on labelling within the education system, they do provide a great deal of publicly-available information to inform recruitment of schools for research projects.

2.2.1. Academies

Academies were originally introduced by the 1997 New Labour government as a way to rebrand failing schools, using private investment to improve their resources. Policies regarding the purpose, funding and accountability of academy schools have changed frequently since their initial launch. Particularly significant was the 2010 Academies Act, which included financial incentives from government to encourage well-performing schools to convert to academy status: by 2018 72% of state-funded secondary schools were academies (Cullen, 2018; House of Commons Education Committee, 2017; West & Wolfe, 2018). The current Conservative government describes academies as “publicly funded independent schools” which “don’t have to follow the national curriculum and can set their own term times, […] get[ting] money direct from the government, not from the local council.” (gov.uk, n.d.-b). Like other state-funded schools, academies are inspected by Ofsted (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017). Although academies still have to publish policies about, for example, admissions, SEN/D and
exclusions, (DfE, 2014) they have more freedom to control the terms of these policies than local authority schools (BBC, 2016).

Since 2010, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) have become increasingly common. MATs vary in size (from two schools up to 40), in the strength of links between schools, and in the amount of control that individual schools have. They are often referred to as chains, a term that West and Wolfe (2018) recognize as problematic given its multiple meanings within policy discussions and media reporting. The extent to which schools within a MAT retain an individual identity and accountability to local residents varies considerably (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017). Factors influencing this include the size and ethos of the MAT, and the school’s status prior to becoming an academy. Both of the case study schools in this thesis are members of small, locally-based MATs that would not colloquially be called chains. Each MAT includes a mix of primary and secondary schools, all located in the county of Hillyon, which have maintained their individual identities despite MAT membership. The impact of MAT status on the two case study schools is significant to the schools’ ethos, however. As I discuss in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, Friars Hall School was a converter academy that has since become the lead school in a MAT, whereas Stonefarm High School was ‘taken over’, following repeatedly poor Ofsted inspection results, by a MAT operated from another local school. The impact of these processes and hierarchies is significant particularly since, as I discuss below, academies are not legally obliged to follow the national curriculum and include music as a subject for all children aged 5-14 (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019).
2.2.2. **Secondary school music departments.**

In many English secondary schools, organization is centred on academic subjects, each of which is generally known as a *department*. In some schools, clusters of subjects are then organized into faculties such as creative arts, technology or humanities. These structures are often reflected in leadership positions, room allocations, budgets, timetabling, and other systems that support the departmental or faculty structure. The term therefore has multiple meanings. For example, in my own role as a music teacher I might “sit with the history department” in the staffroom at lunchtime; “go to the history department” to deliver a message; “use the history department” guidelines for marking essays; or “go on a history department” trip to Normandy. The most common use, however, is in reference to the teachers who deliver the subject or to the physical space that they occupy within the school. Whilst the term department does include implicit reference to these teachers’ curriculum choices and curation of public performance events, the national system of curriculum policies such as GCSE Music is a shared influence amongst almost all secondary school music teachers, regardless of their philosophical and pedagogical approaches to education. Both of the case study schools operated a departmental system and it is notable in Chapters Five and Six that the teacher participants make frequent reference to their departmental ethos and logistics. Both Tom Pryce and Walter Williams were known as *head of department* for music in their schools.
2.3. Current secondary school curriculum policy and music

Music’s presence in secondary schools is highly variable and some data suggest that, within the state sector, schools with more affluent intakes are likely to have better music provision (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 2014; Allen, 2019; Daubney & Mackrill, 2016). In independent schools, where the national curriculum has never been applicable and per-pupil funding is generally much greater, it is notable that many schools offer a more continuous and better-resourced music curriculum than that which is common in the state sector (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019). This frequently serves to further establish elitism within music education and the related alienation of children who have not received such opportunities throughout their school education. Indeed, one consequence of increased school autonomy within the state sector is that many schools now shorten Key Stage 3 to two years, beginning GCSE preparation (and therefore a Key Stage 4 curriculum model in which music is an ‘option’ subject) in Year 9, when children are 13 or 14. This policy, along with other timetabling and staffing decisions, has a significant impact on the amount of compulsory music education that children may receive in secondary school. Daubney, Spruce and Annetts (2019) report a decline in Key Stage 3 music curriculum time since 2010, with the current national figures suggesting that only 3.1% of Key Stage 3 curriculum time is dedicated to music.

The Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) curriculum is dominated by GCSE examinations, which are taken by almost all children at the age of 16 across a range of subjects. It is common practice for schools to devise a table with compulsory examination subjects for all students (commonly English language and English literature, maths, and two or three
sciences,) and then create option blocks where students can choose from a selection of other subjects. Much has been written about the consequences of the EBacc on secondary music education (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019; Devaney, 2018; Lenon, 2017). This government policy to measure school performance was introduced in 2010. It has had considerable impact on the GCSE options available to students, since many schools now require students to ‘choose’ particular humanities and languages subjects as options in order to improve their EBacc results, thus reducing space in students’ timetables to choose creative GCSE subjects. Although this study does not directly explore the EBacc, it is a major factor in the current conversation about uptake of GCSE Music (Ofsted, 2013).

A number of exam boards provide GCSE and A Level specifications for the full range of school subjects, with assessment and grading coordinated nationally. The boards’ offerings are monitored by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), who stipulate requirements such as assessment type, content and weight, ensuring continuity of academic standards and parity between exam boards. Teachers select the exam board that they feel is best suited to their students and plan their curriculum around its requirements. A recurring complaint from teachers is the frequency of policy change around examinations and assessment (Chitty, 2014), which is also reflected in changing data series and attempts to track longitudinal data (Bolton, 2012). The most recent changes to exam specifications and national curriculum include a reduction in vocational qualifications for 14-19 year-olds and more “rigorous” GCSE requirements, to use the word favoured by then-Education Secretary Michael Gove
(Chitty, 2014). This particular phase of GCSE reforms has also included the staggered change from alphabetized to numerical grades, which has caused much confusion for employers, parents and schools themselves (Turner, 2018).

GCSE Music is taken by approximately six percent of Key Stage 4 students (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019), and involves assessments in performing, composing and listening. Following GCSEs, approximately half of the national cohort take A Level exams, normally in three or four subjects, although only one percent of this group study A Level Music (Gill & Williamson, 2016; Joint Council for Qualifications, 2017). Other music qualifications are offered in schools and colleges at both Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, frequently with greater opportunity to study popular music. However, there is often concern about the lesser value of these qualifications compared to that of GCSE or A Level, as demonstrated by participants in Hallam, Creech and McQueen’s (2017) study of six secondary school music departments.

Success in GCSE and A Level Music is largely dependent on access to individual instrumental tuition and familiarity with the Western classical music canon. For both qualifications, candidates are required to submit performances and compositions, and sit an exam that assesses listening and appraising skills. There is considerable crossover between the knowledge and skills rewarded in the GCSE and A Level qualifications and those that are rewarded in graded music exams, generally prepared for in individual instrumental lessons, which I discuss later in this chapter. My own professional experiences suggest that it is common for music teachers to invest disproportionately in children who already have the advantage of individual instrumental tuition. Since school
performance measures are so strongly tied to pupil attainment, this is unsurprising. However, this tendency can further exclude children who already face barriers to education: for example, Ofsted have raised concerns about the low numbers of children with SEN/D who participate in additional instrumental lessons (6% of the school population, compared to 14% without SEN/D) and children with special educational needs or a disability are also less likely to choose music as an option subject at Key Stage 4 or Key Stage 5 (Ofsted 2012a, 2012b). Data from Bray (2000) and Lamont and Maton (2008) suggest that messages about exclusivity are inferred by children who enjoy music at Key Stage 3 but perceive GCSE Music as requiring additional levels of expertise. This possibility is also supported by national analysis of the 2015 GCSE results, which shows that children who choose to study GCSE Music are likely to be high-attaining, live in areas of low deprivation, and attend independent or selective schools (Gill & Williamson, 2016). Despite this evidence, the rhetoric of ‘choosing options’ for Key Stages 4 and 5 continues to mask self-exclusion from music at a macro- and micro-level, enabling schools and policy-makers to preserve music’s elite status in the curriculum. As the following section demonstrates, this tendency towards elitism (and thus alienation for those students who are not considered elite) has long been present in school music education.
2.4. Recent music education history in England

The history of English school musicking demonstrates that, while almost always present, music has often been an elitist or otherwise contentious part of school life (Adams, McQueen & Hallam, 2010; Finney, 2011; Paynter, 1982). One such example is provided by Paynter (1982) in his discussion about the complex intersection of curricular and extra-curricular music in the mid-twentieth century. Music was not a popular subject with O Level and A Level candidates during the post-war years, but there was a significant increase in access to instrumental tuition and therefore entry for graded music exams, which improved the quality of school and county youth orchestras. Paynter considered this to be a “two-edged” development, however, since the increased status for music education also fuelled a tendency to focus the music curriculum on skills and knowledge that aligned with the graded exams and university requirements for undergraduates. This served to “exclude large numbers of young people who do not have conventional musical talents and have no intention of pursuing music as a career.” (Paynter, 1982, p. 7) The same concern remains today despite significant changes to the field: a professionalizing curriculum model and elitist structures of access reinforce one another, continuing to alienate large proportions of children for whom its measures of success are irrelevant or unattainable, and therefore believe that school music is “not for the likes of me.” (Lamont & Maton, 2008)

Prior to the 1970s, most school music curricula were largely dedicated to the study of Western classical music and composer-arranged folk songs (Green, 2012). A more holistic approach took hold, however, as the work of educators such as John
Paynter and Peter Aston (1970) and Keith Swanwick (1979) demonstrated the potential for creative music-making, including composition and the use of music technology, to create a curriculum ethos focused on children as musicians. Swanwick’s work was grounded in a music education philosophy of aesthetic awareness, and his CLASP model (discussed later in the chapter) was a significant influence on the holistic approach of future government policies for music education, including the national curriculum introduced by Thatcher’s Conservative government (Cox, 2017). Introducing *A Basis for Music Education* (1979), Swanwick warned that music teachers badly lack any kind of conceptual framework. […] Fundamentally we have no *rationale* that bears examination and stands up well against the views of different pressure groups. We have failed to notice and publicize the central core of music education, which is that music education is *aesthetic* education. (pp. 5-6)

Having presented his understandings of how music can be defined and experienced, Swanwick then identified two essential considerations for music educators:

The first of these is that teachers should be concerned with the promotion of specific musical experiences of one kind or another. The second is that students should take up different roles in a variety of musical environments. People will find their individual paths into particular areas of music. It is our responsibility to keep the various roads clear and not insist that there is only one narrow avenue, perhaps the one we took ourselves. (p. 42)
From this standpoint, Swanwick proposed a music curriculum that prioritized interaction with musical sound. Similarly, Paynter (1982) summarized his own philosophy as one in which “classroom work should be based upon music-making (performing, improvising, composing) […]” (p. 28). Their philosophies continue to be reflected in policies today, which place practical musicking at the heart of the national curriculum and examination specifications.

Simultaneous to the aesthetic approach gaining popularity, trends also emerged of teachers introducing popular musics and non-Western musics to the curriculum (Green, 2012). These developments were recognized in the national curriculum and the GCSE qualification, both of which were introduced in 1988 by Thatcher’s Conservative government. Finney (2011) provides an account of how these policy developments highlighted the implications of different approaches to music education, which can be summarized as either the development of skills or the acquiring of knowledge. The latter is more aligned with neoliberalism and is therefore increasingly privileged in government education policies in many countries (Fautley & Murphy, 2016). Philpott (2016) includes both skills and knowledge in his discussion of multiple musical knowledges, which makes particular reference to the work of Keith Swanwick. There are multiple knowledges within music education and multiple ways of learning that knowledge, and Philpott encourages teachers to consider how these approaches are best employed in the classroom. Recent governments, however, have increasingly focused on the importance of a “knowledge-rich” education (which does not equally privilege each of Philpott’s suggested forms of musical knowledge) above the development of skills. This matter is
increasingly of concern to researchers given that it appears to be based on ideology rather than evidence-informed policy (Fautley & Murphy, 2016).

The national curriculum is a government policy that outlines subject and standard requirements for children aged 5-16 (National Curriculum, 2013). Music is included as a statutory subject for children aged 5-14 (Key Stages 1-3). Introduced following the 1988 Education Reform Act and regularly revised since, its importance has been diluted by the devolution of education in Wales and Northern Ireland and the growth of academies (which are exempt from following the national curriculum) in England. Indeed, music’s status within the national curriculum has always been less significant than that of some other school subjects. Mills (2005) recalls how the first version of the national curriculum for music, published in 1992, was sent out to schools with two pages stuck together. She often visited schools where this error had not been noticed and addressed! Whilst the national curriculum for music has been updated regularly since then, it remains a relatively “slim document” (Fautley, 2010, p. 74) that allows teachers to be “much more flexible” (Daubney, 2017, p. 98) with content than in many other subjects.

Despite these developments, however, attempts to modernize and democratize music education throughout the late twentieth century were not always successful. As Green (2012) observed, most music teachers were themselves educated in classical music and tended to teach popular music using Western classical pedagogies and vocabulary, often reducing the potential for positive engagement with a more musically-diverse curriculum and more socially diverse students:
It is one thing to bring a variety of musics into the classroom, but, if the learning practices of the relevant musicians are ignored, a peculiar, classroom version of the music is likely to emerge, stripped of the very methods by which the music has always been created, and therefore bearing little resemblance to its existence in the world outside. (pp. 211-12)

In hindsight, it is therefore unsurprising that post-14 music continued to be seen as a specialist subject suitable only for an elite group of students who have individual instrumental tuition (Bray, 2000; Lamont & Maton, 2008). Additionally, music’s identification as a specialist subject can be understood as referring to the teacher rather than students. Daubney (2017) recognizes six potential ways of delivering class music in primary schools, two of which designate the teacher as specialist. She also recognizes that provisions where tuition is provided by a visiting instrumental teacher and focused on a particular instrument, are themselves specialized more than the general music curriculum. Mills (2005) discusses how the term specialist may refer to a teacher who only teaches music or one who has a music degree, two definitions that often do not overlap. The benefits and drawbacks of specialist teachers are discussed by Mills (2005) and Ofsted (2012b), both of whom recognize that childrens’ music education experiences are influenced by teachers’ pedagogical understanding and classroom management skills, not just their own musical training.

The early years of the twenty-first century have seen further change in school music education, as teachers have engaged with Lucy’s Green’s research on informal learning (2001, 2008) presented through the Musical Futures project. Green’s study
began from the observation that school music education was often considered unhelpful or even detrimental to individuals who later became successful popular musicians. This process of ‘failing’ at or self-excluding from formal music education is often one of self-alienation (Wright, 2010), and is worth considering alongside the literature discussed in Chapter 3 about labelling theory in education, which demonstrates how students can be labelled and self-label themselves into positions that ensure social reproduction. Musical Futures, however, has encouraged teachers to develop pedagogies where students learn to play music of their own choice through informal processes, as is often the case in ‘real life’ popular music contexts, thus replacing ‘classroom versions’ of music with experiences that are more authentic and democratic. Hallam, Creech and McQueen (2017) undertook research in Musical Futures Champion Schools over a three-year period, collecting data from 28 music teachers and 733 students. They found that the approach had increased student uptake of Key Stage 4 optional music courses, but that some teachers felt that GCSE Music did not then engage and reward students in a similar way to the Musical Futures approach they had experienced in Key Stage 3. This mismatch, or misalignment, further highlights Green’s initial concern that school music curricula do not support popular musicians.

2.5. The school music curriculum today

The current English school music curriculum is generally approached holistically. The national curriculum and the GCSE and A Level specifications, which are discussed in
further detail below, all require children to demonstrate a range of musical skills and knowledge. Daubney (2017) suggests planning for musical learning in primary education around six strands: singing; composing; improvising; playing; critical engagement; and *spiritual moral, social and culture* education (SMSC). Mills (2005) draws on previous work by Pat Gane to show how a similar grouping of skills can be used to make links between the national curriculum and instrumental tuition, and the CLASP acronym (based on the musical elements of composition, literature studies, audiation, skill acquisition and performance) promoted by Keith Swanwick in his 1979 book *A Basis For Music Education* was also popular with teachers (McQueen & Hallam, 2010). The A Level and GCSE specifications, however, divide skills more crudely into performing, composing, applying knowledge, and appraising (Ofqual, 2015a, 2015b).

Across the 5-18 age range these skills\(^7\) are normally taught through a mixture of whole-class, small group and individual tasks. At each key stage, children should also study a range of musical genres and styles. To address this, many teachers divide each school year into several units, with each unit based around the study of a particular musical topic through a range of activities that encompass performing, composing and listening. It is common for children to experience performing on several instruments, as well as using their voices and music technology resources, during the compulsory Key Stage 1-3 music curriculum. Most individual children therefore experience considerable diversity of content (and sometimes pedagogy) within their own school music education. Whilst this brings challenges in terms of curriculum continuity (Ofsted 2013) and

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\(^7\) For international readers, this may equate to discussions in other countries about “competencies”. 
assessment (Fautley, 2010), the approach is generally considered to be more inclusive than previous curriculum models, given its focus on creative expressive activity that does not require previous instrumental tuition (Mills, 2005). Ofsted (2013) has raised concerns about this common practice, however:

… In primary schools, and at Key Stage 3, the planned curriculum in the schools visited was too often a shallow musical odyssey, with blocks or units of work on various styles of music, such as world music, blues, hip hop, rap and pop. While each genre was justifiably studied, it was rare for links to be made between them. [...] Classical music, as a serious component of the curriculum, was treated as a step too far in most of the primary and secondary schools surveyed, [...]. (Ofsted, 2013, p. 11)

Yet while such a curriculum may seem “shallow” to Ofsted, it is aligned with the presentation of varied musical content in the GCSE listening and appraising exam and to a philosophy of cultural inclusivity, both of which may influence teachers’ continued commitment to such an approach to curriculum planning.

The above extract demonstrates Ofsted’s tendency to privilege Western classical music, which aligns with other recent government policies such as the reformed national curriculum (DfE, 2013) and GCSE and A Level specifications (Ofqual, 2015a, 2015b), as does a passage in the same Ofsted report that speaks with regret about the limited theoretical content in many school music curricula:
Too often, the schools visited expected little of pupils. They failed to ensure that all pupils understood, and could use practically, common musical features such as notation, time signatures, scales, melody shape, chords and key signatures.

[...]

Many primary schools considered, without good reason, that pupils were not ready for such learning involving musical theory, and believed they would not enjoy it. At Key Stage 3, schools often gave students a range of experiences of different musical styles but musical learning was disjointed and superficial. Classical music was rarely introduced to pupils. At Key Stages 4 and 5, music had become a specialised activity for a small minority. (2013, pp. 4-5)

The report correlates the conditions of the common Key Stage 1-3 approach with the subject’s “specialized […] minority” status at Key Stages 4 and 5, but does not query whether the musicking being offered to older children is valuable to them despite research such as that by Green (2008) highlighting this attitude amongst Key Stage 3 children. Instead it is assumed that the ‘problem’ lies in a lack of Western Classical music training earlier in the curriculum. Indeed, the Ofsted report suggests a remarkably similar clash to the one in 1872-3 when schoolmaster James Arthur taught his pupils a range of songs but was reprimanded by the local school inspector for failing to teach them sufficient technique. Telling this story in the introduction to his (1982) book *Music in the Secondary School Curriculum*, John Paynter observed:
The history of music in schools is the continuing story of an apparent dichotomy between practice and theory; between the ‘fun’ of making music now and the hard grind of acquiring techniques which will (or should) make it possible to have much more musical enjoyment later on. (p. 2)

That music education remains a site of conflict between policymakers and teachers, particularly in the current debate about knowledge versus skills, prompts consideration of how music can shed light on power struggles include those centred on issues pertaining to social class.

Running alongside whole-class music education, there is also a tradition of children choosing to take specialized instrumental lessons, delivered by peripatetic teachers who visit schools to teach individuals or small groups. The implications of this and of various other aspects of private instrumental tuition are discussed in more detail below. These, and many other musical activities, contribute to a school musicking experience that can be about much more than the national curriculum requirements. As Mills wrote in 2005,

Today’s truly musical schools are outward-looking in their approach to the curriculum: they respond to requirements such as the national curriculum, just as they respond to developments in music in the charts, in the community, and in the lives of students and teachers. (Mills, 2005, p. 132)
Where this approach works, music education can be inclusive and a tool for social justice. As the literature discussed in this chapter shows, however, various factors combine to make this a considerable challenge in many school communities.

Arguments are regularly made for music’s inclusion in the school curriculum, both for its own sake and for other reasons. Improved literacy and numeracy skills, wellbeing, school attendance and social cohesion are all often cited by teachers and policy-makers as reasons for music education (Halliday, 2017; Schellenberg, 2006). With the current trend of prioritizing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects in curriculum developments and school accountability models, these justifications are increasingly necessary to safeguard music provision. Furthermore, although several government and Non-Government Organization (NGO) initiatives over the last 20 years have been aimed at increasing access to music education in England (for example, Musical Futures, Sing Up, and Widening Opportunities, as mentioned by Hallam & Creech, 2010), it is clear from the literature cited thus far that much about school music education in England is associated with class-based structures of elitism.

2.6. Music services and music hubs

Music plays a significant part in schools beyond that which is included in the curriculum. Writing in 1982, John Paynter posited that curriculum music should be “the core of school music activity; from there we can develop extra-curricular music-making.” (p. xiii), yet much more recently Ofsted (2013) expressed concern that headteachers often
did not consider music as a subject for all children, instead focusing on high-profile (and presumably often elitist) events that showcase a small number of performers considered to be successful. This extra-curricular provision is often supported by visiting music teachers, sometimes affiliated with music services and music hubs. Music services are local organizations that provide specialist music tuition and activities in schools and dedicated centres. Rogers and Hallam (2010) provide a summary of how music service provision has varied in the period 1980-2010, identifying the considerable impact of geographical and financial constraints on access to this aspect of music education. Since this book was published in 2010, however, many music services have had their funding significantly reduced (Ballantyne, Hanley & Widdison, 2015; Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019).

Following the Henley Review (2011), 123 Music Education Hubs were formed in 2012, linking schools, arts organizations, venues and charities “to provide access, opportunities and excellence in music education for all children and young people” (Sharp, 2015, p. 1) Often the lead organization within a hub is the local music service (Henley, 2011). The extent to which these hubs have maintained the ethos of a music service, rather than reflecting the needs and strengths of all stakeholders, varies considerably (Ofsted, 2013). A considerable proportion of hub work is focused on increasing participation in instrumental and vocal ensembles at various levels (Sharp, 2015). In the 2013/14 school year, hubs worked with 83.4 % of state-funded schools (Sharp, 2015), but Ofsted (2013) warned that “[w]hile this work is essential, it reaches only a minority of pupils” (p. 4). Indeed, rather like John Paynter reported in 1982,
Ofsted found that hub work was often overly focused on higher-level opportunities for children who have individual instrumental lessons, rather than “supporting and challenging schools to do better for all pupils” (p. 14).

2.7. Individual tuition and graded exams

The holistic approach to curriculum music means that it is not common for children to spend their class music lessons learning one specific instrument. Instead, most schools have Visiting Music Teachers (VMTs, previously called peripatetic teachers and still often known colloquially as peris) who deliver specialist tuition on instruments and voice to individuals and small groups of children. Ring-fenced government funding for these opportunities is increasingly under threat (Widdison, Barnard & Walters, 2017). In most communities there are also out-of-school opportunities for instrumental tuition, access to which is largely dependent on the ability to pay for lessons. Both through their schools and privately, children may study Western classical, popular or non-Western instruments. Regardless of the instrument and genre being studied, however, much individual and small group tuition is influenced by the graded exam systems that were developed by music conservatoires in 19th Century Britain. Bull (2016) demonstrates how this system continues to require bourgeois Victorian values such as delayed gratification, assured optimism and blending in, values that are familiar and beneficial only to a small section of contemporary British society. The financial demands of this process are considerable, furthering the extent to which access to music education is dependent on social class. In
addition to regular payments for tuition, instruments and accessories, and sheet music, exam entry itself requires one-off payments on a sliding scale from £41 ($50.34 U.S.) for Grade One to £95 ($116.65 U.S.) for Grade Eight. The largest exam board, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), issues over 800,000 certificates annually. Whilst the number of entrants for examinations has dropped in recent years (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019), their considerable influence on pedagogy and conceptions of success in the music education field remains.

Unlike informal musicking in the home or free-of-charge community music opportunities, graded exams offer a legitimated form of cultural capital. Their qualifications are approved by Ofqual, which means that successful candidates can therefore use the results as part of a university application and schools can count them towards their own performance measures (ABRSM, n.d.; DfE, 2019). The economic and cultural capitals required to prepare for these exams makes them unattainable or irrelevant to large groups of society. Their impact is not limited to co-curricular advantages, however, since access to the school music curriculum is often controlled by graded exam attainment. Writing in 2008, Lamont and Maton found that

Although QCA’s criteria state that ‘the scheme of assessment must ensure that the highest grades are accessible by those candidates who may not receive additional specialist music lessons’ (2005:3), there is some evidence that pupils and teachers still believe that instrumental tuition and learning notation are both essential for GCSE (Wright, 2002). (p. 269)
With the recent school curriculum reforms, however, no such provision is even suggested. Neither the DfE (2015) or Ofqual (2019) make an equivalent statement to that issued by the now-defunct Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), and both the GCSE and A Level Music specifications make direct reference to the graded music exam system. The specifications do not officially require candidates to have individual lessons, yet the performance units of each course use a grading system strongly linked to the grades and repertoire of ABRSM, and therefore reward the skills and knowledge that are most easily accumulated through individual instrumental lessons.

The research and policy referenced thus far highlight the importance of social class in determining children’s access to music education in England. Before discussing the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu in the next chapter, I conclude the literature review by discussing two seminal sociological studies about class. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life* (Lareau, 2011) and *The Great British Class Survey*, which is documented in *Social Class in the 21st Century* (Savage et al., 2015) have both significantly influenced this research study. Lareau’s study of American families in the early 1990s and Savage et al.’s large-scale study of British lifestyles in 2011 both employ Bourdieu’s theory. I will now discuss the importance of these texts to my own work and link them to themes in recent music education research.
2.8. Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life

Annette Lareau’s (2011) longitudinal study of families in a U.S. city examined how
gender, race and social class influence childhood. From this data she developed the
concepts of concerted cultivation, in which middle-class parents guide children to
‘develop’ talents that give them institutional advantages, and the accomplishment of
natural growth, where working-class and poor parents are less concerned about filling
children’s leisure time or about engaging assertively with schools and other institutions.
The working-class and poor children often demonstrated greater initiative and creativity,
and developed strong relationships with children of different ages, yet they increasingly
demonstrated a sense of constraint in their communications with adults in authority. In
contrast, the middle-class children developed a sense of entitlement that enabled them to
access valuable educational and career opportunities. When Lareau reconnected with her
participants as young adults, she found that these opportunities had acted cumulatively to
further widen the gap in access and outlook between the different social class groups:

…the benefits middle-class kids accrue do not result directly from their parents’
child-rearing methods. Class advantages are linked to the fact that as schools sort
children, these institutions (and other institutions, as well) prioritize and reward
particular cultural traits and resources. Many of these traits and resources are tied
to social class standing. (Lareau, 2011, p. 265)

Lareau’s study demonstrates how social class is lived and how its impact becomes
cumulative. The “traits and resources” that she mentions are the capitals that Bourdieu
understands as constructing charisma, and the labels that they infer lead to “schools sort[ing] children”, and thus encouraging the self-fulfilling prophecies of labelling (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). I will discuss these theories further in Chapter 3.

Although Lareau did not focus her ethnographic work on music education, her study shows how middle-class children often experience formal music education beyond the school, involving time- and location-specific commitments that require financial, physical and emotional investment from their parents (see Chapter 3 in Lareau, 2011). Such activities provide cultural capital that has explicit benefit in school education. For example, piano lessons, instrumental ensembles or singing in a church choir all enable children to develop musical capital that is easily recognized by teachers. Lareau’s work highlights the potential for symbolic violence, a term coined by Bourdieu to define invisible and unrecognized forms of domination, to occur in education settings. Her concepts of concerted cultivation, natural growth, sense of entitlement and sense of constraint are therefore significant to this study. Although Lareau’s work has been given relatively little attention in the music education field thus far, Ilari (2013) used concerted cultivation as a tool for analysis of middle-class parents’ attitudes towards music education, and Maxwell and Aggleton (2013) used it as a framework for interpreting teenage girls’ development of accomplishments in English private schools. Both studies demonstrate the significance of concerted cultivation to middle-class families, and the extent to which it can ease children’s journeys through the school and university education.
2.9. **Social Class in the 21st Century**

Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), which is explored further in Chapter 3, is focused on social class. The class system in Britain has changed considerably during the twentieth century, as demonstrated in the book by Mike Savage et al. (2015), *Social Class in the 21st Century*. The authors used data from the Great British Class Survey (GBCS), a survey made available to the public online by the BBC in 2011, to develop a new conception of how class is understood and experienced in the UK. They “understand class as a crystallization of different kinds of capital through examining the interplay between economic, social and cultural capital” (p. 180). Savage and his colleagues argue that increasing inequality has contributed to a remaking of the British class system in which small, distinct groups exist at the very top and bottom of a hierarchy (the *elite* and the *precariat*) while the majority of the population exist in the five middle layers which are “more fuzzy and complex” (p. 4) when compared to historical understandings of ‘middle-class’ or ‘working-class’ groups. The authors therefore argue that conceptualizing clear boundaries between middle- and working-class groups is no longer relevant to many discussions about social class, and that attention should instead be paid to how class intersects with age, location and education. Yet they are confident that class, in its contemporary complex form, is still a central factor in the British sociological field. Their own data show that the precariat can easily become invisible and the elite over-represented (see also Skeggs [2004] on media representation of different social groups). Indeed, Savage et al. argue that “not engaging in the politics of classification is not an effective response. It leaves in place implicit privilege.”
Secondly it will not stop classification from happening, as it is so powerfully embedded in contemporary life” (p. 403).

Savage et al. repeatedly identify the importance of cultural capital in their GBCS data. They found that those who thrive in the new class system are ‘knowing’, showing awareness of how tastes and codes imply class in a way that is no longer easily attributed to occupation. “It is one’s ease and grace in moving between different genres, playing with classifications and typologies, which might count as cultural capital today” (p. 151). Their data suggest that this ease comes from education, and that those who feel uneducated are less likely to feel able to access, or worthy of accessing, societal resources. Meanwhile, the ‘knowing’ of the advantaged allows them to make subtle distinctions about what counts as legitimate culture, making previous understandings of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture redundant, and potentially disempowering those who have apparently more singular or simple tastes. The more traditional understanding of ‘high’ culture remains influential, however. Savage et al. identify three significant factors in this tradition: the dedication of Art Council subsidies to primarily ‘high’ art forms, perpetuating the belief that popular culture is therefore less deserving and that “‘high’ culture rises above grubby commercial considerations” (p. 96). Similar values are also perpetuated in the education system, where curricula and examinations generally prioritize works from a canon. The final contributors to this triumvirate are cultural critics and other taste-makers, whose public judgments tend to further legitimize ‘high’ culture and devalue popular culture. Combined together, these three factors further their capacity to legitimize and simultaneously disguise such legitimation.
The GBCS data also suggest that an elite independent school education is just as likely to influence class status as a university education, which is similar to the findings of a study into middle-class children’s educational trajectories discussed by Whitty (2001). Indeed, although much of the education-specific literature used in this thesis was published before Savage et al. proposed the recognition of a ‘new’ class system, it is mutually enlightening to consider Savage et al.’s work alongside that of British education researchers such as Geoff Whitty and Diane Reay and, in the USA, Ray Rist. All three demonstrate how the choices made by some social groups have consequences for others: middle-class withdrawal from state education (Whitty, 2001); teachers’ unconscious bias towards relatively privileged dress and physical appearance (Rist, 2000/1970); or middle-class parents fighting for additional support within the school system (Reay, 1999). Indeed, Whitty argues that these ‘choices’ are actually a way to disguise the power of reproduction and the valuing of middle-class values in the education system generally.

2.10. Sociological perspectives on music education

*Social Class in the 21st Century* has much in common with recent music education literature. There is increasing evidence that even accessing music education in England is strongly linked to social class (ABRSM, 2014; Allen, 2019; Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019), and authors such as Bates (2018) and Bull (2016) explore how gender, location and race also interact with class to influence opportunities within the field of legitimised music education. Fautley and Daubney (2018) consider the implications of music curriculum policies that privilege the Western classical tradition, warning that
“sometimes in music education we treat social capital – or lack thereof – as a hidden disability, and seem to do very little about it.” (p. 220)

The relationship between social class and Higher Education (HE) music education participation was examined by Born and Devine (2015), who used a large data sample provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to analyze student entry into UK traditional music and music technology degrees. Their study showed an increase in working-class HE participation that correlated with the growth in popular music-based music technology degree courses. The authors concluded, however, that traditional music degree courses continued to be dominated by white, middle-class students who had backgrounds in Western Art music, whereas the music technology courses were dominated by white, working-class males. They therefore raised questions about equity of access to higher music education, especially for female students and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students without classical music training. Similar questions are prompted by studies about employment in the arts industry. 75% of arts industry workers are thought to come from a middle-class background (Ellis-Peterson, 2015), which Cloonan (2007) links to government policies that favour Western classical music rather than popular musics associated with working-class culture.

Studying identity, Lamont (2002) found that teachers and children defined people as *musical* or *unmusical* largely based on whether they played a musical instrument, which is easier to observe and assess than many other aspects of musicking. In primary schools this contributed to teachers’ reluctance to include music in the curriculum, and Lamont recognized that teacher responses such as this had significant influence on
children’s formation of their own musical identity. School policies around participation in music activities may further reinforce one’s identity as being musical or unmusical, with children who are not involved potentially comparing themselves negatively to those who are considered to be musicians. Although Lamont’s studies did not directly address social class, Wright’s (2010) explanation of how advantaged children are more likely to “recognize themselves in schools’ valued images” (p. 266) may help to further understand how children from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to become musicians.

Cultural omnivorousness is a concept that has developed from critiques of Bourdieu’s own discussion of taste and the distinctions of high- and low-brow culture. It has become increasingly significant in both the music education and sociology literature (Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skårberg & Nielson, 2014; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Savage & Gayo, 2011; Warde & Gayo-Cal, 2009). Cultural omnivores are those who express enthusiasm for a range of high-, low- and middlebrow tastes. This knowing enthusiasm is an asset in the field of education (Warde & Gayo-Cal, 2009), yet it is not easily acquired. Savage and Gayo-Cal (2011) identified in their middle-class respondents’ ability to pass judgment “a marked deployment of reflective preferences and avoidances” rather than an omnivorous enthusiasm (p. 345). They suggest that this sub-group of participants, referred to as ‘experts’, are worthy of consideration in further discussion of cultural omnivorousness. Indeed, similar ‘experts’ emerged in the Great British Class Survey (GBCS) data discussed in Savage et al. (2015). One such participant was Fraser, a retired primary school headteacher who “described how he had deliberately ‘inflicted’ his taste on his pupils in an attempt to ‘broaden their horizons’” (p. 100).
Fraser and the other ‘experts’ had considerable conviction in the legitimacy of their own cultural activities and presented sharing their good taste with others as a social concern. Through exploring how high and low cultures are approached, the cultural omnivore concept provides a useful lens for research about the impact of music teachers and how their own status as omnivores or ‘experts’ may influence curriculum planning, repertoire selection and more implicit messages about musical value.

Dyndahl et al. (2014) describe how Swedish teacher education programmes have become more inclusive of different musics, but raise concerns about how this happens and what continues to be excluded or misappropriated (see also Peterson & Kern, 1996). The authors discuss how in many countries that do include lowbrow or middlebrow musics in the curriculum, it is often through highbrow practices such as the use of staff notation to learn and study non-Western musics, which creates a barrier to access for those students who do not possess this (highbrow) skill. Thus the Western classical canon continues to be prized in both music higher education curricula and government curriculum requirements for schools.

2.11. Concluding thoughts

The literature presented in this chapter show that social class and music education both continue to evolve in Britain. How they change, and who these changes benefit, is frequently disguised by labels that imply personal choice and responsibility rather than systemic success or failure. Savage et al. (2015) describe how the middle class is no
longer an easily-identifiable category of the British population, but a messy mixture of social groups with blurred boundaries. The summary of current education systems demonstrates that the national picture of schools, curriculum and qualification policies, and additional music education provision is also arguably ‘messy’. Just as the elite and the precariat exist and are easily separated from the middle class majority in Savage et al.’s new class model, the literature about music education suggests that there are clearly identifiable small groups within society who have huge music education opportunities or, conversely, no music education access at all. It is in the ‘middle’, however, that most secondary schools exist. Just as with social class, different schools within this ‘middle’ offer very different presentations of music education, and the music education experiences of the children within them are even more varied. This thesis explores two such schools.

Additionally, the literature presented in this chapter highlights the frequency and implications of labels in the English education system and in music education particularly. Labelling theory is therefore a valuable tool in this study exploring student and teacher perspectives of secondary school music education and, as I discuss in the next chapter, is particularly valuable when considered alongside Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice.
3. Theory

This thesis is situated within the field of sociology of music education. A growing community has contributed to the field. 11 international symposia have now been documented in proceedings and journals (e.g., Dyndahl, Karlsen & Wright, 2014; O’Flynn, 2011; Rideout & Paul, 2000; Roberts, 2008). Of particular significance to the development of the field are the works by Froehlich (2007), Froehlich and Smith (2017), Green (1988, 1997, 2001, 2008) and Wright (2010). Bourdieu’s theory is frequently employed within the field, notably in Burnard, Soderman and Hofvander-Trulsson’s (2015) edited book Bourdieu and the Sociology of Music Education. This thesis also draws on Bourdieu’s Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977), particularly the field mechanisms of doxa and illusio, and also on labelling theory as summarized by Rist (1977). This chapter focuses on these theories.

3.1. Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) developed a Theory of Practice which presents human action as the result of interaction between the three concepts he identifies as habitus, capital and field. Bourdieu’s work has influenced sociological research in many different fields and is frequently used in the literature about school music education. Indeed, he wrote that “nothing more clearly affirms one’s ‘class’, nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music” (1984/2010, p. 10). It is therefore unsurprising that so many music education scholars have used Bourdieu’s theory to inform their own work. One of the
enduring topics of discussion in the field of sociology is that of social class, and it is also one of the most difficult concepts to define. Bourdieu does so through the identification of the concepts of habitus, capital and field, which will be discussed below.

At the heart of Bourdieu’s theory is taste, also referred to as judgment and distinction. In *Distinction* (1984/2010) Bourdieu presents an in-depth examination of the tastes, and therefore implied judgments, of different social groups. As he famously writes in the introduction, “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (p. xxix). These classifications are formed by, and in turn form, our habitus, capital, and field position. Discussing Bourdieu’s understanding of judgment as a class mechanism, Skeggs (2004) reminds us that “for Bourdieu, taste is always defined by those who have the symbolic power to make their judgement and definitions legitimate (the conversion of cultural into symbolic capital)” (p. 107). Bourdieu argued that judgment is formed in large part by shame and wanting to look clearly distinct from shaming attributes and situations: “In matters of taste, more than anywhere else, any determination is negation; and tastes are no doubt first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance (‘sick-making’) of the taste of others” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 56, in Skeggs, 2004, p. 41).

Furthermore, Bourdieu saw music as a particularly significant site for the demonstration of judgment, writing that “nothing more clearly affirms one’s ‘class’, nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music […] because the flaunting of a ‘musical culture’ is not a cultural display like others […]” (1984/2010, p 10). He explains that music is the most spiritual and pure of the arts because it “says nothing and has *nothing to say*” (1984/2010, p. 11). Whilst this statement may be controversial,
understanding music as both unusual and invisible offers a valuable lens for examining music education fields, since they are spaces where judgments may be both invisible and formed from distastes and shame. School music education is often a site where students are unable to challenge the rules imposed on them by teachers (who in turn cannot challenge government policy ‘rules’), and where judgments in the form of exam results confirm ‘the way things are’ for different social classes. Bourdieu developed his Theory of Practice (1977) to shed light on how class is experienced and reproduced. The three core components of the theory-field, habitus, and capital—are briefly outlined below in order to inform a more detailed discussion of his concepts of doxa, illusio, hysteresis and symbolic violence, which are central to the focus of this thesis. I also consider how it intersects with labelling theory.

3.2. Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice

3.2.1. Field

Field, for Bourdieu, is “the social space in which interactions, transactions and events occur” (Thomson, 2014, p. 65). To fully understand any interaction, event or phenomenon, attention must be paid to the field in which it takes place. Rather like a football pitch, the field is a boundaried space in which the participants take certain positions that reflect their habitus and capital. Griffiths (2018) describes field as “an arena where the values and capitals of different groups are placed and traded in relation to one another. It is both geographical and the values, qualities and norms developing within
the geography” (p. 43). Each field has its own “rules, histories, star players, legends and law” (Thomson, 2014, p. 67). Fields can be further divided into subfields and simultaneously contribute to the field of power. Multiple fields can be in play at any one time, affecting hierarchies and relationships, particularly in educational contexts. For example, players who have power in the school field, music field and economic field may immediately occupy an advantageous position in the field of school music education, as has been demonstrated by the music education and sociology research discussed in Chapter 2. This is an example of the ways that fields can interact with and impact each other. Positions and experiences in other fields are likely to influence how the participants experience and comment on the musical field. Field is significant to the understanding of habitus since “dispositions arise from the fields to which one has access, knowledge and experience” (Skeggs, 2004, p. 145) and, likewise, to the accumulation of capital.

3.2.2. Habitus

Bourdieu explains habitus as ingrained patterns of behavior and ways of seeing the world, described by Maton thus:

Formally, Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of actors (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a “structured and structuring structure” (ibid.: 170). It is “structured” by one’s past and present circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is “structuring” in that one’s habitus helps to shape one’s present and future practices. It is a “structure”
in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or unpatterned. (Maton, 2014, p. 51)

Habitus is not fixed but interacts with field and capital. It is possible for individuals to transform their habitus through the acquisition of further capital, thus permitting a change of position within the field. Habitus is unconscious, which makes it difficult for individuals to recognize their position within a field and allows the domination of certain social groups to appear ‘natural’ and legitimate (Reay, 1995, on Bourdieu, 1990b). However, if the individual finds themselves in a position where they experience dissonance between their own habitus and the prevalent habitus in the field, they may become aware of their own habitus and even find that it changes (Wright, 2010). Reay (1995) highlights the potential for habitus as a tool for examining social inequalities, since it “is not solely rooted in location. At the centre of the concept are the social practices, which are the outcomes of an interaction between a habitus and a field. The focus is as much on process as on position” (p. 359).

Burnard (2012) offers a description of musical habitus as a “general disposition”, which highlights how beliefs about musical ability are formed:

Thus a musician’s habitus is acquired in the family as the product of early childhood experiences, along with schooling. It provides a general disposition, within which creative practices and narratives exteriorize themselves as subtle descriptions, which involves unwritten ‘rules of the game’ (the range of
possibilities inscribed in the field), and which can be analysed independently of
the characteristics of their occupants. (Burnard, 2012, p. 267)

These “subtle descriptions” accumulate so that individuals gradually believe themselves
to be musical or unmusical. Indeed, Burnard’s description is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s
claim, to be discussed later in this chapter, that charisma is a “product[s] of learning”
made invisible through “hidden conditions”. A similar example might be how music
teachers often praise commitment to private instrumental lessons, practicing regularly and
playing in formal ensembles without consciously acknowledging that these commitments
are often economically or logistically impossible for children who have limited access to
financial and cultural capital. Therefore, individuals are rarely conscious of the extent to
which cultural capital and field position influence their musical or unmusical identity.

3.2.3. Capital

Capital is the various forms of assets available to players in a field, described by
Moore (2014) as “a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are
transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across
different fields” (p. 99). Capital is context specific, and its volume and composition have
a significant influence on field position (Skeggs, 2004). Bourdieu classified capital as
economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Symbolic capital has the potential to
metamorphose into other forms of capital and is thus a particularly powerful tool for
navigation of the field (Bourdieu, 1977). Moore (2014) separates economic capital from
those sub-types of capital (cultural, linguistic, scientific, literary) which appear to be of more intrinsic worth. This is particularly relevant to developing an understanding of elitism and alienation in musical fields:

In the field of the arts, for example, cultural capital is presented as reflecting the intrinsic value of art works in themselves (“essentialism”) and the capacity of certain gifted individuals (those with “distinction”) to recognize and appreciate those essential qualities. (Moore, 2014, p. 100)

Cultural capital has been described as Bourdieu’s “most famous contribution” and as a “pivotal concept[s] in cultural sociology” (Hanquinet & Savage, 2016, p. 9). It reflects both the value of art works and the capacity of gifted individuals to appreciate them (Moore, 2014), and is summarized more specifically by Allen and Mendick (2013) as “forms of knowledge and taste” (p. 464). Access to social and cultural activities increased significantly during the twentieth century, and Bourdieu’s recognition of culture as a mode of currency reflects this. Understandings of cultural capital continue to evolve alongside other societal shifts. For example, Hanquinet and Savage propose that present-day conceptualizations of cultural capital “should now take into consideration the plurality of aesthetic paradigms at play in its formation” (p. 14). Since cultural capital is of particular importance to my study, I acknowledge Hanquinet and Savage’s advice to conceptualize Bourdieu’s own theories in a contemporary manner, which includes reference to the cultural omnivore debate. Employing capital as a theory in educational research, Reay (1995) cites Lamont and Lareau’s argument that cultural capital can be conceptualized as a form of social and cultural exclusion, and Griffiths (2018) provides a
reminder that “just as a field is localised, the capital within it is also localised. It is a fluid rating that is changed by time and place” (pp. 47-48). Expressions of capital in one music education site may therefore be valued differently in another.

3.2.3.1. Charisma and capital

The literature frequently references the difficulty of defining charisma in modern society. Originating from St. Paul’s letters, the Greek khárisma means “gift of grace” and the term has historically been used in religious contexts (Potts, 2009). Its adoption as a sociological concept is widely attributed to Weber, whose three types of legitimate domination (rational, traditional and charismatic) are referred to in fields such as leadership studies and political science. Many scholars criticize Weber’s work on charisma as being contradictory to much of his other theory (Møller, 2017: see also, Nur, 1998; Turner, 1993), but despite this it has been the basis for most of the twentieth-century discussion on charisma. Nur (1998) provides a useful summary of how charisma has been understood throughout the literature since the 1950s. Three common themes emerge: that the concept of charisma is difficult to understand and define, raising questions about the value of decisions and opinions involving charisma; that charisma must be ascribed to the individual by others; and that charisma is not automatically a “good” quality, but a neutral attribute which can equally be used for unethical purposes. Unsurprisingly, Nur (1998) is not the only scholar to suggest that “it would be even better if researchers, for the sake of clarity, came up with a completely different term that
appropriately defines the behaviors presently subsumed under ‘charisma’” (p. 19). (See also Bloland, 2000; Møller, 2017; Rai & Prakash, 2016). Møller’s (2017) suggestion that “the common denominator seems to be a kind of extraordinary power but the nature of this power is undefined.” (p. 55) is perhaps the most understandable summary of the discussion.

Bourdieu engaged with Weber’s various writings about charisma, but rejected many of them as contradictory and insufficiently grounded in social conditions (Hutt, 2007). Instead, he understood charisma to be a “product of learning” rather than an innate quality:

At the same time it becomes possible to establish whether these [artistically legitimate] dispositions and competences are gifts of nature, as the charismatic ideology of the relation to the work of art would have it, or products of learning, and to bring to light the hidden conditions of the miracle of the unequal class distribution of the capacity for inspired encounters with works of art and high culture in general. (Bourdieu, 1984/2010, p. 21)

Bourdieu argued that “the ideology of charisma” is constructed from capitals, but disguised in order to maintain hegemony:

The ideology of natural gifts is too potent, even within the educational system, for an expression of faith in the powers of a rational pedagogy aimed at reducing the practical schemes of familiarity to codified rules. (Bourdieu, 1984/2010, p. 67)

Belief in talent and giftedness facilitates this process of disguise:
The ideology of charisma, which imputes to the person, to his natural gifts or his merits, entire responsibility for his social destiny, exerts its effects far beyond the educational system; every hierarchical relationship draws part of the legitimacy that the dominated themselves grant it from a confused perception that it is based on the opposition between ‘education’ and ignorance. (Bourdieu, 1984/2010, p. 389)

Identifying this act of disguise draws our attention to another of Bourdieu’s concepts, symbolic violence, which will be outlined later in the chapter.

Related to capital and charisma is Bourdieu’s reference to “natural gifts.” As I will discuss below, research using labelling theory has shown that labels given by teachers to children can have significant longitudinal impact on their educational progress (Rist, 1977). Bourdieu’s descriptions of charisma prompt consideration of how labels such as musical, talented, creative and able may be perceived as “natural gifts” (indeed, it is interesting that the literature about charisma has not been widely associated with music education discussion, despite the increasing attention to understandings of labels such as talented, gifted or musical, which I used in my own data collection and will therefore discuss further in the methodology and results chapters). This sheds further lights on Burnard’s (2012) description of a musician’s habitus as a general disposition acquired from early childhood experiences as well as schooling. If children, through the habitus of their upbringing, assume that they are unmusical and do not have the natural gifts required for success, they will not have “faith in the powers of a rational pedagogy” and, through this lack of engagement, increase the likelihood of being labelled unmusical or
uncharismatic by others. It is therefore apparent that labelling theory will help with the identification and interpretation of symbolic violence in music education contexts.

3.2.4. Field mechanisms and conditions

Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice is founded upon the interactions of habitus, capital and field, but several other concepts also operate within the theory. This thesis employs the field mechanisms of doxa and hysteresis, and the field conditions of illusio and symbolic violence. Whilst these concepts can all be addressed individually, they are most valuable when perceived as “two sides of the same coin” (Grenfell, 2014a, p. 148). Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter, whilst divided into explicit sections for each mechanism or condition, increasingly makes links between Bourdieu’s various concepts and their relationship to labelling theory.

3.2.5. Doxa

Doxa are the unwritten rules of a field, described by Bourdieu as “that which is beyond question” (1977, p. 169). “What is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying: the tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition” (p. 167). Deer (2014a) describes doxa as “the cornerstone of any field”, determining “the stability of the objective social structures” or habitus of a field’s agents (p. 116). When doxa are strongly internalised and reproduced by agents’ dispositions, the field is stable. Doxa are not
democratic or discretionary: “nothing is further from the correlative notion of the 
*majority* than the *unanimity* of doxa, the aggregate of the ‘choices’ whose subject is 
everyone and no one because the questions they answer cannot be explicitly asked” (p. 
168). The silent nature of doxa means that its legitimacy is rarely questioned. Both 
dominant and dominated social groups maintain and reproduce “taken for granted” rules 
that maintain inequalities, and doxa’s role as a symbolic form of power means that field 
positions further advantage those who are already dominant: “The fact remains that, 
despite everything, the struggle [for truth] always takes place under the control of the 
constitutive norms of the field and solely with the weapons approved within the 

3.2.5.1. *Doxa in education.*

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) describe how the doxa of education legitimizes that 
which is valued by the dominant classes, which often results in the dominated classes’ 
self-exclusion from education:

One of the least noticed effects of compulsory schooling is that it succeeds in 
obtaining from the dominated classes a recognition of legitimate knowledge and 
know-how (e.g. in law, medicine, technology, entertainment or art), entailing the 
devaluation of the knowledge and know-how they effectively command (E.g. 
customary law, home medicine, craft techniques, folk art and language and all the 
lore handed on in the ‘hedge-school of the witch and the shepherd’, as Michelet
puts it) and so providing a market for material and especially symbolic products of which the means of production (not least, higher education) are virtually monopolized by the dominant classes (e.g. clinical diagnosis, legal advice, the culture industry, etc.). (pp. 41-2)

Bourdieu reminds us here that whilst certain “legitimate knowledge and know-how” are recognized, understanding of the doxa required to produce them are not made clear to players of the game. Furthermore, the contrast in his examples of legitimate and devalued know-how prompts comparison with the English education system’s categorization of academic and vocational courses. As I discussed in Chapter 2, these two paths tend to result in educational segregation according to social class and, in music at least, successfully negotiating the doxa of academic courses requires considerable middle-class cultural capital.

The importance of legitimate knowledge and know-how is demonstrated in recent education research. Griffiths (2018) highlights this in his study of a West Midlands secondary school serving a working-class community. Although Griffiths focuses on illusio in his analysis, the article also provides an insight to the intersections between doxa (in this case, the hidden rules of the English education system which promotes unconscious segregation by social class), capital and field. This unconscious or silent reproduction of inequalities contributes to stability within the field of education and thus the field of power. The greater the stability, Bourdieu explains in his Theory of Practice (1977), the greater the taken-for-granted. “In a determinate social formation, the stabler the objective structures and the more fully they reproduce themselves in the agents’
dispositions, the greater the extent of the field of doxa, of that which is taken for granted” (pp. 165-6). Griffiths queried whether the teachers in his study made unconscious links between students’ perceived motivation and ability and their cultural and economic capital. He presented data to show a clear argument that students’ cultural and economic capital influenced teachers’ perceptions of their ability and motivation. Significantly, those children considered to be less able and motivated did not attribute their lower status to the teachers. This prompts questions about how much the students had internalized the doxa of the school, in addition to asking how the teachers’ unconscious awareness of their students’ capital affected their perceptions of their suitability for success in the field. Although Griffiths does not draw directly on labelling theory in his article, there are similarities with much of the labelling theory-focused research that I will discuss later in this chapter.

Identifying and challenging the doxa of a field is not straightforward, since it is intended to preserve the structures of its field. In their study of Swedish Physical Education (PE) teacher education, Larsson, Linnér and Schenker (2018) discuss how the doxa of a school subject can be challenged through socially critical approaches, recognizing assessment components as “tools that may reinforce or challenge existing conceptions” of success in PE and proposing that assessment could therefore be a way to change the doxa of the subject (p. 116). Of particular interest is that the trainee teachers who participated in their study often focused on the need to ‘teach’ those students who were perceived as deviating from the doxa of successful PE participation, thus potentially using the doxa as a way to stigmatize these students who did not possess legitimate
knowledge. Teachers’ awareness of the doxa was therefore not a straightforward solution to existing imbalances, and the authors query whether socially critical approaches to PE teaching could actually increase power imbalances in the field.

Rimmer (2017) also discusses the challenges of identifying and questioning doxa within an educational field. Her study focuses on doxa around the teaching and learning of dance technique in a higher education setting. It grew from an observation that “students’ questions were often directed towards understanding what my body was doing and not necessarily how or why and many individuals articulated a desire to get the movement ‘right’.” (p. 222), that prompted her to query what she and the students were considering important and/or taking for granted. Her attention to the unconscious and undisputed doxic agreement between teacher and students provides a further insight into the complexities of identifying and challenging doxa, including the potential for research to further embed doxa and its associated inequities. She suggests that the compartmentalization of “dance ‘subjects’” (e.g. technique, choreography, improvisation) results in multiple fields of learning within the discipline, thus requiring students to engage in multiple doxic negotiations that are further complicated if teachers neglect to make implicit field connections explicit. Rimmer concludes that the ‘unsaid’ nature of doxa limits meaningful understanding and makes alteration of doxic negotiation difficult unless “all social agents [are] enabled to reflexively consider their position […] the teacher alone cannot change the culture” (p. 233). It is possible, however, that not all agents will want to change the culture. In Rimmer’s case, for example, she recognizes that first year university students may actually be reassured by continuing to conform
with ‘the rules of the game’ in a time of personal change. As with Larsson et al.’s PE teacher education students, we are reminded that identifying and disrupting a doxa is not without risks for both conscious and unconscious participants.

3.2.5.2. **Institutional doxa.**

Doxa is also present in educational fields larger than specific classrooms or subjects. *Institutional doxa*, a term used by Davey (2012), draws on Reay’s description of an ‘institutional habitus’ for schools that helps middle-class students and families to feel “like a fish in water” (Davey, 2012, p.512). Davey identifies and uncovers institutional doxa “to strip away the layers of symbolism …[and] move beyond common understandings of the relationship” between school and family (p. 513). Through this process, she examines how one fee-paying school sixth form portrayed its students’ choices of university destination “as natural and obvious” (p. 510), despite a significant amount of intervention into the students’ decisions. Davey suggests that ‘classed practices’ research often focuses on middle-class parents’ decisions about their children’s education, neglecting the role of educational institutions themselves. This creates a sense of separation between the agent and the field, distracting attention from the institution’s position within the field of education and its own stabilizing doxa. Again, we are reminded of how Bourdieu’s concepts cannot easily be isolated from one another, since capital, field and habitus (and the secondary concepts such as doxa, illusio and symbolic violence) are so intertwined.
Illusio, (also known as interest and libido) is a concept that Bourdieu developed throughout his career. Grenfell (2014a) describes interest as “almost haunt[ing] his early work” (p. 151) before becoming a distinct concept that eventually became known as illusio. It is often referred to as “belief in the game”, and “has all the appearances of being natural, while it is indeed a product of the field, as a collective act, apprehended by individuals according to their own socially constituted habitus” (p. 158). Every field has its specific form of illusio, which sustains the game being played and influences the value of certain capitals within the field:

This collusion is endorsed, legitimised and sustained by fetishism – the practices, actions and capitals whose values exist only inasmuch as they are recognised and accepted by those within the field. (Griffiths, 2018. p. 43)

Like doxa, illusio is largely unidentified. Griffiths (2018) refers to Lupu and Empson’s description of illusio as “not the actual values and practices of the game, but the mechanism that ensures ‘an unreflective commitment to reproducing and enforcing the rules of that game’” (2015: 1312, in Griffiths 2018, p. 43). In Lupu and Empson’s study of accountants, the illusio was found to be well-established and its legitimacy embedded. Furthermore, the accountants became less inclined to question its legitimacy as they increased their status within the field. Unlike in more recently-formed fields, where illusio can be “open to interpretation and even challenge” (p. 44), Griffiths therefore
suggests that the illusio in the well-established field of school education is also likely to be resistant to challenge and unlikely to be disrupted. Bourdieu’s own work demonstrates that success in French Higher Education is only available to those who share the illusio of the dominant groups within the field (Grenfell, 2014a).

Griffiths (2018) used illusio as a tool to uncover inequalities in a West Midlands secondary school serving a relatively deprived community. He identified three social groups within the school’s Year 7 cohort, all of which would be considered working-class within a discussion of wider British society. These categorizations were created using considerable data about the students’ lifestyles and demonstrated a range of economic and cultural capitals within the community. At the beginning of Year 7 (the entry point to secondary education in England, when children are 11), it was already apparent that teachers perceived the lower-capital students as being less motivated than their more advantaged peers, and that this perceived difference increased by the end of Year 7. In contrast, the initial data collected from the pupils did not show any differences in their motivation, suggesting that all believed equally in the illusio of the school despite their teachers perceiving otherwise. Yet the post-Year 7 data from students suggested that some of the lower-capital students had become dissatisfied with lessons (although their enthusiasm for the school and their teachers remained high), which were now taught in ability groups that correlated remarkably to the social grouping data Griffiths had gathered earlier in the study. Even though this unconscious social segregation was disadvantaging the lower-capital pupils in the cohort, they did not blame the school or their teachers for their apparent failure to succeed in the field, instead maintaining belief
in the (well-established and legitimate) illusio that “schools know what they are doing and their practice should not be challenged” (p. 54). This is arguably a form of symbolic violence, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Griffiths also considered Bourdieu’s term *méconnaissance*, ‘induced misunderstanding’ or misrecognition, as a possible explanation for this result:

Just as the practitioners failed to recognise that lower-capital students were no less positive towards school than others, the lower-capital students failed to ascribe unsuitable lessons (and the associated lower teacher-perceived motivation and higher incidence of classroom behaviour referrals) to poor teaching or poor overall school provision. They did not blame the teachers or the school for the quality of their provision. This begs the question: What forces sustained this induced misunderstanding? (2018, p. 53)

One answer to this question is symbolic violence. Writing about Bourdieu’s presentation of illusio, Grenfell (2014a) comments that “[i]t is not so much that individuals occupy specific social fields but they are occupied by them: the “good” school “chooses” the pupil as much as the pupil chooses the school (p. 166). Although Griffiths was focusing on “good” positions within a single school, his study serves as a detailed illustration of how illusio can mask discrepancies in economic and cultural capitals, and their influence on field position. Again, we are reminded of how Bourdieu’s concepts mesh together to disguise inequalities and their resulting symbolic violence.
3.2.6.1. *Illusio and field.*

Sharing in the illusio within a field is a requirement for those who want to succeed at playing its game, and players who approach the game with a different perspective on the illusio may be disadvantaged:

The smooth running of social mechanisms depends on maintenance of the illusio, the interest, in economic and psychological senses. Where this breaks down, for example, commonly among adolescents not yet fully invested with the illusio, there is a reluctance to “play the game”. (Grenfell, 2014a, p. 159)

Grenfell’s observation about adolescents is pertinent to the literature discussed above. The students in Griffiths’ (2018) study, aged 12 or 13 at the end of data collection, did not disrupt the illusio, but some were beginning to raise doubts about it. In contrast, Larsson et al.’s (2018) study of PE teacher education students demonstrates how young adults who have chosen to become teachers are fully invested in the illusio of schooling. This extract from a student response about the role of the PE teacher shows complete confidence in the illusio:

Authoritarian and thrilling. The teacher is the master. In the learning process the aim is to educate the pupils to be like the PE teacher and to acquire the same knowledge. It is important to become and be like the teacher. (Student voice 2 in Larsson et al., 2018, p. 119)
In “educat[ing] the pupils to be like the PE teacher”, this teacher education student shares the beliefs of teachers in Griffiths’ (2018) study, who perceived greater motivation in those children who had higher amounts of economic and cultural capital and were therefore likely to share aspects of the teachers’ field position and habitus. Yet some of Larsson et al.’s respondents showed greater awareness of how capital and field position can impact on illusio. Student voice 1 expressed their awareness of “[s]port elitism, where someone (the sporty pupil) gains an advantage at someone else’s (the not so sporty pupil) expense” (p. 119). This level of awareness may be rare, however. Larsson et al. note that “[t]he term ‘teaching’ is frequently used in the responses, which indicates a view of knowledge which implies that the teacher possesses the legitimate knowledge that the pupils need to acquire.” (p. 122) This again suggests the importance of believing in the teacher (and sharing their illusio) in order to secure a good field position. Indeed, this study and Rimmer’s (2017) both demonstrate how illusio is a requirement for access to higher education, with Rimmer’s data showing not only how her (late-adolescent) participants have full belief in the illusio of the game of formal dance education, but are uncomfortable with disrupting the doxa of the game because this has the potential to also disrupt field position and illusio.

In Reproduction, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) explain how illusio maintains stability within the field of education. Just as students must believe in their teacher, so teachers must believe in their students, a belief that “impose[s] simultaneously conviction and ignorance of the social grounds of conviction”: (1977, p. 208)
…, the School today succeeds, with the ideology of natural ‘gifts’ and innate
‘tastes’, in legitimating the circular reproduction of social hierarchies and
educational hierarchies.

Thus, the most hidden and most specific function of the educational system
consists in hiding its objective function, that is, masking the objective truth of its
relationship to the structure of class relations. To be convinced that this is so, one
only has to listen to a consistent planner, discussing the most reliable way of
selecting in advance students likely to succeed academically and so of increasing
the technical efficiency of the educational system: […] (1977, p. 208)

Just as Griffiths’ teachers spoke of motivation and ability rather than social advantage,
Bourdieu identifies gifts and tastes as a way to disguise class relations and thus maintain
illusio within the field. Grenfell (2014a) observes that entry to elite higher education is
conditional on sharing the illusio of the dominant classes, yet studies such as Griffiths’
demonstrate how illusio alone is insufficient for entry. Habitus and capital also contribute
to developing an advantageous field position likely to permit entry. Once again,
Bourdieu’s concepts demonstrate the complex and invisible processes that maintain
inequity and enable symbolic violence to thrive.
3.2.6.2. **Teachers’ own illusio.**

Teachers’ illusio requires not just a belief in those students who are *gifted*, but the conviction that other (dominated) students do not possess such gifts. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) demonstrate this in *Reproduction*, where they describe how the illusio of the professor ensures that teachers do not have to feel a sense of responsibility to understand their students. Rather, any difficulties in understanding are the fault of the student who does not understand the doxa of the teacher:

Teachers never tire of repeating how difficult it is to mark the ‘mass’ of mediocre scripts which offer no purchase for clear-cut judgments and have to be read and re-read in laborious board-meetings before scraping a hairsbreadth acquittal tinged with contempt: ‘Give her a pass mark’ or ‘Let him through’. […] The language of these reports inexhaustibly stigmatizes the congenital ‘mediocrity’ of the ‘great mass of candidates’, the ‘greyness’ of the ‘dull’, ‘insipid’ or ‘flat’ scripts from which there ‘fortunately stand out’ the few ‘distinguished’ or ‘brilliant’ scripts which ‘justify the existence of the examination’. […] Transmitting in a language which is little or not at all understood, the professor logically ought not to understand what his students send back to him. However, just as the status legitimacy of the priest, as Weber remarks, causes the responsibility for failure to fall neither on the god nor on the priest but solely on the conduct of the faithful, so the teacher who, without acknowledging it and without drawing all the inferences, suspects he is less than perfectly understood, can, so long as his status
authority is not contested, blame his students when he does not understand their utterances. (1977, pp. 110-11)

Bourdieu and Passeron recognized that relationships are not purely one-way. Earlier in *Reproduction* they describe how “the religious or political prophet always preaches to the converted and follows his disciples at least as much as they follow him” (p. 25). This use of the *disciple* metaphor reminds us of the need for students to share the illusio of the teacher. Students must put their faith in the teacher and share their beliefs. Furthermore, because the illusio allows teachers to maintain beliefs in the talent or mediocrity of their pupils, it also reduces responsibility for both their approach to teaching and their awareness of the social position (and related advantages or disadvantages) that their students hold. As Griffiths (2018) observes, this contributes to the continuing “unconscious segregation” in the English education system, in which the doxa ensures that such segregation does remain unseen.

3.3. The relationship between doxa and illusio

As with all of Bourdieu’s concepts, doxa and illusio are interrelated. This relationship contributes to their invisibility and thus affords symbolic violence. Grenfell (2014a) explains that illusio is itself doxic. Like doxa, it therefore contributes to, and is expressed by, the field structures. Furthermore, since habitus is also unconscious, the extent to which illusio and doxa intertwine with it is also invisible.
As we have seen earlier in the chapter, Griffiths comments on the unreflexive nature of illusio. Likewise, Deer explores doxa’s “pre-reflexive” status, “mediated - and therefore restricted – by day-to-day experience, by established practice, in short by what is; as such it is stifled by the lack of means to express and therefore appropriately question what is implicit and taken for granted” (2014a, p. 118). Where doxa and illusio are identified, such as Larsson et al.’s (2018) PE education student who identified that elitism was part of the subject’s illusio, it risks disrupting the stability of the field – or, more likely, the field position of the individual who acquires this awareness. This can be problematic when individuals make changes to the doxa and illusio in fields where they are dominant players, but struggle to reconcile these developments with the stable and unconscious field of power. This was evident in the music education literature discussed in Chapter 2, for example the teachers in Hallam, Creech and McQueen’s (2017) study who found that altering their Key Stage 3 curriculum approach to be more democratic and inclusive highlighted the continuing elitism of the Key Stage 4 curriculum options (primarily GCSE Music) that remain aligned with the national field of music education, itself aligned with the field of power.

3.3.1. **Hysteresis**

Hysteresis is a field condition that draws attention to processes of change in field structuring or in the habituses of its players. The two are often mutual: evolving field conditions and accumulation of capital both influence change in habitus, which in turn
“feeds back into the structuring of the field itself in a continuing and continuous process of change” (Hardy 2014, p. 127). Stable conditions allow this change to be gradual and anticipated but in less beneficial circumstances, particularly where the field conditions change rapidly, disruption between field and habitus becomes more visible. Where they were previously coordinated, a mismatch now appears, known as hysteresis. This mismatch further disadvantages the players that it afflicts within the field. Accordingly, individuals with a habitus different to that of the field are more likely to experience hysteresis, whereas those with additional capital are generally quicker to recognize and benefit from changing field conditions. Existing hierarchies are therefore reproduced, since dominant players in the field receive additional opportunities whereas the dominated are slower to identify and respond to changing circumstances (Hardy, 2014). More powerful players often misrecognize how the dominated struggle to find a sustainable path in the field.

Hardy (2014) provides a useful example of recent, nationally experienced hysteresis within the English education system. The 1997 Labour government’s “education, education, education” manifesto, implemented as the National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy, altered the relative value of symbolic capitals in the field of education and resulted in a hysteresis between many teachers’ habituses and the field structures imposed by government. “What many primary teachers experienced was confusion as they sought to modify their practice and dispositions to conform to the new orthodoxy” (Hardy, p. 138). Those individuals who aligned with this new order benefited from more prominent positions in the field. Since the Labour party left government in
2010, however, many of these players in prominent roles have become vulnerable to hysteresis as the field restructures again.

Two further situations for possible hysteresis are also significant. Firstly, it should be recognized that it is not only the apparently disadvantaged who can experience hysteresis. Hardy (2014) provides examples from Bourdieu’s work that show experiencing upward social mobility can result in a player operating in a field that does not reflect their childhood habitus, which can challenge existing relationships and prompt players to question their commitment to both present and past fields. Secondly, an individual who maintains their habitus and field position in a changing field may find that the benefits of this field position diminish. Hardy suggests that this can be significant for artists, who may find that their influence and value in the field decreases with age. I posit that this is a particular concern for music teachers who do not cultivate an interest in the contemporary musical trends which influence the musical habituses of their students. In situations such as this, hysteresis is a tool to explore links between field transformation and individual habitus.

3.3.2. **Symbolic violence**

As we have seen above, symbolic violence can be identified when examining interactions between other concepts in Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice. Symbolic violence maintains social hierarchies through invisible and unrecognized forms of domination.
Lack of recognition means that symbolic violence is often more oppressive than physical violence (Schubert, 2014):  

Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, is the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate. This legitimacy obscures the power relations which permit the imposition to be successful. (Jenkins, 1992/2002, p. 104)  

Schubert (2014) argues for the uncovering of symbolic violence:  

[t]he best sociology will seek to locate the ways in which this less obvious form of violence works to produce and protect dominant interests while at the same time inflicting suffering and misery among dominated segments of the population. (p. 180)  

This challenge is especially pertinent in educational research, since the field of education is one where symbolic violence thrives. Indeed, Schubert provides several examples from Bourdieu’s work which offer insight into music education contexts, including this description of the potential for “talent” – or cultural capital – to disguise symbolic violence:  

The fact that there were relatively fewer successes among children from working-class groups only served to reinforce the belief that those who did poorly were intellectually and/or socially inferior. Children were to blame for poor performance through lack of talent, and their parents were to blame for not
providing the appropriate background – that is, the appropriate cultural capital – to succeed in school. (p. 185)

This theme of talent is especially pertinent to discussions about music education.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, there is a strong relationship between cultural capital and success in school music education. Yet although the music education literature generally refutes the concept of innate talent (Hallam, 2006), labels such as talented and creative remain in everyday use amongst music teachers and policymakers even when their implications are not thoroughly considered (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019; Koshy, Smith & Casey, 2018; Ofqual, 2015a; Sharp, 2015). The vast majority of young people “opt out” of music due to a belief that it requires “natural ability” or is “not for the likes of me” (Lamont & Maton, 2008), which is unsurprising when we recognize that implicit and explicit messages about talent or being musical actually disguise previously accrued capital. Bourdieu identifies these myths as “product[s] of learning”:

At the same time it becomes possible to establish whether these [artistically legitimate] dispositions and competences are gifts of nature, as the charismatic ideology of the relation to the work of art would have it, or products of learning, and to bring to light the hidden conditions of the miracle of the unequal class distribution of the capacity for inspired encounters with works of art and high culture in general. (Bourdieu, 1984/2010, p. 21)
Identifying and naming these products of learning would significantly reduce symbolic violence. As I will discuss below, however, labels in the education field tend to be used as a tool to mask, rather than reveal, social inequities.

3.4. Labelling theory in education

Labels are “a means to construct our social world” and help us to frame and understand our interactions (Moncrieffe, 2007, p. 1). Acts of labelling, self-labelling, and de-labelling (or normalizing) often have significant impact on our perceptions of ourselves and others, as with the examples of symbolic violence outlined in the earlier review of Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice. Labelling is rife in most educational settings: more able, dis-engaged and nurture group are all examples that teachers frequently use without consciously identifying why they are being applied to individual children and the habitus that those children occupy, or the extent to which social inequality has influenced the construction of these habituses. Like almost all fields, music education is a site where labelling allows participants to categorize and communicate about their experiences. Within the broader field of school education, music appears to be a subfield where labelling has particular impact on participation and attainment. For example, Lamont (2002) found that teachers and children both readily used descriptors such as musical or unmusical, often based on access to private instrumental lessons. These labels are arguably a form of symbolic violence.
Initially developed in research into social deviance in the 1960s, labelling theory was soon adopted by education scholars as a viable interactionist perspective to counter both biological and cultural determinists’ theories of educational outcomes. While the latter two positions both place ultimate causality for success or failure outside the school, the labeling approach allows for an examination of what, in fact, is happening within schools. (Rist, 1977, p. 293)

Rist’s own work was influenced by Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968) study of the Pygmalion effect, which found that labelling is a self-fulfilling prophecy since “people, more often than not, do what is expected of them” (p. 1). Rist’s (1970/2000) article took its starting point from the Pygmalion in the Classroom study and asked where expectations of achievement come from. In a longitudinal study of a seemingly homogenous student population, he recognized considerable diversity amongst the cohort and suggested that these social differences contributed to the teacher’s initial assessments of the students, made on the eighth day of Kindergarten. These judgments quickly became entrenched beliefs about the children’s status as fast or slow learners that continued into First and Second Grade, by which point the systems in place made it nearly impossible for “slower” children to “catch up” with their higher-achieving peers. Unconsciously, the teachers were correlating indicators of class privilege (such as dress, hairstyle, cleanliness, etc.) with academic ability. Their resulting practices in the classroom then made these assumptions a reality. Reviewing other literature about labelling theory in education, Rist (1977) highlighted the tendency of teachers to label
children, and the cumulative impact that this has on teaching processes and learning opportunities.

More recent education research continues to demonstrate the automatic nature of labelling, with some studies identifying stereotyping as a negative effect of labelling (Berlin, 2009; Blum & Bakken, 2015). Erving Goffman’s (1963) work on stigma, in which he compared the stigmatized to normal members of society, concluded that “[t]he normal and the stigmatized are not persons but rather perspectives” (p. 137). His theme remains relevant, as demonstrated by Scheff’s (2010) examples of labelling and normalizing in educational settings, where both processes can be positive or negative, and “automatic responses, whether labelling or normalizing, are equally undesirable” (p. 2). Scheff also observes that the majority of physicians are labelers, with a “vast difference of outlook” to those minority colleagues who normalize medical conditions (p. 3). In school music education, where teachers are exposed to music performance exam systems in addition to the school- and government-initiated assessment processes applicable to all subject areas, it is unsurprising that labels abound:

The grade or level awarded is a shorthand referent for a collection of competences which the person concerned evidences. Whilst this can be useful in everyday speech for summarizing attainment, it can be dangerous if the shorthand becomes a label for the pupil. (Fautley, 2010, p. 22)
School size may also be relevant to understanding the potential danger of labels, since Goffman (1963) suggests that stigmas are of less significance in situations where personal identity prevails and each participant is known as a unique person.

3.4.1. The impact of labelling.

Labels become more dangerous if they are not critiqued. Moncreiffe (2007) draws on Bourdieu’s theory in her discussion of labelling theory and practice in development studies, raising points that are also relevant to music education. Labelling from a distance (such as when commenting on famous musicians) allows us to avoid challenging our assumptions. Correspondingly, being fixed in our assumptions (such as when teachers quickly label individual children as musical or unmusical) means that we do not recognize the challenges within such encounters. She also observes that “persons who accept or feel unable to confront the stigma may opt to exclude themselves.” (p. 84), which is a possible explanation for the large number of children who do not seek inclusion in post-compulsory school music.

Moncreiffe (2007) also used Foucault’s work to show that labelling can define power relations and support the interests of those who already have power. Notwithstanding these concerns, however, she asserts that labels are necessary to society since they give structure to encounters that would otherwise be confusing and unwieldy. Indeed, the possibility of non-labelling is not without its own complexities. Matthews, Ritchotte and Jolly (2014) found that parents of gifted children were uncomfortable using
the label *gifted*, which has implications of being a magical or bestowed talent. Despite their discomfort with this particular label, however, many of the parents in the study did recognize that some sort of label was needed to help explain their child’s exceptionalities. They had recognized the benefits that labels can bring or, as Moncrieffe (2007) observed, the risk that conscious non-labelling and non-framing can result in issues or groups being omitted from policies or agendas. This is also relevant in Lareau’s (2011) study of concerted cultivation and natural growth, discussed in Chapter 2, which included the observation that working-class parents’ reluctance to initiate dialogue with professionals often resulted in their children not receiving additional support or opportunities.

Scheff (2010) identifies normalization as counter to labelling, arguing that there is a tendency for professionals to label or normalize the people in their care without significant thought. He raises concerns about the damage that is frequently caused by automatic labelling or normalization of individuals and their situations, providing examples from educational and psychotherapeutic contexts. Inadvertent normalization, however, can be beneficial to individuals who otherwise expect to be labelled out of general society. Rotenberg (1975) identifies “categoric de-labelling”, in which “the representative other […] usually functions as a teacher who reinterprets reality and valuates the actor’s new behavior” (p. 364). When examining the musical culture of a secondary school, it may actually be the case that being musical is normalized rather than labelled, for example, if the majority of children have individual instrumental lessons, or play in co-curricular ensembles, or massed singing is a part of the regular school routine. In such a school, Lamont (2002) comments that “those children who are not involved
may feel the difference from the others becoming more marked, and this negative group comparison leads to them developing a more negative musical identity” (p. 49). Perhaps these children are more likely to self-label themselves as unmusical, applying an exclusionary tactic to avoid the stigma associated with labelling from others.

3.5. Bourdieu, labelling theory and the research questions

The research questions for this thesis focus on Bourdieu’s concepts of doxa and illusio as they are found in the national field of music education and school music department subfields. In addition to comparing two case study school music department subfields with the national field of music education, the questions ask how doxa and illusio influence teacher and student perceptions of success in these contexts and whether individual teachers and students can challenge the doxa and illusio. I suggest that labelling theory offers a complementary viewpoint on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice, further drawing attention to the largely invisible processes of reproduction, and thus arguing it to be a useful tool for approaching these research questions. The field of music education is rife with labels that are rarely critiqued by teachers, students and policymakers. What does Grade Five piano or A* at A Level really mean? Those who are unfamiliar with the English education system may not understand these labels at all, whereas those who are operating in the field often consider them part of the doxa and illusio. Their status is sufficiently legitimate that to question them would risk a disruption potentially leading to hysteresis. As Grenfell (2014a) reminds us, illusio is itself often
doxic: belief in the game can be beyond question. And in fields where players are
discouraged from questioning doxa and illusio, symbolic violence is likely to be
legitimated and also remain invisible. Indeed, doxa and illusio are constantly intertwined
with the other concepts in Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice, and I therefore reference
several aspects of the theory where it is relevant to the data presented in the following
chapters.

3.6. The national field for music education

The theories presented in this chapter draw attention to normally invisible and
unconscious experiences of social class. Bourdieu’s concepts demonstrate how social
advantage can be disguised as meritocracy, and labelling theory provides an additional
lens with which to identify how doxa and illusio serve to advantage or limit players
within a field in order to maintain its stability. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2
provides multiple examples of how these processes can be experienced within music
education, and the research questions seek to better understand the operation of doxa and
illusio as it operates on local levels, in the two case study school music department
subfields, and on a national level.

I have approached this study by conceptualizing a national field of music
education (within the English context), closely aligned to the field of power. This
includes school music education as it is shaped by government policies such as the GCSE
Music specifications, music services and music hubs; by other organizations such as
ABRSM and similar exam boards, universities and conservatoires; and by community music groups. There is much overlap and interconnection between these various spaces within the national field for music education, often communicated through conscious labels that demonstrate the capital gained by players in specific areas of the field. For example, players who take ABRSM exams are more likely to have access to other areas of the national field that value the labels associated with the graded exam system.

Although the national field for music education is far-reaching and diverse, it is more easily navigated by those who have certain advantages. Families who live in urban areas and have the disposable income required to pay for instrumental lessons or other activities are immediately better placed to access the national field of music education and then move between different spaces within it. When parents also have the requisite cultural capital to help children with music practice or finding relevant learning opportunities, the field becomes easier to navigate again. These individuals then become dominant within the field and have greater influence on its development. Accordingly, whilst many music education opportunities do provide meaningful experiences and educational progression for less-advantaged groups, the dominant voices continue to be those who are best-placed to benefit from the field’s traditional markers of success, notably performing music from staff notation and measuring success using graded exams.

In this study I conceptualize secondary school music departments as subfields of both their schools and of the national field of music education. This is an example of how multiple fields can operate at the same time, since school music department subfields must operate within the rules of both their school fields and the national field of music.
As the data presented in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate, the rules of these two fields can create conflict within a music department subfield. School music teachers are primarily responsible for navigating this conflict and generally managing the conditions of the subfield. Although they may not have significant influence in their wider school field or within the national field of music education, they generally control the conditions specific to their departmental subfield, including how much value is given to the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education.

This study seeks to understand how the doxa and illusio of the national field for music education compares to those in secondary school music department subfields; how the doxa and illusio of these subfields influence their players’ perceptions of musical success; and the implications for students and teachers who challenge these doxa and illusio. By making visible that which is normally unseen, it may also become possible to increase inclusion within the national field of music education.
4. Methodology

In this chapter I outline the methodological approach to the thesis, and the processes of recruitment, data collection and analysis for the empirical project. The two case study schools are introduced using the publicly-available data that informed my recruitment of them as cases, and I also discuss my experiences as a researcher in each school.

I designed the study to explore the following research questions:

1. How do the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education in England compare to those of the subfields of case study secondary school music departments?

2. How do doxa and illusio influence student and teacher perceptions of success in these subfields?

3. What are the implications for students and teachers who challenge the doxa and illusio of music education?

As I describe below, the focus on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice informed both the study design and analysis process.

4.1. Methodology

This study was developed from a constructivist perspective in which meanings in the social world being studied are socially constructed by the actors participating in that context (Al-Saadi, 2014). This approach to research recognizes that “value-free research
is impossible” (Al-Saadi, 2014, p. 4) and the researcher’s own perspectives and values contribute to the findings. The context of the research is also significant (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2018). In constructivist qualitative research, the objective is to understand the subject being studied “as it is seen and understood by the participants themselves” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 41). Of particular relevance to this study is recognition of multiple realities within the research context, which is a real-world situation such as the two secondary schools featured in this study (Cohen et al., 2018). As I will now discuss, this reflexive and holistic approach to the research object corresponds with Bourdieu’s own methodological approach.

### 4.2. Bourdieu and methodological decisions

The research questions for this project draw on Bourdieu’s *Theory of Practice* (1977), which Grenfell (2014b) describes as “at one and the same time a *practice of theory*” (p. 218). Application of Bourdieu’s theory to empirical work thus lends itself to certain methodological strategies. Grenfell summarizes Bourdieu’s methodology as a three-level process. This begins with the construction of the research object, during which the researcher should “beware of words” that appear neutral but in fact embody the doxa of the object. The second step, field analysis, requires the researcher to consider how the research object field relates to the field of power, the structures within the field being studied, and the roles of individual agents within the field. Finally, participant objectivity demands that the researcher remains reflexive in their gathering and analysis of the data.
This approach has been expanded by many researchers working in the education field. Reay (1995), for example, provides detailed commentary on the potential for Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to be used as method in educational research, demonstrating how it “ensures that the research focus is always broader than the social activities of the classroom” (p. 359). This was a particular benefit of using Bourdieu’s theory to inform my own methodology since, as with Reay’s research, this study investigates how children’s social and cultural experiences beyond school impact on their school music education. Field is also recognized as a useful methodological concept. Thomson (2014) summarizes the key points for investigating a specific field thus: researchers should analyse the field positions in relation to the field of power, map out relationships and positions within the field with reference to the legitimation being sought, and analyse the habituses of players within the field and their trajectories. In addition to considering these processes during the design and implementation of the methodology, I also used the various components of Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice for initial coding of the data, as will be discussed in more detail later.

4.3. Project design

As discussed above, the study was designed within a qualitative paradigm. Ragin and Amoroso (2011) observe that qualitative research is often prompted by a “conviction that big-picture representations seriously misrepresent or fail to represent important social phenomena” (p. 11), and that goals of qualitative research often include interpreting
complex situations and advancing theory. This is true for my own study, which was prompted by a desire to better understand the situations and stories of children and teachers who contribute to the statistics about music education in England, using the concepts of Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice to explore how they perceive participation and success in school music education. Having established the suitability of a qualitative research design, I refined the methodology to that of a comparative case study.

Case study research involves using multiple sources of evidence to build an understanding of a case (Yin, 2014). This requires careful creation of records and preservation of an evidence chain (Yin, 2014), whilst maintaining objectivity during the data collection process and seeking data that goes against the hypothesis for the case (Stake, 1995). It is also important to recognize acts of struggle and control within the case, including how communication takes place and how power operates (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Accordingly, credible case study data collection is labour-intensive. Stake (1995) recommends creating a plan of target areas in advance, in order to avoid potential pit-falls and distractions.

Analyzing and reporting case study results requires continued ethical responsibility to the participants in the case, whilst recognizing that not all stories may be relevant to the final report. Writing up a case study is often understood as telling a story (Stake, 1995), but for Flyvbjerg (2011) this attitude can be limiting:

Narrative thus seems not only to be the creation of the storyteller, but seems also to be an expression of innate relationships in the human mind, which we use to make sense of the world by constructing it as a narrative.
The human propensity for narrative involves a danger, however, of what has been called the narrative fallacy. The fallacy consists of a human inclination to simplify data and information through overinterpretation […] (p. 31)

Flyvbjerg’s warning about oversimplification is important to the analysis process but often difficult to adhere to. Much data is generated in the typical case study, and the researcher must make choices about what is most valuable to the report. The data which is presented should be holistic, reporting multiple perspectives and the various factors involved in the situation, leading to deep understanding on the part of readers (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995).

Case study is a frequently-used methodology in music education and the results of good case studies are vital to professional understanding within the discipline despite their weaknesses (Barrett, 2014). I have used Stake’s (1995) definition of a case as being “specific, a complex, functioning thing […] [an] integrated system” (p. 2), in this study a secondary school, and Yin’s (2014) twofold definition of case study as “investiga[ing] a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in its real-world context” with “data triangulation help[ing] to address the distinctive technical condition whereby a case study will have more variables of interest than data points” (p. 2). Yin (2014) suggests case study as a methodology most suitable for addressing how and why questions which, in the context of this particular study, could be framed as how doxa and illusio are cultivated in the two case study schools, why they develop in particular trajectories, and how this relates to the doxa and illusio of the national field for music education. Schools vary considerably and their music provision even more so. Therefore, whilst an in-depth, qualitative approach is
well-suited for uncovering doxa and illusio within a school music department subfield, the comparisons to the national field of music education are unlikely to be representative of broader experiences. Ragin and Amoroso (2011) acknowledge this trade-off between depth and breadth when planning comparative studies since a greater amount of cases studied reduces the number of features that can be studied in each case.

The process of selecting cases was largely dictated by the research questions. Flyvbjerg (2011) provides a summary of selection types and their purpose: random selection can be either a random or stratified sample of a population, whereas an information-oriented selection process can help to identify cases that can be classified as extreme/deviant; maximum variation; critical; or paradigmatic. Cases can be chosen both for uniqueness and commonality. The case study researcher should be aware of opportunities to identify both types of features in individual cases and, with multiple case study research, to recognize commonalities and diversities across the group of cases (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011; Stake, 1995).

For this study, I chose to undertake a comparative case study of two contrasting schools, Stonefarm High School and Friars Hall School. This enabled reflection on how music education can vary between institutions whilst still allowing opportunities for immersion in the two cases, as is demonstrated by the variety found in the two music departments studied here. Case selection was informed by concerns with attaining maximum variation, particularly in music provision. Both schools are state-funded and belong to relatively small Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), but vary in size, age range, and socio-economic status of pupils. Before, during and after the data collection process I
made comparisons about social demographic, school size, pedagogy, and other factors that contributed to the diversity between the two schools. Although every school is of course unique and such a small study cannot truly reflect the national field of music education, the two case study schools are sufficiently contrasting that music teachers from other English secondary schools may well recognize aspects of their own music departments in some parts of the data.

To achieve as immersive an experience as possible, I visited each school between one and three times a week over a five-month period, observing music lessons, attending music performances and field trips, and interviewing pupils and teachers. This qualitative methodological approach allowed the participants’ experiences to be observed and interrogated, and their viewpoints better understood. It provided sufficient time and space to yield rich data, leading to detailed interpretation of the participants’ experiences in their respective schools. Ragin and Amoroso (2011) describe this process as a dialogue “between ideas and evidence. Ideas help social researchers make sense of evidence, and researchers use evidence to extend, revise, and test ideas” (p. 57). In this study, the five-month data collection period allowed me to revise my application of Bourdieu’s theory to the two cases as I came to know the participants, including a much more narrow focus on concepts of doxa and illusio in each school’s music department than I had originally anticipated.
4.4. Methods

A key feature of case study research is the use of multiple evidence sources (Yin, 2014). The sources of evidence used in this study were lesson observations and field notes, student focus groups, teacher interviews and document analysis. A similar process was used in each school, with flexibility for school-wide schedule changes and observation of specific music events. Khan and Jerolmack (2013) found discrepancies between what participants say and what they are observed doing, and therefore advise that

All researchers, regardless of whether they are ethnographers, interviewers, or survey methodologists, should avoid presuming that the attitudinal data they gather from verbal accounts indicate a behavioral intention – if they wish to say something definitive about situated action, they must observe it. […] one central task of the ethnographer is to compare interview accounts with observed activity and explain how and why they differ. (p. 18)

This proved valuable advice in both of the case study schools, where my attendance in lessons helped to build relationships prior to interviews and provided information to support a more reflective dialogue within the interviews. There were also some occasions where participants’ accounts did not align with my own observations of events, and I refer to both perspectives in the results chapters.
4.4.1. **Lesson observations.**

Lessons observations took place over a period of three months at each of the case study schools, intended primarily to provide context for the teachers interviews and student focus groups. I visited each school on average twice a week throughout this period, observing each selected class between six and ten times. At both schools, each lesson lasted for 60 minutes. Observation requires the researcher to look systematically “at people, events, behaviours, settings, artefacts, routines, and so on” (Cohen, et al., p. 562). The teacher participants were all used to being observed as part of their own high-stakes performance management. I explained that I did not want to see planning documents or observe outstanding lessons (a label commonly associated with Ofsted inspections) but was instead interested in how they and the students behaved over a series of lessons. At both schools, the teachers initially made a point of telling me what each lesson would involve and asking my opinion after each lesson. As we got used to one another, however, the teachers tended to chat with me about other topics or carry on with their work as though I wasn’t there, just as the students became more relaxed in my presence as the observation period progressed.

Cohen et al. (2018) recommend thorough preparation, including the development of observational instruments and decisions about one’s interactions and location within the observation setting. I prepared the following topics for attention during observations, all of which were relevant to both the teacher and student participants:

- engagement with lesson structure and content;
• understandings of musical success, as presented through formal and informal assessments, use of language, and use of musical content;

• interactions between the research participants, including any apparent acts of inclusion, exclusion and labelling.

As trends emerged from these initial focus areas, I also searched for counter-evidence in order to build a balanced picture of the case. I made a conscious decision to sit ‘out of the way’ at the start of each lesson, normally at the back or side of a classroom. Most of the lessons I observed involved group work or individual rehearsal time, so students frequently asked for my help with setting up instruments, using composing software programmes or negotiating group decisions. In each of the classes, certain pupils would actively ask me for help during most lessons whilst other individual pupils rarely approached me.

I video-recorded lesson observations and used this footage when particular events warranted detailed transcription. I also made written notes during the lessons and sometimes the teachers offered me copies of worksheets that were being used. Whilst I regularly chatted informally with both teachers and students after lessons, I sometimes asked specific participants if they could clarify events that I had not fully understood. Further member-checking opportunities arose in the focus groups and teacher interviews, where the participants frequently spoke in depth about their experience of lessons that I had observed.
Stake (1995) recommends remaining attentive to background information and physical contexts, as well as key events happening during the observation period. This information helps to demonstrate both “the uniqueness and the ordinariness” of the case location and participants (p. 63). This was true throughout my observations. Many ordinary things occurred during the lesson observations: children fell out with their friends, chatted with me about their weekend plans and were reprimanded about their school uniform or incomplete homework. As is common over a school year, several lessons were disrupted, for example by teacher absence or HPV vaccinations for female students, or cancelled completely due to bad weather or school exams. Over three months of observations, however, I observed enough lessons with each class to become familiar with how the students and teachers experienced ‘ordinary’ music lessons. This helped me greatly in the focus groups and teacher interviews, since the participants often referred to events which they knew I had witnessed or, conversely, talked about how things had been different in previous years or at their previous schools.

4.4.2. Document analysis.

At both schools, I gathered and analysed various documents before and during the data collection process. Schools in England are required to publish a significant amount of data annually, and other publicly-available sources such as Ofsted reports and national league tables also provide information. I was freely able to access the schools’ mission statements and policies (e.g., Special Educational Needs/Disabilities; Teaching and
Learning; Behaviour; Curriculum entitlements) through their websites. This information was particularly helpful when choosing and recruiting cases, since it allowed me to ensure that the two schools would be sufficiently different in size, age range and social demographic. The various document sources provided a greater understanding of each case study field and its nuances, and at times enabled me to identify tensions between official policy and the experiences of players in the field. During the data collection period, senior leaders at both schools encouraged me to refer to these public sources of information, and to school newsletters and social media communications. The music teacher participants also mentioned departmental policies to me (e.g., scheme of work documents; budget; event planning) during their interviews and informal conversations, but I did not request copies of these policies.

Although document analysis was not a primary source of data, the documents that I gathered served as an aid to the interpretation of participant responses and my own field notes, following Krippendorff’s (2013) recommendation for content analysis as a tool to “include inferences about institutional phenomena of which the institutions’ constituents may be only dimly aware” (p. 72). This description is especially pertinent given my focus on doxa and illusio, which are unquestioned and often unseen by players in the field. However, Yin (2014) reminds researchers that documents are prepared for a purpose and audience other than case study research, and interpretations of such evidence must therefore be appropriately critical.

As such, I refer to data gleaned from these documents where it can be used to better situate and understand the contributions of my participants, particularly for readers who
wish to compare the schools and participants of this study to their own educational contexts, but have tried to avoid prioritizing these sources above the voices of the study participants.

4.4.3. **Focus groups and interviews.**

Student focus groups and teacher interviews provided a large proportion of the data discussed in this thesis (see Tables 4-1 and 4-2 for participant details). The conversations were recorded using both audio and video recording equipment and transcribed in full, although the video footage was only used to clarify which member of a group was speaking. The teacher participants were sent transcriptions of their interviews for member checking, but the confidentiality implications of sharing transcriptions with multiple students made this impractical for the focus groups. Instead, I initiated an aural member checking process at the end of each focus group, and on some occasions checked sections of transcriptions with individual participants if I was unclear about their intentions in a particular part of the discussion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Participants and gender</th>
<th>Focus group date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Dez (f)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mal (f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Bob (m)</td>
<td>9.5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geronimo (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>Amelia (f)</td>
<td>26.4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eloise (f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everly (f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>Dave (m)</td>
<td>2.5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heinrich (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zuzu (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>Ben Parker (m)</td>
<td>9.5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Aaron (m)</td>
<td>4.5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Billy (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fred (m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>G-dragon (f)</td>
<td>8.5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shaz (f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V (f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Student participants total</td>
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<td>Student participants by class</td>
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<td>Year 9 = 8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Year 10 = 6</td>
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<td>Student participants by gender</td>
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<td>Male = 10</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>22.3.18</td>
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<td></td>
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Table 41: Focus group participants at Stonefarm High School
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<td>Kim (f)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Kylie (f)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>Isabelle (f)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Year 8</td>
<td>Barbara Woolcott (m)</td>
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<td>Chris Stevens (m)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Madison (m)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malonkadonk Davies (m)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael (m)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronald McDonald (m)</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Tea Cup (m)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sheila (f)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Alisha Daniels (f)</td>
<td>21.3.18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lucy (f)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Renee (f)</td>
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<td>Year 11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eliza Schuyler (f)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Gamora (f)</td>
<td>27.4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rocket (m)</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Table 42: Focus group participants at Friars Hall School

Yin (2014) describes the role of the researcher as moderating a discussion about particular aspects of the case study, which requires reflexivity and sensitivity to all the members of the group. This is echoed by Stake (1995), who describes the interview as “the road to multiple realities” (p. 64) and suggests that it is a crucial tool for obtaining the descriptions and observations of participants in the case. A semi-structured interview approach helped to focus the discussion on topics relevant to my research questions, whilst giving the participants opportunities to interact with one another and explore issues that are important to them within the broader themes of the research (Cohen et al., 2018). I followed Hermanowicz’s (2002) advice to converse and listen with the participants,
noticing what is said and not said within the group. Within each of the student focus groups, I also asked the participants to comment on their responses to a series of flashcards (see appendix H). Each card offered two contrasting definitions to a word relevant to the study: talented, gifted charisma, and musical. These definitions offered a clear starting-point for discussion about some of the more nebulous topics that I wished to cover in the focus groups, and I refer to the flashcards and their definitions where this particular data appear in the results chapters.

Social class was a particular concern in facilitating the focus group sessions. Skeggs (2004) describes “telling [w]as a technique of self-cultivation” (p. 125), and Khan and Jerolmack (2013) compared their own data in which elites were comfortable being interviewed with research whereas poor people “appear more likely to fear the interview and meet many questions with distrust or silence” (p. 12). Savage et al. (2015) had similar experiences gathering data for the Great British Class Survey and highlight the potential implications of classed-imbalances to engagement with research thus:

The complicity between receptiveness to particular research methods and social inequality is itself an issue to be challenged. Whereas the elite now command attention and interest, lying at the centre of media attention and social research, the precariat recedes from view, and this limits our awareness of social inequality and class divisions today. (pp. 333-34)

The two schools had different social demographics, and the enthusiasm of Friars Halls’ (generally) middle-class pupils to take part was notably greater than that of
Stonefarm’s (generally) working-class pupils. I took Hermanowicz’s (2002) advice to “get to know the person, […] prepare in advance how you will handle yourself and the encounter” (p. 482), leaving the focus groups until later in the data collection process at Stonefarm when the pupil participants were more relaxed in my presence. Almost unconsciously, I presented a quieter version of myself in the Stonefarm focus groups, moderating my own behaviours to be more aligned with the norm amongst the students. Despite this, the Stonefarm pupils who did participate often appeared less at ease during the focus groups and their interviews were generally shorter than those at Friars Hall, where it was often a challenge to contain the participants to a one-hour interview.

In addition to this difference between the case study schools, there were also visible classed differences within the music classes being observed at each school. For example, observing the Year 8 class at Friars Hall arrive one day, I noted that most of the pupils carried “labelled” bags (including Superdry, Michael Kors and Adidas) but that some individuals had obviously cheaper schoolbags, probably purchased from supermarkets or cheaper high street shops. Whilst I did not collect data about social demographic, my field notes suggest that those pupils who chose to participate in the study were often relatively more privileged than their peers in the class who did not. As with many educational studies, this raises questions about which voices are being represented in research and how methodological approaches can be altered to better create welcoming spaces for those who do not hold dominant positions within the field being studied.
Student focus groups were undertaken with small groups of pupil participants from each observed class. The recruitment script and letter included an invitation to take part in a focus group, and some students immediately expressed their desire to do this. Other students volunteered later in the data collection process, often after asking questions about my research or inviting me to observe their work during lessons. In both schools, the students signed up in focus groups of their own choice (see tables 4-2 and 4-2 for a breakdown of focus groups and participants at each school). Whilst this generally made for more relaxed conversations that allowed me to observe the participants sharing their perceptions with their peer group, there were two interviews where the group dynamic was less comfortable. At Friars Hall, Dizzy tended to dominate in his focus group with Shrek and Joanne, stating his opinions as facts and rarely creating space for the other two to contribute, whilst at Stonefarm the Year 9 girls’ group (Amelia, Eloise and Everly) were argumentative and explained that this is why they are not normally allowed to work together in music.

I approached the teacher interviews with an adapted interview guide that focused on exploring the teachers’ awareness of their own position in both the school field and the wider field of music education. This was especially pertinent to my interest in labelling as part of the doxa in each field. Since the literature shows that teachers label pupils both formally and informally (Chitty, 2014; Lamont, 2002; Rist, 1970/2010, 1977), I wanted to explore how the teacher participants used language around musical success in a different context to that of the lesson observations.
Tom Pryce was the only participant to take part in more than one interview and the last of his three interviews took place over Skype. All other focus groups and teacher interviews were held in the schools’ music departments. I invited Walter Williams to take part in a second interview via Skype, but he chose to answer my remaining questions via email instead. Lyndsey Carter went on maternity leave shortly after the data collection period concluded.

4.5. Guarding against the problems of case study design

The study design included recognition of the common problems with case study research. Yin (2014) warns about lack of rigour and the temptation for a researcher to “allow equivocal evidence to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions” (pp. 19-20), whilst Flyvbjerg (2011) discusses misunderstandings about case studies that focus on issues of theory, reliability and validity. Again, Bourdieu’s concern about reflexivity is relevant. To guard against a biased presentation of the cases, I regularly reflected on my own perceptions of the cases and sought out opportunities for member-checking throughout the data collection process. Flyvbjerg also highlights the danger of over-simplifying cases. Writing up a case study is often understood as telling a story (Stake, 1995), but this attitude can be limiting. Whilst the two case study schools were chosen for their differences, it would be unfair to present the population of each school as homogenous or its students’ experiences of music as uniform. The nature of qualitative data collection means that much of the data generated cannot be presented within the confines of this thesis (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995), but I have nonetheless attempted to
demonstrate the variety of experiences within each school, with particular attention given to this in the ‘outlier’ profiles presented as part of Chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters I have followed Power, Edwards, Whitty and Wigfall’s (2003) advice that whilst individual experiences can help to identify questions about a phenomenon, caution should be used to ensure that they are not presented as more exceptional than is actually the case. Instead, they suggest that these data should be used to prompt a deeper exploration of how these individual stories are influenced by larger systems, using their information as an opportunity to “refine or even redraw the ‘bigger picture’.” (p. 4), which I address in Chapter 7.

4.6. Ethics process

Educational research raises various ethical issues, most significant of which are the rights of children (Cohen et al., 2018). I therefore approached the study design and data collection with two particular considerations: ensuring that participation was optional and that choosing whether or not to participate would not impact the students’ normal education. Further pertinent issues included informed and ongoing consent, confidentiality and anonymity, all of which contribute to the safety and dignity of children (Cohen et al., 2018).

The methods used also raised ethical considerations, which were addressed with reference to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, 2014) and texts such as Cohen et al. (2018) and Dowling and Brown (2010). I employed document
analysis of various publicly-available information about each case study school and its community. Some of these documents were generated by the schools themselves, whilst others were sourced from Ofsted and other government sources, and the local media. Where any such documents included identifying information, I have withheld them from the reference list in order to maintain confidentiality. When observing lessons, I prioritized informed, ongoing consent above any potential benefits of covert observation. Cohen et al. (2018) offer a detailed list of ethical considerations for interviews which I applied to both the teacher interviews and student focus groups, and I also considered additional concerns of confidentiality amongst the participants within focus group sessions.

4.6.1. Institutional ethics requirements.

Prior to beginning the study, approval was gained from the university’s non-medical Research Ethics Board and from the individual schools. The Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2, 2014) emphasizes the importance of building a trustworthy relationship with participants in qualitative research, possibly including preliminary activities prior to beginning data collection. Unlike in Canada, there is no English equivalent to School Board research ethics committees and therefore there is a different procedure for gaining access to schools. Headteachers or other senior leaders within a school personally grant permission to researchers. Once this was acquired, I confirmed that the music teachers at each school were willing to participate in the study and
obtained their written consent. At Stonefarm High School the Head of School reviewed the pupil and parent letters before they were distributed, and the Assistant Headteacher responsible for Teaching and Learning took a particular interest in my study. At Friars Hall School, the Headteacher gave me permission to undertake research at the school, then left all further decisions up to the Director of Music. At both schools I was required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and Barred List check, which was made significantly quicker because I already held update status with the DBS. I also undertook the safeguarding trainings required by each school during my introductory visits, and followed their policies for interaction with children throughout the pre-habituation and data collection periods.

4.6.2. Participant consent, assent and communications.

In line with guidance from the Tri-Council Policy Statement and my own application to the university REB, I sought written consent and assent from all participants prior to beginning the study (see appendices 1-5). Each school office sent the letters of information and consent directly to the invited children and their parents, so I only collated the names of students who chose to participate. Similarly, I only acquired email addresses or phone numbers if students or their parents initiated contact with me through these channels. The children who were invited to participate in the study were reassured that participation was optional and would not affect their achievement in music (Cohen et al., 2018). Additionally, verbal consent was ongoing throughout the
observations, survey and interview processes, and all participants were reminded of the right to remove themselves from the study at any time during data collection (Cohen et al., 2018; Dowling & Brown, 2010; Yin, 2014).

I began the student focus groups with a discussion about respect and confidentiality within the group (Cohen et al., 2018), and I was almost universally impressed with the levels of consideration that the participants showed one another. I also ended all of the student focus groups and teacher interviews by reviewing what I understood the participants to have discussed and offering opportunities for clarification. On one occasion, the members of a student focus group agreed that a section of their discussion should not be transcribed since it was about other members of the school community who had not participated in the study. Otherwise, the participants generally used this opportunity to reinforce what they considered to be their “main points” about music in their school. I sent the teacher participants transcriptions of their interviews for member checking (Cohen et al., 2018). Although I did not routinely ask the student participants to member-check their transcriptions, there were a handful of occasions where I was concerned that I had “missed the point” of a particular conversation and asked the students concerned to read a short section of their transcription.

To protect the anonymity of the participants, all children and teachers chose pseudonyms and the school names have also been changed (TCPS2, 2014; Yin, 2014). As readers may observe in Tables 4-1 and 4-2, many of the participants put considerable thought into their pseudonyms! Some student participants chose to be known by first
name only, whereas others specifically requested that I also use their pseudonym surname in transcriptions and analysis.

4.7. The case study schools

4.7.1. Recruitment of the two case study schools.

The two case study schools are approximately 35 miles apart in the same English county, Hillyon. I sought cases that were significantly different, particularly in terms of social demographic. Also on my ‘wish list’ were differences in size: approximately 30 percent of secondary schools only have one music teacher (Daubney & Mackrill, 2016), and I consciously wanted to compare such a school with one that has a larger music staff. I anticipated that these factors would influence pupil and teacher attitudes to the nature of the school’s music provision.

Early in the recruitment process, Stonefarm High School confirmed that they would like to take part in the study. I had approached their sole music teacher, Tom Pryce, who I knew slightly, and he was very enthusiastic about participating. Since Stonefarm is a small school with an 11-16 age range, serving a rural, mainly working-class community, I then targeted other schools in the county which had a contrasting profile. I was able to confirm levels of contrast by referring to Ofsted reports and school websites, as well as informal conversations with my own professional contacts. Following an introductory

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8 Hillyon and the other place names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.
email to the Head of School at Friars Hall, a large 11-18 school with two music teachers, I had a telephone conversation with the school’s director of music, Walter Williams. He agreed to the school taking part on the condition that the initial visit went smoothly.

I therefore had two cases that were significant for their differences in size, pupil intake, and number of music teachers. However, I was surprised by other contrasts that emerged once I began the habituation process at each school. For example, Stonefarm High School has recently reviewed its assessment and reporting processes so that there is a focus on growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) rather than grades. The Assistant Headteacher who developed this approach mentioned Rosenthal and Jacobson’s *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968/1992) to me in our first conversation, and was very interested in my own study of labelling theory. In contrast, at Friars Hall it quickly became apparent that the music department focus was much more on graded exams such as those by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), and on achieving high General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Advanced Level (A Level) grades. I also noted a considerable contrast in resourcing and pedagogical choices in each music department. At Friars Hall the two music classrooms had instruments, technology and displays that were remarkably similar to those at my own secondary school in the mid-1990s. Each classroom had shelves of tuned percussion, one computer and a stack of portable keyboards. In contrast, the Stonefarm music classroom was set up to encourage easy access to rock and pop instruments and several computers, and the wall displays referenced the recent changes to the GCSE Music curriculum. These differences all contributed to the experiences and attitudes that the focus group participants discussed,
and to the content of lessons that I observed. Accordingly, it could be argued that the schools and their data are actually more contrasting than I anticipated when beginning the recruitment process.

4.7.2. **Statistics describing the case study schools.**

Table 4-3 uses data made publicly available by the Department for Education and the 2011 census to provide a comparison of the two schools\(^9\). They provide an introduction to both schools and highlight some of their differences as case study sites. The statistics demonstrate significant contrasts between the two schools. Friars Hall School is a large school that includes a sixth form and thus offers education up to the age of 18, located in a medium-sized market town with good road, rail and bus links to the county town. The school is graded *outstanding* by Ofsted and is the founding school in a medium-sized MAT. A relatively low number of students are eligible for Free School Meals (7.8%, compared to the national average of 28.6%), and the number of children whose first language is not English is also below the national average (10.1%, compared to 16.5%). The school’s exam results are consistently above the national average. In contrast, Stonefarm High School is a small school serving Years 7-11 only, after which students must travel to other towns to continue their education. Stonefarm is served by limited bus routes but there is no train station and no direct road to the county town. Although Stonefarm High School achieved a *good* Ofsted report just prior to the start of

\(^{9}\) References withheld for confidentiality purposes.
the data collection year, this followed a long period of poor exam results that lead to the school’s takeover by a local MAT. The number of children eligible for Free School Meals is only slightly below the national average (23.3%, compared to 28.6%) and less than 1% of pupils have a first language other than English. This statistic is reflective of the local demographic, which is almost entirely white British.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Friars Hall School</th>
<th>Stonefarm High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of School</strong></td>
<td>Converter academy and founding school of a 12-school trust (MAT).</td>
<td>Academy sponsor led, sponsored by a 5-school trust (MAT).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number on roll</strong></td>
<td>1289</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age range</strong></td>
<td>11-18</td>
<td>11-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of town</strong></td>
<td>14,405 (2011 census)</td>
<td>3,149 (2011 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance to county town</strong></td>
<td>13.9 miles.</td>
<td>15.6 miles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Hillchester)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ofsted grade</strong></td>
<td>Outstanding (November 2007)</td>
<td>Good (September 2017 Ofsted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pupils eligible for Free School Meals at any point in the last six years</strong></td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pupils whose first language is not English</strong></td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GCSE results 2017 (headline figures)</strong></td>
<td>65% Grade 5 and above in English and maths GCSE</td>
<td>35% Grade 5 and above in English and maths GCSE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 43: Summary of the two case study schools.
4.7.3. **Key Stage 3 music in the case study schools.**

In both schools, all Key Stage 3 students took music as a discreet, compulsory subject timetabled for one 60-minute lesson per week. The classes were intended to be *mixed-ability*, rather than being set or streamed according to, for example, English or maths attainment. A significant difference in provision, however, was that at Friars Hall Key Stage 3 (originally intended by the government to encompass Years 7, 8, and 9, for children aged 11-14) has been shortened to two years. For those students who did not continue to GCSE, their secondary music education therefore ended at the age of 13 and totalled approximately 80 hours, compared to the approximately 120 hours of music education experienced by Key Stage 3 students at Stonefarm. At both schools, students who continue with music at Key Stage 4 take the Edexcel GCSE Music course, with 2.5 hours of class music lessons each week.

4.7.4. **School uniform.**

As is common in English secondary schools, both schools required students to wear a uniform. At both schools this included a tie, with the standard-issue tie being in
the colour of one’s house. Selected senior students were awarded a special tie that designated their status as, for example, a prefect, sports captain or academic scholar. The student participants at both schools frequently mentioned the significance of such ties, and their symbolism is therefore further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.7.5. **Introductory visits.**

My time at each school began with a three-day intensive visit, during which I observed the music lessons that were being taught during those days and spent time talking informally with the music teacher(s). I was also introduced to other members of teaching and non-teaching staff in both schools, often informally in the staff room or dining room. Although these visits did not involve direct habituation time with the classes who participated in the study as discussed by Dowling and Brown (2010), they did provide an opportunity for me to become familiar with the school environment. After this period the music teachers and I agreed on suitable classes to recruit for the study.

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10 Readers unfamiliar with UK school uniforms may find that Harry Potter is a helpful example here! Each house at Hogwarts has a particular colour tie, and those senior students who are given Prefect status are also awarded a badge to wear on their uniform. These details are common features of most UK school uniforms and awards systems, and many schools also award badges to students who take part in committees or achieve high numbers of house points. Often, awards specifically for co-curricular achievements in music or sport are referred to as “colours”.
4.7.6. **Friars Hall School.**

Friars Hall is one of 38 state boarding schools in the UK. Almost half of the pupils are boarders who live at school during term time. Pupils pay for boarding provision, but not for costs associated with education. Such schools are therefore a financially-attractive option for families who are seeking alternatives to a local state school. The boarding population at Friars Hall is much more diverse than the local population. It includes a significant number of pupils who have parents in the armed forces and international pupils, along with pupils who are from other areas of the UK. Friars Hall is also the most over-subscribed school in the county for day (non-boarding) places and therefore has a more rigorous admissions policy than many other local state schools. (see Benn [2012] for descriptions of how state schools can shape their admissions policies and recruitment approaches to attract or dissuade certain families from considering a school)

I began visiting Friars Hall School in early January 2018. The school had two full-time music teachers, Walter Williams and Lyndsey Carter, although Lyndsey also taught Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) as part of her timetable. Over the initial three-day visit I also met several peripatetic instrumental teachers, some of whom worked in the school for multiple days each week. A number of teacher-directed ensembles rehearsed weekly and the department was preparing for a production of the musical *Cabaret*, a biennial collaboration with the drama department. Wall displays included statistics about uptake of GCSE and A Level, highlighting that the school’s
music entries were regularly above the national figure. During this period I observed classes in every year (Years 7-13).

Friars Hall School operates a 3-year Key Stage 4, meaning that children begin GCSE courses in Year 9. Music is therefore only a compulsory subject in Years 7 and 8 (Key Stage 3), when each class has one 60-minute music lesson per week. Accordingly, I planned to recruit one class from Years 7 and 8, one from Years 9, 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4, all studying the same GCSE specification over 2.5 hours weekly) and one from Years 12 and 13 (Key Stage 5, all studying A Level music over 4.5 hours each week). Observing all of the Key Stage 4 and 5 classes during my initial visits, I found the Year 11 and 12 classes to be particularly interesting. The Year 11 class included pupils with visibly contrasting attitudes to school music, which they were very quick to share with me even before they knew about my study topic. In contrast, the Year 12 class were much less interested in talking to me but appeared to have very strong relationships with each other and with the music teachers. Both of these classes were the largest in their respective Key Stages, which increased my chance of recruiting participants for the study.

Having observed several Key Stage 3 classes during habituation, I decided to recruit a Year 8 class for participation. The Year 8s were in the process of choosing GCSE options, which would provide much scope for discussion in focus groups (see Bray, 2000, and Lamont & Maton, 2008). I therefore identified a Year 8 class for the study based purely on timetabling: they had music on a day where both the Year 11 and 12 classes also had a lesson. The make-up of the three selected classes is shown in table 4-4. In all the three classes, the gender profile of the participants was generally reflective of the class as a
whole. The teaching for the Year 11 and Year 12 classes was divided between the two teachers, which is a common strategy for GCSE and A Level timetabling in some secondary schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of pupils and gender split</th>
<th>No. who participated and gender split</th>
<th>Teacher/s</th>
<th>No. of weekly, 60-min lessons timetabled</th>
<th>No. of lesson observation s completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 8</strong></td>
<td>27 (10 f, 17 m)</td>
<td>12 (4 f, 8 m)</td>
<td>Lyndsey Carter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 11</strong></td>
<td>17 (14 f, 3 m)</td>
<td>10 (9 f, 1 m)</td>
<td>Lyndsey Carter and Walter Williams</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 12</strong></td>
<td>6 (2 f, 4 m)</td>
<td>5 (1 f, 4 m)</td>
<td>Lyndsey Carter and Walter Williams</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 44: Friars Hall classes for the study**

In all three of the participating classes, recruitment occurred steadily throughout the data collection period. Frequently, individual students would ask about my research as we waited in the corridor before a lesson or drank tea in the music common room. Those individuals were often key to further recruitment, organizing their friends in the class to create a focus group and plan a meeting time. Unlike at Stonefarm High School, the students did not seem fazed by my presence in lessons or my role as a researcher. A few of the participants mentioned that their parents worked at one of the local universities and many told me about their own plans to go to university. Often students demonstrated, via
these casual exchanges, the concerted cultivation that Lareau (2011) associated with middle-class children.

I met with ten student focus groups during the data collection period at Friars Hall and also interviewed the two teachers. The data gathered in these interviews further informed my lesson observations and other interactions during school visits. In addition to weekly observations of the participating classes, I also attended a performance of the *Cabaret* production in February and sat on the judging panel for the school’s annual inter-house music competition, the Dunn Shield. Both events allowed me to see how music department activities were presented to the wider school community. It quickly became apparent that music was considered a stable part of school life, with a calendar of formal music events that repeated in the same format each year. As I discuss in Chapter 6, the participants’ attitudes to this stable field varied greatly.

4.7.7. **Stonefarm High School.**

Stonefarm High School was chosen as a case primarily for its small size. An 11-16 academy with only 343 pupils, it is one of the smallest secondary schools in Hillyon. After a period of poor results and falling numbers, the school was taken over by a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in 2015. The trust’s Executive Headteacher is based at the lead school within the MAT and a Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day running of Stonefarm High. Early in the 2017-18 school year, Ofsted awarded the school a *good* grading, which had a considerable impact on the data gathered at the school. As I
discuss in Chapter 5, the participants were proud of this official status and what it represented.

Stonefarm High School had one music teacher, Tom Pryce, who also taught drama for approximately one day each week in the 2017-18 school year and held a Lead Teacher role within the school’s pastoral structure. During the initial three-day visit, I observed Tom teaching music and drama, often meeting the same Key Stage 3 class in both subjects. Although the pupils expressed some interest about my role as a researcher at the school, it was often only on our second or third meetings that they began to ask me questions or sustain informal conversation. Unlike at Friars Hall, they seemed more cautious about interacting with an unfamiliar adult. I realized that Tom and most of the other staff members knew the students in multiple contexts, rather than only engaging with them in timetabled subject lessons. However, I was immediately made to feel welcome by staff at the school and my informal conversations with staff other than Tom seemed to positively impact the students’ trust. After a few days of being seen talking to staff in the corridors and the dining room, the students became much more forthcoming.

Unlike at Friars Hall, I did not meet any of the peripatetic instrumental staff, whose short timetables at Stonefarm meant that they did not ‘hang around’ for lunch or support ensemble rehearsals. At break and lunch times, however, there were often students visiting the music room to practise or ask Tom questions about homework or activities. Formal ensembles were limited to a ukulele club and a choir, but Tom often organized ‘one-off’ events that involved different groups of students.
Stonefarm followed a three-year Key Stage 3, with all Year 7, 8 and 9 classes having one 60-minute music lesson per week. Approximately a third of Year 10 and 11 pupils had opted to take GCSE Music, which is significantly above the national average (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019), and these Key Stage 4 classes each had 2.5 hours of music weekly. I had already selected the participating classes at Friars Hall, which placed timetabling constraints on which classes to recruit at Stonefarm. Tom and I therefore chose the three classes for participation in the study primarily on timetabling. These were in Year 7, chosen with the hope of obtaining student data about the transfer from primary to secondary school music education, Year 9, to explore the process of choosing GCSE Music and Year 10, to provide opportunities for observing and discussing the GCSE curriculum. The details about these classes are shown in the table below. The gender profile of the participants in the Year 7 and 9 classes was roughly aligned with the class gender split. It was interesting, however, that the participation rate amongst the Year 10 class was not reflective of the class dynamic. Those Year 10s who did participate were also involved in other music activities and I hypothesize that, for this particular class, the participant group profile is therefore more representative of social class and position within the music department subfield than of gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>No. of pupils and gender split</th>
<th>No. who participate d and gender split</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>No. of weekly, 60-min lessons timetabled</th>
<th>No. of lesson observations completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 (14 f, 12 m)</td>
<td>4 (2 f, 2 m)</td>
<td>Tom Pryce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 45: Stonefarm classes for the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Tom Pryce</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13 f, 11 m)</td>
<td>(3 f, 5 m)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tom Pryce</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4 f, 15 m)</td>
<td>(3 f, 3 m)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It took longer to recruit participants at Stonefarm than at Friars Hall. The students were more cautious about committing to the project and their parents were less willing to complete the consent forms, demonstrating Lareau’s (2011) description of a working-class sense of constraint in interactions with institutions. There was a notable shift in attitude after the Easter holiday, however, when the students seemed to accept me more as ‘part of the furniture’ of the school and expressed more curiosity about my project and how they could contribute. At this point I quickly recruited seven focus groups, which was proportional to the relatively small size of Key Stage 3 classes at Stonefarm compared to Friars Hall. The later timing of the focus groups within the data collection period also meant that we had a greater amount of shared experience in music lessons, which helped me with finding conversation starters when some of the participants were quiet or uncertain about how to present their ideas.

As at Friars Hall, I was invited to attend two events at Stonefarm High School during the data collection period. The first of these was a day-long trip with Tom Pryce and eight pupils from the Year 10 class. The event, held in the repertory theatre in Hillchester, was the launch of a music management project by a regional arts education organization. This provided an opportunity to spend time with some of the participants
and to work alongside them in a different musical environment, with different success values, to that of the school classroom. These pupils then worked on this project as an after-school activity for several weeks, planning and curating a concert performed by a professional band. I attended this concert, which they hosted in the school hall just before concluding data collection. Two pupils provided warm-up acts before the headline act, and several of the Year 9 and 10 study participants were present in the audience.

### 4.8 Analytical strategy

Saldaña (2009) advises qualitative researchers to code “slices of social life recorded in the data” (p. 15), from both participant-provided data and one’s own field notes and reflections. During the first few weeks of lesson observations I collated my field notes into a coded spreadsheet, adding additional codes as they emerged. These included references to Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts and the music education literature, private music lessons, music department resources, and the words used as the basis of the flashcard activity. Some of the codes were words used directly by the participants (Cohen et al., 2018), such as ‘family’, which was frequently mentioned by the Friars Hall participants and is discussed in Chapter 6. In addition to finding patterns in the data, some codes were used to identify differences of opinion or experience (Saldaña, 2009). This analytical process contributed to my shaping of the semi-structured focus groups and teacher interviews, during which I began to use these initial codes both more naturally and more deliberately (Saldaña, 2009).
I continued to recode the data over a period of three months after completing data collection, further refining the codes to create hierarchies (Cohen et al., 2018), reflecting on and rereading the data (Roulston, 2014), and linking the emerging themes to the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter 3 (Saldaña, 2009). From this coded data, I then identified 27 significant categories (e.g., Key Stage 3, listening to music, notation, instruments). These were grouped into the two main themes discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, Bourdieu’s concepts of doxa and illusio, each of which are considered alongside the parallel themes of music department, school and national fields for music education. The process thus loosely aligns with Saldaña’s recommendation that qualitative education research frequently generates 80-100 codes, which are then organized into 15-20 categories and from there into 5-6 themes.

4.9. Standpoint/reflexive statement

Reflexivity is a central, evolving component within Bourdieu’s theory (Deer, 2014b) and, more generally, much has been written elsewhere about the importance of case study researchers adopting a reflexive approach and identifying their own positionality within a study (Dowling & Brown, 2010). Indeed, in his later works, Bourdieu himself explored how his theory could be used to increase participant power within what is inherently an imbalanced relationship (Deer, 2014b). The following details provide a brief description of my own positionality and the strategies used to employ a reflexive approach during this study.
My own experience of music education has been varied. I am a white, heterosexual female and grew up in a rural farming community on the Anglo-Welsh border. I attended state primary and secondary schools in the 1980s and 1990s, at which time the local music service offered subsidized instrumental tuition in schools and a wide range of ensembles, membership of which was also subsidized. I had lessons on one or more instruments from the age of seven onwards, both through the music service and with private teachers in the local community, and took graded exams. I also participated actively in school and music service ensembles, often made possible by my parents’ willingness to drive me to rehearsal venues around the county. Although much of the local music education offer was open to all children, my own access to formal musicking was greatly increased by the additional resources available within my family. I was awarded a music scholarship to attend the Sixth Form of a local independent school, and took A Levels in Music, Music Technology and Religious Studies.

Throughout my school education I was involved in creative projects and a great deal of informal musicking that did not revolve around staff notation, alongside a more formal music education focused on the Western classical tradition. Within my own local music education field, therefore, I occupied a fairly dominant position, aided by financial and cultural capital within my family. Upon studying at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, aged 21, however, I realized that this experience was not comparable to that of my peers who had arrived at Guildhall via specialist music schools, elite independent schools, junior conservatoires and/or the National Youth Orchestra. This recognition of inequities within the national field of music education prompted me to become a
classroom music teacher. Although access to this career was made easier by my Western classical music credentials, throughout my teaching career I have increasingly sought to approach music from a more inclusive perspective.

I taught secondary school music for eight years prior to beginning my PhD and have continued to teach part-time whilst studying. All of this teaching experience has been in England, in a variety of state and independent schools, and the first four years of my career were spent at a school in Hillyon that is located near Stonefarm. In this role I took pupils to various county-wide music events and myself attended county-based Continued Professional Development (CPD) sessions for music teachers. As such, I was familiar with the national and local music education field (and the local field of power) before beginning the research project. Although I had not worked in either of the case study schools before, or worked directly with their music teachers, I was aware of their local reputations. Furthermore, following my first teaching position in Hillyon, I worked for four years at a state boarding school elsewhere in England that is similar in size and structure to Friars Hall School.

This background meant that I approached this research with considerable knowledge of the English secondary education system, with specific experience of curriculum policies and pedagogical trends in music, and of the local area in Hillyon. I was familiar with the various places, local events and transport systems that participants mentioned, and recognized the classed and geographical differences in their accents. Cohen et al. (2018) recommend that researchers communicate their own biography in order to increase transparency during data collection and publication, and I also found it
to aid the process of recruitment. Sharing my own biography helped with gaining entry to the case study schools and then recruiting participants. Writing alongside Jerolmack in 2013, Khan acknowledged that his ethnographic study of St. Paul’s School was greatly aided by his own prior connection to the institution, which helped him to gain access and build rapport with the pupils. I had a similar experience at Stonefarm High School, where several students became more relaxed in my presence once they knew that I’d taught in a neighbouring school that was familiar to them through family links. Additionally, in both schools, student participants expressed interest in my decision to disrupt my own teaching career for PhD study, prompting conversations about my experiences as an international student and transitions to and from professional employment.

I was aware that my own experiences as a teacher could potentially create an unhelpful power imbalance with the study participants. The researcher’s positionality is generally one of power over their participants (Cohen et al., 2018). This is particularly true when working with children (Dowling & Brown, 2010). In an attempt to reduce this, I dressed more casually than the school staff and introduced myself to children using my first name. I let the teachers take a lead with how much to include me in lessons and other activities, and I was careful not to revert to ‘teacher mode’ myself when interacting with the student participants. I also avoided offering an opinion to the teacher participants unless they specifically asked for my thoughts about particular pedagogies, resources or events. Although I carefully followed the schools’ respective safeguarding protocols and behaved professionally during the research process, I did not discipline children who misbehaved or otherwise intervene with their learning during lessons.
Power balances can also become further compromised if friendships develop during case study research (Cohen et al., 2018). I developed positive relationships with many of the participants during the school visits, although my direct contact with the student participants ended immediately after the data collection period. During the analysis and drafting process, I regularly sent emails and hand-written cards to the teacher participants which could be shared with the students, updating them about the status of the project. Although the Friars Hall teachers made limited response to these communications, Tom Pryce at Stonefarm was keen to remain informed about the findings and how it could influence his own professional development.

My status as an experienced teacher also required reflexivity. Cohen et al. (2018) warn that neither researchers nor their inquiry are neutral, and that reflexivity obliges the researcher to recognize how their own biography contributes to each stage of the research process. I was aware that I might easily make assumptions about the two schools and that I might not ‘see’ things that are part of my own doxa as a music teacher. Indeed, Deer (2014b) notes that “in Bourdieu’s view, reflexivity cannot be an exercise carried out on an individual basis.” (p.198). To guard against this, I wrote a weekly reflection on my field notes and used this activity as a prompt to member-check particular details that were otherwise solely from my own observations. I also sought out opportunities for informal dialogue with teachers and students at both schools, so as to better understand the factors influencing their experiences of education. At Friars Hall, I frequently ate lunch in the school dining room, sitting with staff members from different departments and witnessing their general conversation about school life. At Stonefarm, I attended staff briefing
occasionally and always stopped to chat with the office staff on my arrival at the school. Although such interactions were not a formal part of the data collection process, they proved invaluable to broadening my understanding of each school as a field and often highlighted topics to address more formally with the study participants.

Additionally, several of the focus group participants drew my attention to their own difficulties in navigating their school’s music department subfield. Such information illustrated Flyvbjerg’s (2011) warning that as research develops acts of struggle and control may become visible within the case, including how communication takes place and how power operates. The interview data about these events prompted me to reconsider data from lesson observations and, in some cases, to seek new observational data.

4.10. Presenting the data

The data gathered at the two schools are presented and discussed in the following chapters. Chapter 5 is focused on Stonefarm High School and Chapter 6 on Friars Hall School. As I explore in these chapters, my experiences as a visiting researcher and the data gathered varied significantly in the two locations. The structure of each chapter reflects these differences. Whereas Chapter 5 is organized using Bourdieu’s concepts of field, doxa and illusio to present the data about Stonefarm, Chapter 6 is structured around themes from the Friars Hall data, with reference to Bourdieu’s theory built into this presentation. In Chapter 7, I make direct comparisons between the two schools and
consider how the data gathered relate to, and potentially inform our understanding of, the national field of music education.
5. Stonefarm High School: “Just ‘cause you haven’t heard
of our town doesn’t mean we’re useless.”

In this comparative case study of two secondary school music departments,
Stonefarm High School was chosen as a case because it serves a rural, working-class
community. The local population is almost entirely white British and less than one
percent of students at Stonefarm High speak English as an additional language\textsuperscript{11}. 23.3% of the pupils qualify for Free School Meals and the school is in an electoral division
where household deprivation is slightly above average for Hillyon county. The school is
small and only has one music teacher, Tom Pryce. Tom was interviewed three times
during and after the data collection period, and 18 pupil participants took part in focus
groups (see table 4-1). I observed all of these participants during music lessons and other
school activities. This chapter presents data primarily from the teacher interviews and
student focus groups, but also makes reference to my field notes and informal
conversations during the data collection process. These ethnographic details are intended
to provide further context to the participants’ conversations and highlight areas where
their accounts do not align with my own observations of their actions and experiences.

Music is a popular option subject at Stonefarm. Typically, 28% of Stonefarm
students choose to take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Music,
which is significantly higher than the national average of six percent (Daubney, Spruce &
Annetts, 2019). However, relatively few of these students are active in other legitimated

\textsuperscript{11} References withheld for confidentiality purposes.
areas of the music education field. The proportion of students taking individual instrumental lessons is half that of the national average of 14% (Ofsted 2012b), and even fewer of these students go on to take graded exams. For most of the Stonefarm students, their music education experience is entirely based on what Tom Pryce offers in class music lessons.

Stonefarm High School had undergone considerable change in the years prior to the data collection period. Following a series of poor Ofsted reports, it was closed in December 2014 and reopened in January 2015 as part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The participants referred to the impact of this process on their experiences at the school. Particularly important to the study is the Stretch Stonefarm initiative, which was launched by an incoming assistant headteacher in September 2015. This is based on a growth mindset ethos and, by the 2017-18 academic year in which data collection occurred, had a considerable impact on how the students and teachers perceived themselves and the school. The Stretch Stonefarm initiative is discussed specifically in the illusio section of this chapter.

5.1. Field

This chapter uses Bourdieu’s concepts of field, doxa and illusio to present data gathered at Stonefarm High School. Using this framework for data analysis has enabled me to identify the participants’ understanding of their music education experiences and their perceptions of success in music education. A field is a defined space in which a
game is being played. Field interacts with habitus and capital, which influence access to and position within any given field (Skeggs, 2004). The field at Stonefarm High School, for example, is shaped by (and continues to shape) the working-class habituses of most of its players. Many fields can exist, relating in different ways to the field of power which overarches all other fields (Griffiths, 2018; Thomson, 2014):

Bourdieu posited a social world (the field of power) made up of multiple fields: large fields could be divided into subfields (e.g. art into literature, painting, photography, etc). Each subfield, while following the overall logic of its field, also had its own internal logics, rules and regularities [...]. (Thomson, 2014, p. 71)

In this chapter, Stonefarm High School is understood as being a field and its music department a subfield.

Stonefarm High School as a field is notable because it has made significant changes to its rules of engagement during the past few years, causing some players to experience what Bourdieu would call hysteresis, a mismatch of habitus and field conditions. These transformations have been prompted by the school’s change of status to that of an academy in a multi-academy trust (MAT). The data additionally refer to the community of Stonefarm itself, which is also a field, and the national field of music education. Each of these fields has their own rules and a player may occupy different positions within each of the fields. For example, the data discussed below show that Tom Pryce has a dominant position within the field of Stonefarm’s music department, where
he is able to control the music education experience offered to children in that particular school, but is dominated within the national field of music education which, as the data about GCSE Music particularly demonstrates, rewards a more elitist approach to musicking.

5.1.1. The school as a field.

Tom Pryce was in his third year at Stonefarm High School during the data collection period. He had joined the school as its music teacher soon after it was taken over by a small MAT, following an inadequate Ofsted inspection that had left it in special measures. The labels associated with Ofsted judgments carry immense value, and the attention given to a special measures school is significant both within and beyond its local community. Officially, the old school had closed and been replaced by the MAT, but the Ofsted labels informally remained. The MAT takeover was not sufficient to reassure parents of the school’s capabilities, as the following extract from interview data with Tom illustrates:

Alison: Remind me, when you arrived [in September 2015], was this school in special measures?

Tom: Yes. I think. It was. On a[n] historic Ofsted from [November 2013], and no one had been back, I think.

Alison: And they waited quite a long time for someone to come back, is that
right?

Tom: Well, then they became an academy [in January 2015], which wiped the slate clean, er, but the historic significance lingered. In the community. Because this is such a traditional community, you see. (Interview 1, March 2018)

Stonefarm High School was eventually inspected by Ofsted at the start of the 2017-18 school year, at which point it was graded good. This label is displayed on a banner outside the main entrance, and it was clear throughout my visits that both the staff and pupils were proud of this judgment.

Tom often referred to how much he enjoyed working in the Stonefarm community and how the school shared the town’s ethos of caring for the individual, but he recognized the potential for this small-town environment to inflate negative perceptions about the school:

Tom: Because this is such a traditional community, you see […] Stonefarm is in this little bubble, and they don’t realize what it’s like anywhere else. The adults, even. And they’ve got, it’s like a fishbowl. And they only know what it’s like in Stonefarm. […] Stonefarm is a nice town, and generally the people are nice, but because it’s such a close-knit community, word gets around quick, people trust each other’s word, and so anything that happens of note goes around Stonefarm like wildfire […] Everyone jumps on a bandwagon, um, which is negative for the school. (Interview 1, 22nd March 2018)
During the data collection period I began to appreciate why Tom found these attitudes frustrating. In casual conversations locally, my own friends and acquaintances often expressed doubts about the school. Many times, these were based on ‘ancient history’ rather than recent knowledge of the school. Yet Tom did feel that community perceptions about the school were beginning to change:

Alison: Has the good Ofsted made a difference?

Tom: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, yeah it has. It’s shook people up, certainly. And [the head of school] invites people in. You know, if someone, if he even hears of someone, in some instances, or a parent slating the school, or even issuing a not massively positive, kind of sideways comment, he’ll go “Well come in. Let me show you round. I’ll prove it to you.” You know, and we’re now, I think, a very transparent school. “If you’ve got a problem with it, come and have a look, we’ll show you. If you got any queries, we’ll show you around.” (Interview 1, March 2018)

Later in the same interview, we discussed how the school’s reputation was beginning to change following the good Ofsted grading earlier in the academic year. At the beginning of our third interview in October 2018, I congratulated Tom on the school’s 2018 GCSE results, which were praised in the local media both for being improved and for being above the national average. He replied enthusiastically, mentioning the positive shift in community attitudes towards the school and how the recent open evening had been unusually well-attended.
Whilst Tom had benefited from the field changes at Stonefarm High School since 2015, for some other players in the field these changes appeared to cause hysteresis. Ofsted reports and local media reporting about the school both commented on significant staff turnover in the three years preceding the data collection period. The impact of this change was mentioned to me informally by several members of staff who told me that I had visited the school at a really good time, often linking this to changes of personnel and policy. Had I spoken to former staff, a different perspective of these changes may have emerged. Both the head of school and assistant headteacher told me that Tom was particularly invested in the new developments to the school field, meaning that music was therefore one of the departments that had particularly embraced the school’s growth mindset ethos discussed later in this chapter. Indeed, the assistant headteacher described several examples of how implementing changes to the field structure had required negotiation with teachers, parents and students who were resistant to change. Therefore, whilst Tom and most of the student participants at Stonefarm spoke positively about the recent changes in the school’s field, their interviews should not be assumed to reflect the experiences of all the players in the field.

Stonefarm High School is a small secondary school: in the year of data collection there were 343 students on roll. Although its typical roll in the years 2010-2015 was larger, with yearly rolls of between 400 and 500 students, such numbers are still considerably lower than the national secondary school average of 910 students (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017). This often appeared to shape the field of the school. The small number of community members was physically visible. During my
initial visits I noticed an unusual sense of space within the school. The corridors did not feel crowded at lesson changeover and there were sufficient tables in each classroom for teachers to be flexible with seating plans for their classes. In music there were always enough instruments for the whole class to participate simultaneously in activities. I asked Tom whether all teachers had their own classrooms:

Tom: Yeah, and I’m grateful of that. […] because a nomadic teacher works bloomin’ hard. […] Whereas for me, my lessons start so quickly I’ve forgot to take the register. Genuinely. So that, yeah, I do agree. (Interview 1, 22nd March 2018)

This consistency for teachers helped to ensure smooth lesson transitions and eased communication. Unlike in some larger schools, where telephone and email are the common methods of communication, I often observed staff going to find one another for face-to-face conversations or to collect students for meetings. When other staff came into the music room it was clear that they knew both Tom and his students well. Compared to many schools in which I have worked, this was unusual. The nature of Tom’s teaching timetable (in the data collection year he taught all of Years 7-9 for both music and drama, in addition to the Year 10 and 11 GCSE Music groups) and the small size of the school meant that he actually did teach almost every student on roll. It was clear through briefings and informal conversations in the staff room, however, that most of the students were known to all staff by their first names, rather than being categorized by year, house or surname as is common in larger schools. This helped to create a field where being
known was normalized rather than perceived as a result of positive or negative stigma (Goffman, 1963; Scheff, 2010).

The school’s small size was a recurring theme in the student focus groups. The participants tended to move easily from talking about lessons to other aspects of school life, implying a continued sense of identity and comfort across their experiences of school. Ben Parker and Samuel (Year 9) often used the small school argument to explain their views, such as in this conversation about group work:

Alison: So one thing that I’ve noticed in this school, compared to other schools, is that I get the feeling that the kids are fairly comfortable around each other in lessons. Is that right?

Ben: Yeah.

Samuel: The good thing about this school is it’s pretty small. Like, everybody knows who each other is. And so you kind of mix, whether you like it or not. And I’ve, obviously I have some people I dislike or whatever but it’s all good, because each person kind of has their own kind of group of friends. Like, we play football while some other people may walk and do laps [the term used for students who spend their break and lunchtimes walking repeatedly round the school corridors]. And it all comes together, we all kind of just get along. And, ‘cause there’s no point of arguing, not really. […]

It is interesting that Samuel recognized distinct groups within the student body whilst simultaneously feeling that everyone is known “whether you like it or not.” He suggests
that there are distinct student groups within the field but that there is cohesion between these groups. It was not coincidental that students felt known beyond their own class or year group. The school was organized into mixed-age tutor groups that encouraged pupils to build inter-year relationships, and many students also lived alongside one another in geographically isolated, close-knit villages and hamlets. In many ways, the local community structure benefited the students and the school itself:

Billy and Aaron (Year 10) also spoke about being known within the school community, but suggested that confident pupils were more likely to be noticed in lessons:

Billy: And also in a big school I feel like people are more cocky because – they need that to get attention because there’s more students there. So then you want to stand out, they need to stand out to get noticed more. Whereas here, everyone knows everyone, like in every single year –

Alison: So are you saying it doesn’t matter if you’re charismatic here? You can still succeed?

Billy: I think in subjects – in, like, the playground and break times and stuff like that, where it’s, you’re not in lesson, I think it doesn’t matter. But in lessons it’s good to, um, show— show your confidence and like emotions about whatever.

Aaron: It encourages others as well. Obviously them knowing you, they’re like “If he can do it, I can do it as well.” Or she, whatever.

Similarly, Tom felt that it was important for students to feel comfortable and confident in the school environment:
Tom: I know it’s not in my subject as such, but it’s as a whole school thing [...] Because when I got here, the feeling, er, in music and around the school, was of unrest and just not being sure [...] But make them feel like they’re in a comfortable environment, so that they haven’t got that barrier to learning straight away. (Interview 1, March 2018)

Tom’s mention of the changes during his time at the school further emphasizes the impact of becoming part of a MAT. It is also interesting to note how the various participants mention the field conditions of being comfortable, being known and being confident – but not being “cocky”.

As I will explore later in this chapter with regards to doxa, arrogance was actively disliked by almost all of the participants at Stonefarm, with some of the older students describing “Stonefarm modesty” as a required trait for acceptance within the field. This modesty, however, seems to be calmer and more confident than the “unrest and just not being sure” that Tom mentioned as a historical field condition. The Year 10 focus groups also referred to a change in atmosphere at the school, highlighting the transformation of the field during the last three years.

I frequently reflected on how Stonefarm High School had an expectation that every activity should be valuable. Unlike in some schools, this did not equate to every activity seeking to improve exam results, but there were clear expectations about participation within the school field. The School Leadership Team (SLT) intended to foster common values in the school field, and it was notable that these applied even to the
high-achieving students who, in other schools, often manage to excuse themselves from the more mundane aspects of school life. Rather, anything generally considered mundane was reviewed and altered. For example, the tutorial programme was refocused during the data collection year, with teachers being given specific guidance for activities and pedagogies during this daily session. Therefore, all students were expected to participate in tutor time at the start of every day. They could not be withdrawn for interventions, rehearsals, or other events.

This expectation of full in-class participation was enabled by the working-class habitus of most of the students and their families. Rather than a lack of investment in education, I perceived this as a commitment to whole-class lessons as the main source of education. For example, very few students had individual instrumental tuition during the school day, meaning that it was rare for students to miss part of an academic lesson, and it was also unusual for school trips to take place during curriculum time unless they were on a whole-school Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education day. I mentioned to Tom that there was an unusually high level of importance placed on attending every lesson punctually, and how that seemed a positive aspect of the school’s culture and attitude towards learning and achievement, even though it was making it more difficult for me to schedule interviews that might run over the end of lunch time. Tom replied:

Tom: It’s not a bad thing, because people are passionately wanting to keep them in their own subject area, which is fine, of course I understand that. But when I got here, there was very much an idea of “Ah, you’re taking kids out [of lessons] again?” You know, like me being in the building is a massive upheaval for the
staff, because I’m getting the kids to do things, you know. (Interview 1, March 2018)

This attitude to co-curricular music trips and individual music lessons was a source of conflict for Tom and illustrates the difficulties that can occur when negotiating the relationship between a field and subfield, even for individuals who hold dominant positions within one or both contexts (Thomson, 2014). As he had described earlier in our conversation, Tom remained keen to reduce “the feeling [...] of unrest” that was present when he joined the school, but also recognized the limitations that “stability” and being “comfortable” can bring, to use his own words, particularly in a community where relatively few children had geographical and financial access to educational opportunities beyond those provided by the school.

The school field, itself part of the local community field, impacted on the music department subfield in other ways too. As in many rural schools, location and transport significantly influence planning at Stonefarm High. There are five dedicated school bus routes for Stonefarm High in addition to the public bus routes serving the town, and three quarters of the pupils qualify for funded school transport. Even in a rural county such as Hillyon, this is an unusually high figure. Accordingly, the school empties out dramatically at the end of the lesson time, and attendance at after-school clubs and revision classes is often quite low. In the year of my study, the school also moved to a shorter lunch time. The whole school continued to have lunch simultaneously (in many larger schools a split lunchtime is common, which can be a hindrance to music rehearsals), but Tom expressed his frustration at how this time limitation further restricted
opportunities to develop extra-curricular provision and performance quality in the music
department subfield:

Tom: So it was an hour, and [now] it’s forty minutes, and that’s absolutely
wrecked it for me. Totally wrecked it.
Alison: And you’ve also not got, partly because of where you are [located],
you’ve not got that ethos of everyone sticking around after school either, have
you?
Tom: No, and there [are] issues. Um, around transport. Because there are people
who live in Stonefarm, but – again, it’s the strength [and] depth thing. Like, your
one brass player or one wind player lives –
Alison: In Parverham [a remote village right on the coast]. [Tom agrees]. And has
to go home on the bus.
Tom: Yeah. And so, something that could generate a band, a wind band or just a
‘band’ band, any kind of school band, you haven’t got. Because you’ve only got
one person that it hinges on, and then they can’t do it. Yeah, it’s such a shame.
(Interview 1, March 2018)

Tom’s concern is familiar to many music teachers, but it is compounded at Stonefarm by
social class and geography. As he recognizes, the habitus and capitals of most Stonefarm
students means that few have the formally- and often expensively-acquired skills required
for participation in a directed instrumental ensemble, which is commonly viewed as the
measure of a successful music department. This problem is magnified in a small school
since there is a smaller pool of children who can be included, but Tom also highlights the
difficulty of a rural location and how transport can be a barrier even when individual children do have the skills required. We therefore see how having access to one form of capital, such as individual instrumental lessons, may not be sufficient to overcome other barriers such as geographical limitations. If students cannot acquire co-curricular ensemble experience in the subfield of the school music department, they are unlikely to gain the confidence and skills required for participation in the wider field of formal music education such as county and regional ensembles, which in turn provide opportunities to improve field position in the national music education field. Although Tom rightly attributed part of this problem to a gap between the school field and the music department subfield, it is apparent that habitus and capital are also significant factors that are beyond his, or the school’s, control. Once again we are reminded of how Bourdieu’s concepts must be applied holistically in order to uncover symbolic violence.

5.1.2. The music department as a subfield.

Within the field of Stonefarm High School, much of my data were gathered in the subfield of the music department. Subfields follow the overall logic of their field, but also have their own rules (Thomson, 2014). Tom was the only adult to play a significant role in this subfield. He was the only teacher of classroom music and, unlike at Friars Hall where a large proportion of the pupil body have individual instrumental lessons, there were only five visiting instrumental teachers at Stonefarm, each of whom were on site for less than half a day each week. As Tom described in his first interview, this gave him
more autonomy within the department but also helped him to feel established within the
field of the school:

Alison: I like this idea that you’re thinking about it as not just being the music
teacher. And I’m wondering if that is easier in a smaller school?
Tom: Oh yeah, hundred percent. Absolutely. Because you know, as much as I
pretend to big myself up, in a bigger school with [a] two- or three- or four-person
department, you’re just, you know, mucking in and helping out the department,
working towards that department goal, and you can’t necessarily establish
yourself throughout the school. Whereas in a small school, where I teach virtually
everybody, […] therefore, my role around the school is very noticeable. They
know who I am, they know what I’m about, um, so yeah, it does have an effect I
think. [Pause] But I like that. (Interview 1, March 2018)

The student participants also perceived Tom as central to the music department subfield.
He was well-liked amongst the participants, and several focus groups offered detailed
accounts of how he’d shown them different instruments and helped them with specific
skills. When I asked questions about the music department as an entity, the students
frequently responded with details specific to Tom:

Alison: In this school, what counts as being good at music?

Eloise: Being able to play an instrument and playing it well.

Everly: Being able to keep on going even when you fail. Like, Sir doesn’t care
about your musical ability, it’s how much you work towards it.
Everly had benefited from Tom’s attitude to teaching, in which he valued musical progress and curiosity above previously-acquired skill.

Although Tom was popular with the student participants, there was still a clear delineation of power within the music department subfield. The Year 10 girls, Shaz, G-dragon and V, had their focus group at lunchtime after a particularly challenging double lesson for their class. Tom had tried to introduce a new set work (Defying Gravity from Wicked) and had pitched his introduction at a level that was too high for the class. He had assumed that they would at least have heard of Wicked and The Wizard of Oz, but it became apparent that the students did not even know what a musical was. As an observer I felt that Tom had contained his frustrations remarkably well, but his attitude had nonetheless been noticed by the students. As these girls explained, their high expectations of him as a teacher made them more aware of those times where he did not connect with them so well:

Shaz: I was gonna take art, and that’s what put me off art, it was the aspect of the different teachers, and Mr Pryce is an amazing teacher.

[Pause]

G-dragon: Apart from, when he starts to act like a dad. Like earlier today. [Shaz echoes this]

Alison: What, when he did the “you’re all not paying attention”? [They agree]

V: It immediately feels like dad talk!
G-dragon: I feel probably he was looking at me pacifically [sic]. When he said that, I was like “right.”

Alison: Which he almost certainly isn’t, but probably everybody felt like that.

Shaz: I felt like that.

[…]

Alison: Why do you think he ends up doing – the dad thing, in a lesson like that?

G-dragon: I think he just gets frustrated ‘cause it’s like me when I can’t – like, do something, I get really frustrated […]

[…]

Shaz: But then a hundred percent, ninety nine percent of the time he’s not like that.

Later in the conversation Shaz returned to this metaphor, linking it to labelling and highlighting how students use this approach to create fixed expectations of their teachers: “And you know, I don’t even think it’s the dad label that we’ve given him. I think it’s the fact it’s – because he’s a good teacher, we all expect so much more from him […]”.

Although Shaz was one of the oldest and most perceptive student participants at Stonefarm, she demonstrates here how features of the school field (notably the illusio of growth mindset and the rejection of labels, which are discussed later in this chapter) influence experiences in the subfield of the music department. In this particular school,
and possibly in other small schools, it is therefore important to consider whether the music department subfield is actually more in alignment with the field of the school than the field of national music education.

5.2. Doxa

Doxa are the unwritten rules of a field, that which “goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 167). These rarely-questioned rules contribute to individual players’ inclusion within, or exclusion, from the field, which is largely dependent on embodying the preferred habitus and capital of the field. Doxa serve as cornerstones to the field, providing stability and aiding reproduction (Deer, 2014a). As discussed in Chapter 3, the doxa of education contributes to stability in the field of education and thus to the reproduction of the dominant classes, often through the self-exclusion of the dominated from the field. Doxa help to maintain players’ habituses within the field, and this interconnection of doxa and habitus is clear in the data from Stonefarm High School. Doxa are generally unconscious and silent, yet Tom Pryce showed awareness of the doxa at Stonefarm and its misalignment with the doxa of the national music education field. For example, very few Stonefarm students took instrumental graded exams. Tom was further conflicted by his own middle-class habitus, which at times emphasized his position as an outsider in the Stonefarm community. As the data below illustrate, Tom struggled to balance his beliefs about equitable access to
music education with his own habitus, which reveals advantages that are unavailable to his pupils.

5.2.1. **The doxa of the school field.**

A striking feature of the doxa across Stonefarm High School was modesty. During the flashcard exercise, several focus groups felt that words such as *charisma* and *gifted* were not helpful since they might negatively impact work ethic. Billy and Aaron in Year 10 demonstrated the doxic belief that modesty and commitment are required for success:

Billy: I think maybe you take [school work] more seriously, but then again, if you were really, like, charismatic, you got a bit cocky, something like that, you’d be “Ah, I don’t need to do this.” And then when it get[s] to like, the examinations and stuff, you’d struggle a lot. Compared to other people.

[...]

Aaron: I’d say our school’s very polite.

We see here assumptions about the relationship between modest behavior at school and national examinations, which are part of the doxa of state education in England. The implications of GCSE and A Level exams are omnipresent in discussions about secondary school. Yet the participants did not compare their own community to others in this regard, as I found out when I queried Tom’s description of Year 7s from Stonefarm High’s largest feeder primary school as “really arrogant”:
Tom: [...] you can sort of work out who came from Stonefarm Junior ‘cause the Junior do do some good stuff with them there, and they do get very good results, - but the kids come from there extremely confident. Like, really arrogant. Really –

Alison: Really arrogant on a national level, or really arrogant compared to Parverham?

Tom: [pause] Compared to Parverham, yeah. (Interview 3, October 2018)

Unlike Billy and Aaron, Tom recognized that arrogance did not preclude good exam results, but he found it distasteful. Given his acknowledgement that such behavior would not be recognized as arrogance in the national field of education, it is pertinent to consider whether the school’s doxa of politeness is similarly present in the national education field and, if it is not, whether this could further impede those players who do seek to become active in education fields beyond Stonefarm.

Year 9 girls Eloise and Everly also spoke about arrogance, but in explicit relation to rurality. The girls gave a passionate explanation about why they think people from rural areas are often overlooked:

Eloise: Can I just say something, right? Everyone thinks that everyone in London are “Oh, they’re all talented, oh they do a lot of things”, just ‘cause they’re from London. They’re like – London doesn’t say anything about your personality, about your ability, it just says you’re from London. Like, it’s not, you can’t put it on a[n] application, “I’m from London” and suddenly get a job. You have to actually do something, and people think, “Oh, they’re from London, they can do everything.” People from London can’t do everything. Or, like, and people underestimate other
people. That don’t live in London because of old – “Oh, they ain’t from London, they can’t do that.”

Everly: I know, ‘cause it’s a big city, it’s like the capital of England [sic], so it’s like if you’re talk-, for example, if someone, um, a director or someone, is looking at someone from a small town in Hillyon and someone from the big city – London, they’re gonna obviously, yeah, they’re gonna choose London because they’re gonna be “ah, there’s more studios round there, they must have more practise.” Bearing in mind that person could have like, a year’s worth of experience and the person from Hillyon could have like three years’ experience. But that three years’ experience one would still lose it to the –

Alison: And that’s a big issue isn’t it? ‘Cause if you live round here, it’s harder to find opportunities, isn’t it? OK? So, that’s why I would really like to do some writing that draws attention to the things that matter to people who live here, basically. OK. Um –

Eloise: Just ‘cause you haven’t heard of our town doesn’t mean we’re useless.

Alison: Doesn’t mean you’re not important. Yeah, exactly.

Everly: Like for example, someone was trying to find a – like music job or, like, even if they’re an adult, they’re trying to find a job that includes directors, or like contracts and that lot. They’re always gonna find it difficult in smaller towns, ‘cause they’re not gonna be noticed as much. And they’re not gonna be like – if they’ve got a list of people, they’re always gonna go with the people from cities. ‘Cause they assume that they’ve got a higher qualification.

Alison: Do you think that living here puts people off going into jobs like music?

Everly: Yeah, definitely.
Eloise: Yeah, because if, like, it says you’re from Hillyon, a lot of people think Hillyon are very, [pauses] very chavvy. Very mouthy, like, they think they’re – basically chavs. But if you get someone from London you’re gonna think “Oh they’re all posh and that stuff”, but like, it’s like they think Hillyon’s a bad place, like, “Oh, it’s rough and stuff”, where, you can get parts of London that are rough and they don’t think about that. They like, “Rendon is” – [we all laugh] Rendon!

Alison: That well-known city!

Eloise: London is a lot, like rougher than Hillyon, but they don’t see that part of London, they see all the big towers, the big names, there’s a lot of –

Alison: And the posh buildings.

Eloise: Yeah. That’s kind of where - [stops]

Alison: OK.

I was moved by Eloise and Everly’s indignation, which was unusual compared to the “very polite” engagements I had with the other participants, to use Aaron’s description of the school. The girls reminded me of the Great British Class Survey finding that elitism in the UK is securely and unquestionably centred on London, and that other “[p]laces are moralized through the lens of the dominant London worldview” (Savage et al., 2015, p. 263). Yet Eloise and Everly’s indignation also demonstrates their lack of cultural capital and the extent to which the local doxa has become ingrained in their responses to perceived inequity. The assumption that the music industry would “choose [a person from] London[…] [with] a year’s worth of experience” when “the person from Hillyon could have like three years’ experience” suggests that, whilst the girls recognize
inequality of outcome, they are unaware of the inequality of opportunity that precedes it. This can be understood through the lens applied by Owen Jones in his (2012) book *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*. Eloise’s claim that “a lot of people think Hillyon [people] are very chavvy” illustrates Jones’ finding that “[p]ractically nobody, except in jest, self-identifies as a chav. The term is almost always an insult imposed on individuals against their consent, [...] undeniably used in a classist fashion.” (p. x) Originally an acronym for Council Housed And Violent, Jones argues that the label *chav* has become a way to justify meritocracy and “the idea that inequality is rational: it is simply an expression of different talent and ability.” (p. xiii) Accordingly, the doxa of the girls’ habitus (and arguably that of the school field) enables symbolic violence. Even though Eloise and Everly recognized that significant players in the field of power might dismiss potential players from rural communities, they attributed this disadvantage to cosmopolitan ignorance of rural talent and ability, without considering the systemic inequality of opportunity.

5.2.2. **The doxa of the music department subfield.**

The music department doxa at Stonefarm was remarkably similar to the doxa of the school field. Music was not given the specialist status that is often the case in secondary schools (Lamont & Maton, 2008). None of the participants felt that they were unmusical or that those children who excelled in music were necessarily gifted. Indeed, both Year 10 focus groups actively sought to disrupt that particular doxa of the national
music education field by commenting on how parental income often affected access to
music lessons and resources, and thus to perceptions of ability. In the girls’ focus group,
for example, Shaz commented on how G-Dragon and V (who are twins) were advantaged
in GCSE Music because they had access to a piano at home:

Shaz: I think - your lifestyle, AKA you two with the piano, it may come from the
fact that in your habitat, like, in your home, in your family, you’re used to the
piano. [...] And I think that’s the difference. Like, you two have chosen to take up
the piano. Like –

Alison: So Shaz, are you saying that it’s about early exposure to things? Things in
your family environment?

Shaz: I think that has a big impact, yeah. I think it has a big impact, doesn’t it.
Like if you were born into a jazzzzzz [sic] family, you’re gonna like, love jazz. Or
you either hate it, you either do one of the two –

Alison: But you at least know about it?

Shaz: But you know about it, and that’s the difference.

Shaz was certain that cultural experiences at home could create an advantage in the
classroom.

There was, however, still a tendency for the students across the participant age
range to tell me about their effort in music. In this extract, Samuel from Year 9 suggested
that music was hard work because of the subject-specific skills required, and that this
hard work is both doxic and part of the illusio of the subfield:
Alison: OK. It’s interesting that you framed it as ‘more work’, because often people talk about music as being more fun. [pause, Samuel agrees] Can it be both?

Samuel: It can be fun. But music requires more work. Like, um, take history for example, right now we’re just talking about World War Two. And we sit there and we talk and we learn, but then music, we have to then play an instrument, we have to remember that, we have to do that over again, we have to find a beat and we have to like –

Alison: So the fact that it’s skill development, as well? [They both agree] [pause] OK.

In Samuel’s description, we can see that many of the more traditional doxa around music education are active in this particular subfield. Succeeding in music requires playing an instrument and developing skills such as selecting a beat, whereas history is “just talking about World War Two”. I am sure that the Year 9 history curriculum involved far more varied tasks than Samuel described, but it is likely that the skills developed in history are generic to more subjects than those acquired in music. Thus, even though the official message of the school field is one where music is available to all, the doxa continues to preserve its status as special.

The doxa of the subfield also reflects that of the school and community fields, and therefore the habitus of the players in those fields. Tom liked the school and the town, but often expressed frustration at how the common values in this small, rural, working-class
community did not align with that of the national field of music education, which was evident in the low numbers of children taking instrumental lessons. Rather, the dominant values in many Stonefarm families were more similar to those Lareau (2011) identified in her concept of natural growth. Particularly obvious in the Stonefarm data are common beliefs about the value of modesty, commitment to family and local community, and a belief that schooling is sufficient formal education. In this extract, Tom explains some of the difficulties he experiences in his classroom teaching:

Tom: And the problem becomes, for me, a balancing act between keeping the students engaged and furthering their musical ability, or their technique. Because do I try and keep ‘em engaged and try and keep the lessons pacey and flowing, and so that they are achieving in one sense, or do I try and say “Right, let’s stop the content, let’s dig in and really understand how to play the instrument, how to read music.” It’s a total shift. It’s like – mainstream school lessons or – a music club. Like, do you go holistic for the mainstream, to keep the pace and engagement and people want to always do music, they feel comfortable, they wanna perform. Or do you go like “right, this place is hallowed ground, we are like, you know, University Challenge [an elite television quiz competition] in here. It’s hard, and it’s gonna be” – I don’t know if it works, it doesn’t work. Alison: And it’s very interesting, because a lot of schools do make music a minority subject by going “If you’re doing it you’ve got to work this hard, in this way.”

Tom: Yeah. In a sense it is a minority subject because of the skills that are
involved with it. And not everyone can really do it.

Alison: So it’s not necessarily the schools that are making it the minority, it’s the policy makers?

Tom: Yeah, and it’s the course makers.

Alison: And then it’s your decision whether or not you endorse that approach or whether you try to make it open to everyone.

Tom: Yeah, and I tried to find a [GCSE] course that was open to everyone, so this approach wasn’t so obvious – but there isn’t one. (Interview 2, May 2018)

Here we see the doxa of the national music education field in which, to use Tom’s words, the course makers require specific skills (or capitals) that often make school music departments seem like hallowed ground. The data about GCSE Music uptake suggest that this is the case in many secondary schools (Bray, 2000; Gill & Williamson, 2016; Lamont & Maton, 2008; Ofsted, 2012b). The data from Friars Hall discussed in Chapter 6 provide an example of how music departments can become spaces within a school that are seen as special or exclusionary, depending on one’s field position. This doxic aspect of the national field for music education, the tendency for music departments to be “hallowed ground”, was made more obvious to me when I realized it did not exist at Stonefarm. I posit that this lack of exclusivity associated with the music department spaces was partly because so few pupils were exposed to other doxic aspects of the national music education field (e.g., having individual instrumental lessons or playing in formal ensembles), and partly because Tom had consciously critiqued and attempted to disrupt this doxa. Yet although Tom was trying to create a doxa in which “[you] keep the pace
and engagement and people want to always do music, they feel comfortable, they wanna perform”, he found it difficult to align such a doxa with that of the national field for music education, particularly as it is disseminated through the GCSE requirements. Later in the same interview he explained that “[i]t ends up being only accessible to a point, for the open-minded, less experienced musicians. And possibly academically able but probably not.” When considering the nationally low uptake of GCSE Music, we therefore have to ask why a student would (or should) choose a subject that “is only accessible to a point”, particularly if they also lack the middle-class cultural capital of generic study skills that, in the doxa of education, is often referred to as being “academically able”.

5.2.2.1. Instrumental lessons

As this chapter has thus far demonstrated, individual instrumental tuition is not a significant part of the doxa at Stonefarm High School. About six percent of the students have instrumental lessons at school, compared to a national average of 14 % (Ofsted, 2012b), and those children who did have lessons did not appear particularly dominant within the music department subfield. Nationally, however, individual instrumental tuition is a key aspect of the doxa for music education. Although GCSE qualifications are presented as open to all students through the normal school curriculum, it is often assumed by both students and teachers (and implied by exam board specifications) that successful GCSE Music candidates will have a background of individual instrumental lessons and reading staff notation (Bray, 2000; Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2017; Lamont & Maton, 2008). Not only is this tradition part of a middle-class habitus (Bull,
but it also requires cultural and financial capital that is rarely available to the less advantaged. Tom discussed which students have instrumental or “peri” lessons at the school, and how he influenced the subsidization of some of these lessons:

Alison: So how many kids have peri lessons at school. [Pause]

Tom: Up to about 20, I think.

[...]

Alison: Do you subsidize any of them?

Tom: I subsidize GCSE, and Pupil Premium.

Alison: How much by?

Tom: Full.

Alison: But do all the GCSE kids have lessons?

Tom: No. Because, I don’t, like, overly promote it because I think that’s a bit of a – it’s a tough one, like, in an ideal world, if I was selfish I’d say “Right, [head of school] I want all 40 of my GCSE kids to have subsidized music lessons”: they can’t do that, you know?

[...]

Alison: So is it just the ones who’ve chosen, or is it ones who’ve you’ve prodded, or -

Tom: A bit of both, really. Um, ones that have shown interest, ones that have wanted to for a while but never got the opportunity until I got here. Er, ones that
I’ve gone “You’ve done well in class there, have you ever thought about it?” “Oh, yeah.” “Here you are, here’s a letter, take it home.” And then they’ve tried it, and some stay, and some don’t stay. (Interview 1, March 2018)

Tom is displaying the doxa of Stonefarm modesty here, by not “overly promot[ing]” the need for the school to invest in individual lessons or by requiring students to continue lessons that they do not enjoy. However, whilst this is aligned with the habitus of many of the students, it could be perceived as symbolic violence since those who do not visibly show interest in instrumental lessons will not necessarily become aware that such opportunities exist. This may be furthered by Lareau’s (2011) finding that “working-class and poor parents typically are deferential rather than demanding toward school personnel” (p. 198), and do not seek out opportunities such as individual instrumental tuition. Yet as Tom described earlier, insisting that his music department be “hallowed ground”, which would certainly become more likely were he to insist that all students taking GCSE Music had instrumental lessons, would also be an act of symbolic violence to the majority of Stonefarm students who might then disengage from school music education.

Even when students did actively seek formal musicking opportunities, their rural habitus created other obstacles that restricted admittance to the wider music education field:

Tom: I’ve got a fantastic drummer in Year 11, could be a session player right now. So tight, […] so then comes the whole thing of, well, being out here in Stonefarm
we’re probably quite isolated so, although this lad has been having lessons for a few years, and is clearly a naturally talented drummer, he’s not had the cultural, um, exposure, or experiences, to give him what we would call the schemas to help him access that other material. Or the analysis, if that’s assessed it in that way. Um, so then it, kind of becomes – a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy really. You have your lessons, you think you’re a good musician, but you get here and actually you’re doing stuff that isn’t all about performing or isn’t all about drumming. And so then, you’re back to square one. (Interview 2, May 2018)

Tom’s awareness here stemmed from his status as a professional adult with understanding of how the music industry and the national field for music education operates. It is significant that Tom had acquired awareness outside the local community: it is unlikely that many parents of the student participants at Stonefarm would share this knowledge, let alone the children themselves. Indeed, Tom’s description of accessing the music industry was notably different from that of Eloise and Everly, the Year 9 girls who spoke so passionately about the unfair advantage for young people living in London. Whereas the girls felt that rurality was a barrier to being noticed for one’s talent, Tom recognized that it was actually a barrier to even acquiring the skills needed to be considered talented. Tom knew how many musicking opportunities were unavailable to children in rural areas. Indeed, the word opportunity could itself be considered part of the doxa that allows reproduction of inequity in music education, since these opportunities are often necessary for success in the national field. Accordingly, we see how, even though Tom controlled the doxa of the music department subfield, this did not transcend the students’ habituses.
Despite expressing discomfort with words such as talent or culture elsewhere in his interviews, Tom often slipped into vocabulary that did not align with the Stonefarm doxa. His expression of his own habitus, formed in a less-rural community with greater access to formal music education than most of his students, often reflected the doxa of the national music education field despite his attempts to challenge these unconscious assumptions. Working in a school that was so unaligned with the national field of music education had therefore made him more aware of his own habitus. This was particularly apparent in the flashcard activity when Tom juxtaposed his discomfort with labelling students as gifted and the additional difficulty of viewing this through the lens of GCSE success, whilst simultaneously othering music from the rest of the school curriculum:

Tom: And therefore why should you say the top five percent are more special than the others? You know –

Alison: And how do you decide how to measure that five percent.

Tom: Yeah. I mean if you took my Year 11 music class and looked at all their performances, you’d say two or three of them were gifted musicians. But then when you look at their overall [GCSE Music] exam results, they’re not. Which links back to what we were saying earlier. They’re not even talented if you, if you’re going down that gifted/talented/able tier. They – overall, over their GCSE grade, they wouldn’t even be classed as talented. And that’s the thing.

[…]

Tom: Because [my mantra] it is about having a voice, and the importance of what we do, as a musician, in a school. ‘Cause that’s what I am, effectively, I’m a
musician in school. Which I value –

Alison: Rather than a teacher who teaches music?

Tom: Yeah. And I value that more than an English teacher. ‘Cause anyone can read a book. But not everyone can play an instrument. And so, yeah –

Alison: And yet the paradox of that is that you want everyone to play an instrument.

Tom: Yeah! I know, I know! But look at that, straight away. There’s the discrepancy. Everyone can read to some level, but not everyone can play to some level. So I’m straight away onto a loser compared to English, in terms of achieving. Ah, this is so interesting. I could talk about this all day! (Interview 2, May 2018)

Extracts such as this suggest that Tom does not fully embody the doxa of “having a voice […] as a musician” that he claims to cultivate in the department: despite his intention to make music education equitable, he continues to revert to the elitist doxa of the national music education field with statements such as “not everyone can play an instrument.” The undercurrent of GCSE results (and their direct impact on teachers’ pay and employment, and on schools’ standing with Ofsted) is omnipresent in his interviews, serving as a reminder that the micro level of the Stonefarm music department subfield (and Tom’s power within it) must be considered within the macro level of the national field for music education, in which Tom and other teachers in schools similar to his have almost no power. The pressure that teachers feel to conform to the national field in order for their students to succeed is also doxic and contributes to the reproduction of the field of power.
5.3. Illusio

Illusio is a “belief in the game” (Grenfell, 2014a, p. 158) being played in the field that is itself a product of the field. Every field has its own illusio and in less stable fields the illusio may be “open to interpretation and even challenge” (Griffiths, 2018, p. 44). As I discuss below, this is the case at Stonefarm High School, which underwent a period of considerable change in the period before my research. Yet illusio is required for success in educational settings (Grenfell, 2014a; Rimmer, 2017) and the data also demonstrate how illusio may mask truths about field position and the likelihood of reproduction within the field.

5.3.1. The illusio of the school field.

My reading and development of research questions prior to data collection had included some exploration of labelling theory and self-labelling. This was originally of interest to me as a way to understand alienation from school music education (Fautley, 2010; Lamont, 2002), but I soon began to think about how labels are used in schooling generally, and how more generic labels, in addition to music-specific ones, might also be relevant to my questions about pupil and teacher experiences of music education. As outlined in Chapter 3, labels can be used to legitimate success and preserve illusio within a field, and to avoid identifying the implications of its doxa. The absence of labels is also
significant. Those who do not become labelled as successful may self-exclude in order to avoid being labelled as failures. Such a withdrawal can strengthen the overall sense of illusio for those players who remain in the field. I made a conscious decision when recruiting schools, however, not to mention that I was interested in labelling. Based on my previous experience as a teacher in English secondary schools, I was concerned that this could easily be misunderstood as being about pupil attainment data (which some schools are understandably cautious about providing to external researchers), or that teachers might assume that I would focus on particular sub-groups of pupils, as defined in government data reporting requirements (e.g. SEN/D, FSM, PP, ethnicity, gender etc.; see glossary for definitions). Instead I was interested in how students and teachers labelled themselves and each other using everyday language as a way to uncover the schools’ doxa, and I therefore did not want, through a mention of labelling in the initial communications, to cause the teacher participants to assume that more ‘official’ labels were a requirement of the case study research.

It was therefore a pleasant surprise when I began visiting Stonefarm High to find that the school was in its third year of establishing *Stretch Stonefarm*. This initiative used pedagogies focused on growth mindset qualities to encourage engagement with learning. *Stretch Stonefarm* is a significant factor in the data that I collected at Stonefarm High, since the study participants were already familiar with critiquing the impact of labels on participation and attainment. At times it was clear that this also helped them to communicate their perceptions of the school’s doxa and illusio to me. *Stretch Stonefarm* therefore offers a reminder that the initial criteria when choosing schools as cases (for
this study, size and social demographic) may not continue to be the most defining characteristics of a case when collecting and analysing data.

During the habituation period, I noticed three particular absences in the school’s culture. Students rarely said “I can’t” about their work in music, even though several mentioned finding aspects of their work difficult. They did not wear large collections of badges denoting membership of clubs or prefect status, which limited the assumptions I could make about an individual student’s status within the field. Also, neither teachers nor students made much reference to exam grades, levels, or other summative assessment measures, instead appearing to place more value on questioning and identifying challenge. When I asked Tom about this he immediately replied “Stretch Stonefarm” and suggested that I speak to the assistant headteacher responsible for the school’s recently developed growth mindset ethos.

Although I hadn’t read a great deal about growth mindset previously, I knew that it drew on Rosenthal and Jacobson’s *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968/1992), which had informed Rist’s (1977) work on labelling theory in education settings. When I met with [assistant headteacher] in my second week at Stonefarm¹², he cited *Pygmalion in the Classroom* as an influence and also mentioned his desire for the school to offer opportunities for its students to increase their cultural capital. He had arrived at the school in 2015 with a brief to improve teaching and learning, and Carol Dweck’s (2006) work on growth mindset had appealed to him because it seemed like a straightforward way to reduce students’ tendency to label themselves as “not good enough” to achieve at

¹² Personal communication.
school. He also mentioned that the timing for such a change had been serendipitous since it coincided with the national changes to GCSE grading systems and the removal of levels at Key Stage 3 (McIntosh 2015; see Fautley [2010] for a discussion of how the old national curriculum levels impacted music curriculum and assessment). Teachers were therefore encouraged to replace graded learning objectives with reference to challenge and courage. Labels for sub-groups such as Gifted and Talented, Pupil Premium and SEN/D were also made less prominent in discussions about classes and individual children, with the preferred focus being sufficient opportunity for all students. It is apparent, therefore, that the assistant headteacher was consciously trying to change the illusio of the school field in order to better equip the students for greater success in the field of power. As the data below demonstrate, the students were often aware of how this illusio had been constructed and communicated, yet they rarely demonstrated conscious awareness of how their habitus or capital might limit opportunities to transfer capital accrued in the school field to other situations. Although the school field had transformed to portray a more positive illusio that sought to increase intrinsic motivation and cultural capital, many of the participants continued to be disadvantaged in the national field of music education (and in the field of power) by their rurality and lack of economic capital.

As Year 10s, Aaron, Fred and Billy had seen the introduction and implementation of the Stretch Stonefarm initiative over the last few years. Their discussions showed that they were familiar with thinking about situations using a growth mindset ethos. Even when Billy expressed his doubt about Stretch Stonefarm, it was still with reference to growth mindset:
Billy: I think it’s just a gimmick. No, I don’t think people pay attention much. Obviously if someone’s got the mindset, then they’ll do it, won’t they? I don’t think just an assembly in the main hall is gonna really change people’s - it might do for the first lesson, they go away thinking, but then they just forget.

Later in the focus group, the boys used the flashcard activity to explore how the *Stretch Stonefarm* system related to understandings of concepts such as *gifted* and *talented*. They disliked the innate aspects of the definitions on the flashcards, and this extract demonstrates their awareness of the conflict between these particular words and the growth mindset rhetoric of *Stretch Stonefarm*. One feature of the initiative was a merit system aligned with 20 *growth mindset qualities*, encouraging teachers to reward attitudes to learning rather than simply the standard attained.

Billy: And there’s evidence that people show [self-confidence] because, obviously, merits and stuff. That we get.

Alison: And do people care about merits? Or is it kind of a Year 7 thing?

Billy: No, I think everyone cares, but I think some people take it as more of a jokey thing. But when you get a merit, uh, even like, for me, you do feel a sense of achievement more. Especially when you’re expecting the merit for something you’ve done, and you get it.

Aaron: Teachers use them words, like, when giving out awards and stuff. Like, they won’t give it to someone who isn’t talented or gifted, I don’t think. Or who they don’t see as talented or gifted.
Billy: Yeah, and if they get a merit or something, you wouldn’t say talent, charisma, or being gifted in something, you’d say one of the growth mindset qualities or something, because it’s not “that’s what you’re relating to, that’s why you got it”. It’s not because you might be talented at it, but you showed improvement at a skill or something, which is one of the growth mindsets.

Alison: OK. So there’s a focus on improvement and progression?

Billy: Yeah, and like resilience.

[...]

Aaron: Yeah, so I think if the teacher was to say “Oh, have this award, you’ve just naturally got it, well done, you were born like this,” say if someone who hadn’t been [given] that award, it would just put them down. ‘Cause “Oh, I’m not born like that, there’s no point trying.” So like having, like Fred said, like “I’ve had to work towards it”, it’s then encouraging others to, wanna work towards it. So they can do it to.

Alison: OK. And does that actually encourage them?

Aaron: I think, I think it does, ‘cause you see kids walking round the school with a tie, special tie, you think, - it makes them different. Like, they, - they’ve obviously achieved something, and maybe you want to achieve something to their standard.

It was apparent that the Year 10 boys felt considerable pride in merits, the school colours ties that were awarded to a handful of senior pupils each year (see Chapter 4 for a
description of school uniform ties and badges) and in being acknowledged for using growth mindset qualities. Although they initially dismissed Stretch Stonefarm as gimmicky, they actually appeared to value its intentions. The Year 10 girls also shared these attitudes, expressing pride at their own growth mindset attitudes and disdain at their peers who did not believe in the illusio of the field:

G-dragon: Today, when we were doing that – following that thing, [pupil] wouldn’t do it. They just gave up. ‘Cause that’s what [pupil] does, they’ve got a “fixed mindset”. [said in a “teacher” voice]

Shaz: I know, and that’s it. That’s – that’s what people have the problem with, is that they’re so fixed on the fact that they can’t do it, that they won’t actually try. Like today, I can’t play ukulele, but I sat there, I learnt the chords, and I tried to do it. Even though I messed up so many times, […] But I’m now better at the ukulele than I was, and I think that’s the nice thing that music – it gives me that feeling of, you know, “You were absolutely rubbish, but do you know what, you gave it your best shot.”

This conversation illustrates how Scheff’s (2010) work about labelling theory in the medical profession, identifying a “vast difference of outlook” (p. 3) between those who are labelers and those who normalize medical conditions, can be applied to education settings. Scheff recognized the benefits of translating discourse away from automatic labelling towards conscious normalizing. This reduces the tendency to make unmeditated judgments associated with labels, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, those who
approach foreign situations without automatic labelling themselves or the context may find it easier to develop the competencies needed for such a situation to become normal. Belief in the growth mindset illusion, in which labels are not ascribed, therefore gave Shaz motivation to “give it [my] best shot” within the field.

The message of the Stretch Stonefarm initiative was not consistently heard, however. The following conversation with Bob and Geronimo (Year 7) suggests that they focused more on merits as an achievement in their own right rather than a reflection of their learning. Bob and Geronimo’s account also implies that not all teachers were using the merit system in relation to the growth mindset qualities, although I did not verify this with their science teacher.

Alison: Do things like the Stretch Stonefarm stuff help [with understanding teachers’ expectations]?

Geronimo: No. [Long pause]

Alison: You have merits, don’t you?

Bob: [Cautiously] Yeah.

Alison: What are the merits for?

Bob: Merits, at the end of the year, you can buy merits at the merit shop - no, not buy merits, buy stuff with merits.

Alison: Buy stuff with merits. OK. And what do you get merits for?
Geronimo: Merits are like loads of things. Saying the right thing, you know, getting a massive sum done and still quick, or just, good work. [Bob agrees]

Alison: OK. Alright. [Pause] Um, and is that something – does it motivate people, or is it just like it’s an added bonus for stuff you were doing anyway?

Bob: Ummmm, I’m not really that fussed about them [Geronimo agrees], it’s just the stuff you can get in the merit shop, it’s just pens and footballs –

Geronimo: Bob, in science you were going for the merits so much!

Bob: Yeah, [I] just wanted it so badly, that merit.

Alison: But you wanted the merit, rather than the merit giving you something else?


Geronimo: No, I’m just thinking.

Alison: Oh, alright then. Um, is there competition to get merits? Like, between people in the class?

Bob: No. Not much people care about merits, in my opinion.

[Pause]

Geronimo: I disagree with that. Especially, in science especially, you’re always trying to get the merit. It’s like, “the first person to complete this task gets the merit”, he [Bob] does it so quickly, it is amazing.
Bob: It’s ‘cause I want to be a scientist when I’m older, so I put lots more effort into that than anything else.

Bob and Geronimo’s discussion raises questions about whether the growth mindset illusio had been more clearly understood by the older participants than these Year 7s, or whether they found it easier to articulate in the focus groups. It may also be the case that the Year 7 participants wanted to look “cool” by appearing not to care about merits or being recognized as hard-working. This possibility would add an extra dimension to the illusio, reminding us of Savage et al.’s (2015) finding that “the new snobbery is based on being ‘knowing’, and in displaying an awareness of the codes which are used to classify and differentiate between classes.” (p. 44)

As the above data show, Stonefarm High School is a field where the illusio has altered as a result of actions by dominant players in the field, in this case the development of the Stretch Stonefarm initiative by the new leadership team in 2015. The initiative has contributed to a new illusio based on notions of growth mindset. Whilst most of the student participants bought into this illusio, consciously using the language associated with growth mindset and Stretch Stonefarm, some of the younger students expressed doubts. As I discuss below, this illusio is perhaps more controversial in the subfield of the music department, where belief in growth mindset as a powerful tool for success means that students are not aware of how their habitus may disadvantage them in the wider music education field.
5.3.2. The illusio of the music department subfield.

The school-wide illusio was present in the subfield of the music department. Students regularly referred to growth mindset qualities in their verbal feedback to one another and Tom awarded merits during most lessons, always with a clear justification for their allocation. The music-specific illusio was one of participation, experimentation and creativity. The student participants frequently mentioned the resources available to them in class lessons and the opportunities they were given to take on different musical roles.

Asked how music at Stonefarm High was different to music at primary school, Mal (Year 7) explained:

Mal: It’s definitely a wide range here, because Sir says sometimes, like, “you can go on the piano if you want to include that, to get a rhythm, you can use the drums if you want a beat, you can use the guitar if you want a different instrument in it”. And then you’ve got most of the instruments we have here. And if the person isn’t that, like, loud and singing, you can use the microphones if you want. So you feel more comfortable, singing quietly, but then your voice is heard by everyone.

Although Mal’s comment about voices being heard was literal, it echoes the frequent participant comments about being known within the small school community. The exploration and adaptation that Mal described was also a common theme in the student descriptions of the music department. The Year 9 boys Dave, Heinrich and Zuzu attributed this illusio of creativity to Tom Pryce’s own musical style:
Dave: I think he’s, - he’s self-confident. But that doesn’t affect his teaching in a negative way. Sort of, um, what’s the word, sort of – helps us push further.

Heinrich: He always tries something new.

Alison: ‘Cause he plays a lot to you, doesn’t he? [They agree] Like in lots of musical contexts.

Heinrich: Oh, and um, when he’s confident he’s not embarrassed to do stuff that we would be. So, um, if I was made to sing, I – I can’t sing, and I’d be rather embarrassed about it if I was made to sing. But then when Mr Pryce does it –

Dave: He doesn’t really care, in a way.

Heinrich: He doesn’t care.

Alison: OK, so that gives you more confidence?

Heinrich: Yeah. ‘Cause if he’s able to do it like that – [fades out]

Alison: Yeah, if he’s able to take risks and – kind of, make himself vulnerable, it’s less scary for you to do that. Yeah? [They agree] OK. Alright then. ‘Cause, a lot of what seems to make a difference is – whether you feel comfortable in the lesson, is that right? [Agreement]

Zuzu: Yeah. But then Sir, he’s always trying something new every day. Because he usually, he’s recently got this like piano launchpad thing [a one-octave MIDI keyboard], and he’s trying to test it out. Um, that white thing that he had [a theremin], he was testing it out, and then when I got the launchpad on my phone [the DrumPad app], he just went straight ahead and started testing it out. And then, with Sir, is that – he’s a good musician because as soon as he gets something, if, in like a click, he gets the hang of it and he goes ahead and creates
a piece with it.

Alison: OK. So, the fact that he’s trying new things himself, I’m wondering how that ties in with this talent thing, do you think that maybe gives the kids in this school more confidence to try new things? [Zuzu says yes] Because you can see him progressing, is that right?

Dave: Yeah. Because a lot of the time, children can look up to teachers, and say “they’re really good at it, I want to be like that, I want to be good at it.” So like say Sir does something like that in a lesson, like plays something on like the keyboard or something, that could push other people to try and learn the keyboard so they can be able to do stuff like that.

The boys summarize several key features of the music department in this conversation. They confirm Tom’s own descriptions of himself as an active musician and multi-instrumentalist and perceive that his risk-taking (which aligns with the school’s growth mindset philosophy) makes him a good role-model. When asked about the word charisma in the flashcard exercise, several focus groups suggested that Tom was charismatic. I perceived that Tom’s charisma, including his willingness to try new things, encouraged pupils to buy in to the departmental illusion of participation. Yet Tom himself knew that this approach was problematic. When I asked him about the challenges of curriculum planning, he described his approach as “for the many” at Stonefarm but recognized that this did not align with the wider music education field.

Tom: The problem is, - cause yeah, for the many not the few. That suits the many.

[…] I’m aware that there are some students that consider themselves performers,
because they have lessons outside of school or whatever, that they probably don’t feel their needs are met in whole-class music, because it’s not all about notation and grade exams. But I can’t base everything around a graded exam syllabus, ‘cause no one can access it on a weekly basis. (Interview 2, May 2018)

As Tom describes here, his cultivation of an exploratory illusio is therefore a conscious effort towards musical inclusion. Judging by the high proportion of students choosing to take GCSE Music, this approach was effective. As I reminded Tom, there was no apparent musical hierarchy amongst the student participants:

Alison: But the kids here […] don’t see a divide between musicians and non-musicians in this school. Which –

Tom: That’s probably ‘cause I am always very much about, like you said, holistic skills, performance skills, teamwork skills, leadership skills, improvements and progress –

Alison: And it’s interesting because on the one hand, it’s a sign of the positive aspects of your Key Stage 3 teaching [Tom agrees], on the other hand what I’m wondering is, is it a sign of just how isolated they are from the rest of the world? […]

Tom: What, here? Yeah. But, - there’s no culture of knowing that students can go into county groups. I haven’t got a culture of that ‘cause I haven’t got anyone
good enough to go over there and say “this is what happens in Hillchester.” So yeah, in that sense it is.

Alison: So in a way it’s great because those two things combine to make them feel like they’re all musicians. (Interview 2, May 2018)

Thus, we see that the departmental illusio disguises but does not counter the symbolic violence of the national field of music education. The Stonefarm students may have felt like they were all musicians, but Tom rightly observes that this positive culture within the Stonefarm field is not easily transferred to other fields. The students were unaware of the wider field of music education (in this case, county-wide formal ensembles that rehearse in Hillchester) and the high level of middle-class capitals that are required for participation. Whilst the systems Tom had promoted did work positively for the majority of students at Stonefarm, they alone did not give the students the necessary capital to move beyond this particular subfield. As I will now discuss, Tom’s choice to create a music department “for the many” did have a potentially negative impact on “the few” whose habitus might have otherwise enabled them to access this larger and more powerful field.

5.4. An outlier’s perspective (Heinrich)

Both Stonefarm and Stonefarm High School have a population that is relatively homogenous in race, socio-economic status and level of education. To some extent the
school’s conscious avoidance of labelling emphasizes this, as evidenced in their focus on equal participation and the limited number of awards to be worn as badges or ties with the school uniform. Yet variation was still apparent, both in pupils’ appearance, dress and other personal resources (visible and often conscious labels), and in how they interacted with their peers and teachers (prompting invisible, and arguably unconscious labels).

Distinctions also emerged in the observation and focus group data, although these were generally more subtle than those amongst the Friars Hall participants. Heinrich, a Year 9 student, was therefore unusual amongst the study participants at Stonefarm for his expression of a middle-class habitus. Considering Heinrich’s contribution to the data challenges easily-formed stereotypes about the Stonefarm participants, and highlights the potential for other interpretations of the doxa and illusio in the school music department subfield.

Heinrich chose to be in a focus group with Zuzu and Dave, who he often worked with in class. Zuzu and Dave generally gave answers that were consistent with the other student participants at Stonefarm, yet they were unsurprised when Heinrich responded differently and mentioned out-of-school experiences that were more obviously highbrow than their own. One such point in the interview was when we were discussing what musicians the boys admired. Dave cited Ed Sheeran “because he got up there by generally not giving up” and Zuzu mentioned Marshmello “because his type of music has got in to so many people”. Both answers were consistent with those of the other focus groups, several of whom who mentioned these (and similar) artists, identifying similar, social reasons for the artists’ success. In contrast, Heinrich responded thus:
Heinrich: I mean, I like Beethoven, Mozart, Elgar, Grieg, Vivaldi, Verdi, Tchaikovsky, erm, Khachaturian, -

Alison: Why do you like those particular composers?

Heinrich: Um, because, I just like classical music as a whole, to be honest. Especially more grander type music. I mean, I don’t like modern music. It’s not – [fades off]

Alison: That’s alright. Do you like the drama of classical music? [pause] Or is it that you don’t like songs with words? So classical music is more attractive?

Heinrich: Yeah. Songs without words sort of appeal to me more.

Dave: I find it quite boring.

Zuzu: I say that songs either always need a meaning, or like, if they’re instrumentals, like what Heinrich’s speaking about, they need at least a good melody and a constant one. But then, if they’re not, and they don’t have that, then they have to have lyrics in it. No matter what.

Heinrich: I was gonna say, because I find most of our music too simplistic. ‘Cause you think about something like, er, - Ay-, Aida, Grand March by Verdi, so that they’re not always, it’s not the same thing, A B A. It’s gonna be something like A B, er, A B –

Alison: C.

Heinrich: A B C D -

Alison: Yeah. OK. So you like things where there’s a lot of development, do you?

Heinrich: Yeah. Like, what was is, Liszt’s Hungarian, er –
Alison: Rhapsody?

Heinrich: *Rhapsody*, yeah.

In this conversation Heinrich demonstrates his knowledge both of Western classical music and of the vocabulary associated with it, evoking Savage et al.’s (2015) understanding of cultural capital as ‘knowing’ and reflexive. In contrast, Dave and Zuzu both expressed their own lack of comfort with the genre but did not criticize Heinrich of poor taste or accuse him of being snobbish. One interpretation of this exchange is that it illustrates Samuel’s description, earlier in this chapter, of the school field as a space where “we all kind of just get along […] ‘cause there’s no point of arguing”, but it could also be possible that Dave and Zuzu were demonstrating Lareau’s (2011) working-class sense of constraint in their lack of response to Heinrich’s expression of a middle-class habitus.

Heinrich also returned to his interest in Western classical music when we discussed why music is a popular subject at Stonefarm. Whereas Dave and Zuzu focused on all the resources that Tom Pryce had added to the department, Heinrich’s thoughts were more about the lack of orchestral instruments (and players) both at Stonefarm and more generally, with his responses suggesting that he was aware of broader conversations in the media. When he did shift his perspective to be more aligned with Dave and Zuzu’s focus on what Mr Pryce had changed, it was still with an emphasis on orchestral instruments:
Heinrich: I’m quite surprised by that figure [about uptake of GCSE music nationally and at Stonefarm], because, according to most people, music departments in most schools are underdeveloped, and lack certain instruments. Like, oboe. The oboe. Haven’t seen –

Zuzu: If you go ahead and look at Sir, he’s got several guitars, like, three drum kits, -

Heinrich: And a-chew-stic [sic].

Zuzu: An electric drum kit, literally loads of stuff that we could use to make a good piece of music. And he’s still getting more stuff in, for GCSE technology. [Tom hoped to offer an additional Key Stage 4 ‘music technology pathway’ qualification starting the following year]

Alison: Um hum. So does it help – ‘cause, did you guys arrive at the same time as Mr Pryce? So you’ve always had him as your teacher here? [They agree] Yeah, OK. So does it help that maybe you guys have seen him developing the resources?

Dave: Yeah, ‘cause it started off about three, just normal, standard acoustic guitars.

Heinrich: And now, if you look in the music room it’s got just tons and tons of brass instruments, and –

Dave: And I don’t think they had that many to start with either.

Heinrich: No, they only had a couple. But, tons of brass, tons of, um, flute, sort of wind – and – [tails off]
This discussion demonstrates Heinrich’s mismatch of habitus within the subfield of the school music department. Even though he agrees with his friends about the improvement to resources since Tom Pryce’s appointment at the school, he still refers to highbrow instruments that are only on the periphery of the department’s activities and not those which Dave and Zuzu (and the other Stonefarm student participants) explicitly value.

There were times in the focus group when Heinrich explicitly acknowledged his different position, such as in this discussion about the boys’ musicking beyond school. Dave and Zuzu had both explained that they’d previously joined the local brass band but not stayed for long, because it “wasn’t my sort of style”:

Heinrich: I think I’m, - the opposite, nearly, to Zuzu and Dave –
Alison: Flying the flag for the brass band!
Heinrich: Yeah. Because not only am I in the Stonefarm Brass Band but I’m also in Cadet brass band. And I also take piano lessons, that’s out of school as well. I used to take violin lessons, so really, music is a very important part of our family. [I’ve got a] nice big piano, so –
Alison: And it’s interesting that you’ve mentioned your family there. Do they encourage you? Do they pressure you? –
Heinrich: No pressure, just encourage. My dad says it’s always something good to be able to play an instrument, certain standard.

Heinrich’s description of his parents’ support for formal musicking is reminiscent of the middle-class participants in Lareau’s (2011) study, many of whom supported their
children’s attendance and practice for instrumental lessons, community ensembles and other formal music activities. One father said of his son’s musical skills, “‘How can that not be a benefit in later life? I’m convinced that this rich experience will make him a better person, […]’” (p. 113), a perspective that Heinrich’s own father seemed to share. Indeed, such family-approved experiences may help to explain Heinrich’s perception of musical success. Heinrich was the only focus group participant at Stonefarm to mention graded music exams when discussing what musical success looks like, and Tom Pryce confirmed that he was one of very few pupils in the school that had taken such an exam:

Alison: […] how do you think this school sees being successful in music?

[…]

Heinrich: I would’ve thought it, what I would’ve said, being able to achieve a Grade Eight. […] not many people in the school who aren’t, um, linked to music would know what a Grade Eight, what Grade Eight would mean. Like a Distinction [at] Grade Eight is – so to most people it would seem – nothing, but I dunno, there’s individuals that know what it is, it’s sort of a big deal isn’t it? It’s hard to get Grade Eight.

Alison: Definitely.

Zuzu: I literally don’t have anything to say for this, except for, just get a C or higher.

Alison: at GCSE?

Dave: Being able to pass.

Zuzu: Yeah, being able to pass is success.
Again, Heinrich uses the vocabulary associated with more highbrow musical practices: “a Distinction [at] Grade Eight” is the highest classification on the highest of the graded exams and it is held in great esteem by many middle-class families. I have often heard anecdotally (and incorrectly!) from my own students’ parents that achieving this qualification will mean that their child “is allowed to teach” their instrument or “is ready to become professional.” In contrast, Zuzu made it clear that this was not at all part of his habitus (“I literally don’t have anything to say for this”), but then referred to the now-outdated GCSE grading system whereby a “C or higher” was informally considered a “pass.” Whilst Zuzu is far from unusual in his confusion about the GCSE grading system (Turner, 2018) it further emphasizes his own lack of knowledge about legitimizing qualifications in the national field of music education and in the field of power, where graded music exams are often used to demonstrate a middle-class habitus in non-musical contexts. Whereas Heinrich appears familiar with the doxa and illusio of these fields, Zuzu’s belief that “being able to pass [GCSE Music] is success” could severely limit his opportunities within the national field of music education, where additional qualifications and skills are often deemed necessary in order to become a player in the field.

Whilst Heinrich’s habitus was aligned to that of the national music education field, it caused him discomfort in the Stonefarm music department subfield. This extract follows a lengthy discussion between Dave and Zuzu about the experience of group composing, including the pros and cons of creative work. Heinrich was notably quiet throughout, but gave this response when prompted:
Heinrich: Well, I like it when we have a certain thing to do, ‘cause then that’s something I can aim towards. ‘Cause when we have to do, sort of make up or compose, make up our song or idea, um, I can’t do any of that. ‘Cause I just can’t – I can’t compose, or – I’m not creative or imaginative, so - [tails off]

Zuzu: Is that why you stuck to that simple in-the-club beat when we were doing that –

Heinrich: Yeah. Yeah, ‘cause I can’t compose. But I – I’ve always had sort of a sheet of music in front of me, whenever I’ve been playing. So I, - that’s how - [tails off]

Alison: OK. That’s interesting that you’ve brought that up, because um, some of the kids at the other school that I’m interviewing, have often mentioned that the more confident you are with reading staff notation, the scarier it can be when you have to go and make up something yourself. Is that what you’re saying?

Heinrich: Yeah. ‘Cause, um, I’ve been playing cornet for nearly seven years now. And all the seven years I’ve been looking at sheet music. And it’s only been recently where I’ve had to start - creating my own, sort of, composing, stuff like that, not pieces, -

Alison: Just ideas?

Heinrich: Just ideas. And I find it really hard, ‘cause I’ve been like, sort of, uniform, for a very long time.

Alison: So [it’s] too much freedom?

Heinrich: Yeah.
We see here how the notation-focused musicking that Heinrich valued outside of school did not always align with the Stonefarm music curriculum. Although his graded exam results meant he was in one sense the most skilled musician in the Year 9 class, his lack of creative confidence was a barrier that the other, less legitimately-skilled participants did not experience. Tom mentioned this when we were discussing measures of success in classroom music:

Tom: So I’m fully aware of how Heinrich in Year 9 is sat there thinking “well I never get a chance to play my violin” […] But when you question him, or you – ask him to analyse music, he can’t. He’s at the same level as everyone else, in terms of his – musical awareness, cultural – musicultural awareness and analysis skills. Yeah, he can play an instrument, he can read notation, but that’s it. He’s not a musician, all-round, any more than someone who doesn’t play an instrument and is a singer. (Interview 2, May 2018)

It is significant that Tom identified Heinrich as a student who did not align with the typical student profile at Stonefarm. He described Heinrich as advantaged when performing from notation but lacking equal expertise in other musical skills. This is similar to a teacher participant in Hallam, Creech and McQueen’s (2017) study of Musical Futures champion schools, who said “‘Take a notation-reading flute player […] give them something else to do and it becomes much more challenging.’” (p. 140) Just as Tom was reluctant to praise Heinrich or single him out as special, this teacher recognized that a diverse Key Stage 3 music curriculum, particularly one based on informal learning, required a broader range of musical competencies than that generally acquired through
individual instrumental lessons and graded exams. Heinrich and students like him in similar school music departments may therefore feel discouraged from continuing to participate in a school music education that does not reward their legitimately-gained classical music performance skills.

It is clear that Heinrich’s habitus is at odds with that generally experienced in the Stonefarm music department sub-field. Whether this advantages him, however, is unclear. As the data presented in Chapter 6 show, Heinrich’s habitus and cultural capital would be an asset in a school like Friars Hall. He also has capital relevant to the national field of music education, such as graded exams and experience of playing in a brass band. Within the subfield of the school music department, however, he is often less comfortable than his peers. Therefore, the most significant outcome of policies such as Tom’s, which attempt to benefit those children who would normally not access the music education field, may actually be that children like Heinrich are discouraged.

5.5. Concluding thoughts
The data explored in this chapter show that Stonefarm High School is a field that has recently experienced instability, and that dominant players have consciously used this as an opportunity to change the field’s doxa and illusio. Many of these changes, such as the conscious avoidance of labelling and the promotion of a growth mindset, have been applied in the sub-field of the music department. These philosophies, however, are not easily aligned with the doxa and illusio of the national field for music education, a
problem which Tom Pryce struggles to negotiate and which most of the students are unaware of. Furthermore, although the school’s status has increased within the local community field through its good Ofsted grading, the community itself is largely invisible within the field of power. Eloise said that “[j]ust ‘cause you haven’t heard of our town doesn’t mean we’re useless.” Throughout my visits to Stonefarm I felt great admiration for the school, its staff and students. I fear, however, that Eloise underestimates the importance of positioning within the field of power. Although the school is certainly striving to give its students a positive and enabling education, and Tom Pryce is seeking to create an inclusive and creative musicking experience, the impact of these changes is less powerful than that of the students’ existing habituses.

Specific to music, I believe that the majority of Stonefarm students enjoy their music education and will leave school with the knowledge that their musical tastes are valued by the school itself, but I doubt that this will give them access to other, more dominant, subfields within the national field of music education as it is currently configured. As Tom himself noted, he could identify certain students as gifted compared to their peers at Stonefarm High, but they would not maintain such a distinction compared to other children at national or even county-wide level. Furthermore, focusing his efforts on those few children who do want to take instrumental lessons and learn to read staff notation would risk alienating the majority of students at the school. Such an approach could result in far less enthusiasm for music than is currently the case at Stonefarm, possibly endangering music’s place in the curriculum. Tom’s approach, whilst it did not align with the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education, did
ensure that relevant music education continued to exist for all children at Stonefarm. Yet their invisibility within the national field of music education and the wider field of power does further perpetuate the symbolic violence that Eloise hinted at, maintaining inequities that result in communities such as Stonefarm being “useless” to the field of power.
6. Friars Hall School: “This school has made me feel like a musician is someone who plays piano, Grade Seven.”

Friars Hall School is a larger-than-average secondary school with an 11-18 age range. It was chosen as part of this comparative case study primarily for its middle-class pupil roll. Only 7.8% of children qualify for Free School Meals compared to a national average of 28.6%, and the school is heavily over-subscribed. Friars Hall School is thus statistically very different to Stonefarm High School and the data collection revealed further, qualitative contrasts between the two schools. Also significant to the study was the size of the school’s music department. There are two music teachers, Walter Williams and Lyndsey Carter, and the department teaches Music at A Level as well as Key Stage 3 and GCSE. Walter and Lyndsey were interviewed together mid-way through the data collection period, and 27 pupils took part in focus groups (see table 4-2). The pupils offered varied opinions of the music department and this complexity is reflected in the data presented here. I observed the student participants in their class music lessons and also attended two school music events in which some of them performed. Some of the older participants had access to the music staffroom, where I often chatted with them informally during the data collection period. The music staffroom emerged as a significant topic within the focus group data. The music building also included two classrooms, a large rehearsal space, several smaller practice rooms, an office and a toilet block.

References withheld for confidentiality purposes.
All Year 7 and 8 classes at Friars Hall have a weekly music lesson. The Key Stage 4 curriculum begins in Year 9 and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Music is typically chosen by 5-10% of each year group. Around three percent of A Level students at the school study Music. The curriculum and co-curricular opportunities include a range of musical styles, but almost all legitimated musicking is teacher-directed performance of notated repertoire, and students and teachers generally assume that “reading music” is a requirement for participation in the field. Individual instrumental lessons are a big feature of musical life at Friars Hall. Many of the students who have instrumental lessons continue with them despite not choosing to study Music after Year 8, taking graded music exams throughout their time at the school. Commitment to a school ensemble is essential to gaining capital within the music department subfield. Joining such an ensemble, however, requires previous success in individual instrumental lessons on an orchestral or jazz band instrument.

The data about Friars Hall are presented thematically, and analysed using Bourdieu’s theories of field, doxa and illusio. The Friars Hall music department was notably independent from the rest of the school field. As the data below demonstrate, it was physically isolated from other academic departments and valued musicians wore special school ties that visibly differentiated them from the rest of the pupil body. Although the teacher and pupil participants do provide some data about the wider field of the school, my own visits offered little opportunity to interact with students and staff beyond the music department, and the music lessons and activities I observed made relatively little reference to whole-school policies or events. This chapter therefore
presents data that are largely about the music department subfield and its associated doxa and illusio, rather than the Friars Hall school field. After reviewing Bourdieu’s concepts and discussing how the music department is positioned within the school field, I present several interconnecting themes. *Instrumental lessons and graded exams* are used to improve position within the departmental subfield, which enables some students to gain access to the *family*, seen by those who are excluded as an *inner circle*. *Banter* is a further tool used to demonstrate one’s distinction within the subfield, as is a knowledge of *jazz*. Likewise, family members share beliefs about *resources for music* and their relationships with *instrumental teachers*, whereas students who feel excluded share different perspectives about these aspects of the subfield. I conclude the chapter by discussing the relationship of Friars Hall to the wider music education field and sharing the opinions of an outlying participant, Lucy, who openly challenged the departmental doxa and illusio.

### 6.1. Field, doxa and illusio

Bourdieu understood a field to be “the social space in which interactions, transactions and events occur” (Thomson, 2014, p. 65), with each field having its own “rules, histories, star players, legends and law” (p. 67). In this chapter I consider Friars Hall School as a field and also refer to the national field of music education. The primary focus, however, is on the concept of subfield, which, “while following the overall logic of its field, also ha[s] its own internal logics, rules and regularities [...]” (Thomson, 2014, p. 70). As the data presented here demonstrate, the subfield of the
music department at Friars Hall has formed internal practices that have become internally known as traditions. The subfield was described by its dominant players as a family, whereas those who felt excluded from it described the dominating players as an inner circle.

Doxa are the unwritten rules that maintain stability within a field (Deer, 2014a). They are silent, unconscious, and not democratic or discretionary. By encouraging the recognition of legitimate knowledge, they allow the dominant to maintain power within the field (Bourdieu, 1977). The doxa in the Friars Hall music department subfield were those of Western classical music practices. Musicians were defined as people who took graded exams and played in teacher-directed ensembles. Several student participants in the study recognized that they were not compliant with the doxa of the music department subfield and one, Lucy, was surprisingly conscious of the doxa and its implications for social reproduction. Her perspectives are discussed in greater detail at the end of the chapter.

Illusio is a belief in the game being played within a field. It is an unarticulated tool that is sustained by, and itself sustains, the conditions of the field (Grenfell, 2014a). Each field and subfield can have their own illusio, which are in part defined by the illusio in related fields and subfields (Grenfell, 2014a). The Friars Hall music department illusio is influenced by the illusio of the school field and that of the national field for music education. Those participants who considered the music department to be a family had clearly bought into the illusio of the field, which included taking graded music exams, performing from staff notation and listening to jazz.
6.2. The school and the music department

Friars Hall is an 11-18 secondary school of above-average size and is unusual for being a state boarding school. During the data collection year there were 1289 pupils on roll, of whom nearly half lived at the school during term time. This had a considerable impact on the school as a field, since the condition for entry to the field and the relationships formed within it were often different to those commonly found in state schools. Walter Williams was one of several teachers who lived on the school site in order to provide pastoral care and co-curricular opportunities for the boarding community. Walter was in his 19th year as Director of Music and his colleague Lyndsey Carter was in her 14th year teaching music at the school, making the music department a particularly stable subfield within the wider field of the school. Walter and Lyndsey chose to be interviewed together, although Lyndsey did not attend the whole interview. When Lyndsey was not present, Walter talked at length about his perception of both the school and the music department. The following commentary occurred early in our discussion: although the transcription has been edited to reduce repetition, it demonstrates Walter’s desire to set the agenda for the interview. With little prompting, Walter explained his own position in the field, and how he considered the field to have changed. He explained why he did not plan to change jobs at this point in his career:

Walter: I’d be moving for a change of scenery, and you feel as if you’ve invested 20 years of your life in a place, and you’ve got it now to how you would like it,
it’s got a good musical tradition, and all you’ve gotta really do is continue to maintain that tradition, whereas if you go somewhere new, you’ve got to p’raps – you’ve either got to drag it up by the boot straps and you’ve got to start off traditions, or you gotta learn a whole new system of doing things and you wouldn’t be […] So, if I’m treated well I think it would be quite likely that I will finish my career here. Just because it’s a nice situation, the kids are nice, by and large they let – allow me to get on with my job, fairly independently. And, um, yes they have high stand[ards], you know, there’s lots of demands, um, there’s high demands in terms of GCSE and A Levels as to what sort of results they want, and – but, but you are dealing with sort of quality, you could go somewhere else where it would be a lot easier, but you wouldn’t be dealing with any musical quality, it’d be a bit more like a battle. All day long. And you wouldn’t be doing the sort of music that you – I think, [pause] here, I commit all my music to Friars Hall, whereas I think if I went somewhere else the music wouldn’t be so good, so I’d have to do my own personal music outside of school. […]

In this introductory statement Walter described his own comfort within the school field and departmental subfield. As is apparent elsewhere in this chapter, he really valued being left “to get on with my job, fairly independently.” This independence (which at times looked more like isolation) contributed significantly to the illusio of the music department subfield, since music was often seen as being different to other academic or co-curricular areas of the school. Walter also valued working in a school where he had traditions in place, traditions that relied in part on students who brought musical quality
to the department. As the data in this chapter show, these traditions allowed the
department to maintain a stable doxa and illusio despite changes to the school field and
the national field of music education. These conditions also supported Walter’s own
musical identity.

Walter illustrated his understanding of quality as he explained how the school
field had evolved:

Walter: The school […] has doubled in size since I arrived […] In terms of
musicians, I would say it’s a bit of a national trend, but I think we’re probably
getting less musicians coming in on a yearly basis than we were ten years ago.
And that may just be an economic thing, it may just be a luck thing. As you know,
we don’t have any control of our feeder schools, so […] we are getting less and
less musicians each year, but in a sense we’re lucky because we still do Year 7
music scholarships so that we, I can guarantee that we can get six good musicians
coming in each Year 7.

This was Walter’s first reference to musicians, a term he then used frequently throughout
the interview to indicate children who had individual instrumental lessons, took graded
exams and participated in school ensembles. As I described in Chapter 2, this form of
what Lareau (2011) calls concerted cultivation is strongly linked to (white) Victorian,
middle-class values and has shaped much of the national understanding of success in
music education (Born and Devine, 2015; Bull, 2016). The student data show that most
of the participants shared this illusio and therefore considered that they could only be
musicians themselves if they had formal individual tuition. The term musician occurs regularly throughout the data and discussion below, including in Walter’s explanation of the music scholarships he mentioned in this section.

6.3. Instrumental lessons and graded exams

The Friars Hall music department includes a team of 16 visiting music teachers, referred to as peris, who teach specific instruments (including voice, and music theory) to individual students. They are self-employed but some spend several days teaching at the school each week. Some of these teachers also direct or support school ensembles. This type of formal music education is a significant part of the national field of music education that is legitimized through graded exams. The school regularly hosts an Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) examiner visit, allowing students to be assessed at school for these qualifications which are essential to the illusio of the music department subfield.

Instrumental lessons and graded exams were important even before children arrived at the school aged 11. The Friars Hall admission policy allowed Walter to award six music “priority places” (generally referred to as scholarships, although they held no financial value) to incoming Year 7s who displayed skills associated with this particular aspect of musicking:
Alison: So these kids that come in on scholarships, um, what sort of standard would you say you see amongst the auditioning crowd?

Walter: Um, from very beginners up to – I have had a Grade Seven. In Year 6. And I think on average to get a [music priority] place here you need to be a really strong Grade Four or Grade Five musician. So usually if you’ve got Grade Five and you play well on the day, then that’s, that’s probably enough to get you in.

[…] Yeah, Year 7 [music priority places are] heavily competed for every year. I probably do, well, thirty-plus interviews.

Walter automatically interpreted my question about standard using graded exams, which is a common assumption in the national music education field. These are summative assessments generally prepared for with private instrumental tuition and awarded by national examination boards, with grades scaled from one to eight. Unlike GCSEs, they are considered an ‘optional’ qualification and are therefore only available to those who can afford the tuition and entry fee. It is worth noting here that the National Qualifications Framework aligns Grade Five music exams with the higher grades in GCSE exams, which are taken at the age of 16 (gov.uk, n.d.-c). Yet those students who won music scholarships at Friars Hall had already acquired a comparative skillset at the age of 10 or 11 (Year 6). Such achievements require significant financial investment and parental input over a long period of time, epitomizing Lareau’s (2011) theory of concerted cultivation. It is therefore unsurprising that, as the data below demonstrate, many of the student participants in the study who arrived at Friars Hall without such a
background in formal music education instead felt a growing sense of constraint within
the music department subfield.

Once students arrived at Friars Hall, building a positive relationship with a peri
teacher was key to improving one’s position in the subfield of the music department. This
was particularly important for students who chose to take GCSE or A Level Music. The
school operated a budget whereby all GCSE and A Level Music students had automatic
funding for individual lessons on one instrument. Further to helping with preparation for
the performing aspect of these academic qualifications, the lessons also provided the
opportunity to enter for graded music exams and thus gain additional, legitimated cultural
capital. For families who had previously paid for their children to have individual lessons
with a peri at the school, this was seen as a significant financial advantage:

Walter: I don’t think the pupils mind one way or another. But definitely I see the
[…] penny drop at parents’ evenings, when parents suddenly realise that they can
get all their lessons paid for if they do the GCSE. That can be a big, a big benefit
really.

The funding system also allowed Walter and Lyndsey to pass almost all responsibility for
the GCSE and A Level performance units along to the peri teachers. This strategy is
widely accepted amongst music teachers but is unlike the delivery of almost all other
GCSE and A Level subjects, furthering the perception of music as a specialist subject
(Lamont & Maton, 2008). Whilst Walter and Lyndsey did not insist that students had
experience of peri lessons prior to choosing GCSE Music, it was mandatory for them to
participate in the culture of formal, individual instrumental tuition once they began the GCSE course. (The school policy for entrance to A Level music assumes that students will already be encultured into the system of ABRSM exams) As they explained the role of instrumental lessons in the GCSE course, Walter and Lyndsey revealed several doxa in the department subfield:

Walter: You know, it’s meant to be open-ended, they’re meant to be able to take GCSE even if they’ve done no extra music whatsoever. Obviously we would probably try and encourage them and say “look, you can do it, but you’re not probably gonna get […] a level 9 or a level 8 or a level 6 [at GCSE] unless you’re already playing an instrument now –

Lyndsey: Unless they’re a singer, I think singers –

Walter: Unless they’re a singer.

Lyndsey: Unless they’re a, they’ve got a good voice. If they haven’t had lessons, obviously that –

Walter: And that’s where we’d steer them, so if we had a non-musician turn up to do GCSE music and they said “oh, [I] want to have some piano lessons”, we’d probably say “well hang on a minute, I don’t think you’ll get very good at piano in the three years that you’ve got, but if you do voice, you could definitely be singing Grade Four, Grade Five stuff [from the ABRSM exam syllabi] within three years”, and that’s probably the route that we try and push them in really.
This conversation adds another dimension to Walter’s classification of students as musicians or non-musicians, since it suggests a doxa about the value of different musical disciplines. Singing lessons provide a way to access GCSE Music but not to become a musician. Additionally, Lyndsey’s phrase “got a good voice” could be understood to imply that singing is an innate ability rather than a skill that all students will develop through the Key Stage 3 music curriculum. Indeed, this conversation highlights complexities within the ABRSM instrumental exam system, as well as its relationship to GCSE Music. Although all the ABRSM qualifications require candidates to read Western staff notation, a common perception amongst teachers and students is that singers do not need to develop this skill as early as instrumentalists and that piano, which demands that candidates read two clefs simultaneously, is arguably ‘harder’ to learn than other instruments. At Friars Hall, where the system of instrumental lessons is so deeply and unconsciously connected to ABRSM exams, it was not considered that a student could study the piano by ear or using alternative notation systems. Rather, being a musician required full commitment to the illusio of performing from staff notation and taking graded exams.

Most of the Year 11 and 2 participants also told me that Key Stage 3 music was not sufficient preparation for GCSE Music. Their reasons for this varied considerably, as did their opinion about whether the Key Stage 3 curriculum should be altered accordingly. Several students also commented on the implications of GCSE Music being an “option” subject. Year 11 girls Mrs Birling and Sheila perceived this particular change as being important to the teachers:
Mrs Birling: When you get to Year 9, you’re seeing a lot of people who want to be there. [Sheila agrees] Whereas in Year 7, 8, it’s like a compulsory subject, where people are just there because they have to be. [Sheila agrees] So they’ll just mess about. And I guess, it’s quite demoralizing for the teachers and they don’t really want to teach them. And it’s almost not worth teaching them, because they’re not gonna bother to learn it, and it’s just a bit of a waste of time really. I mean, when you get to Year 9, 10, whatever – people do actually want to be there. Or at least you can single out the people who do, from the people who don’t. And then it’s more, sort of, concentrated, and you can get on and learn stuff.

It was interesting that these girls considered Key Stage 3 music as “not worth teaching” and demoralizing for the teachers. This further demonstrated the departmental doxa of preparation for GCSE music being focused on instrumental lessons and graded exams, rather than the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

The Friars Hall music department had successfully cultivated a specific illusio of musical success that encouraged stability in the subfield. I asked each pupil focus group how they thought the school defined musical success, and every group immediately replied “grades” and “music ties”. Such unanimity was striking for its contrast with the diverse perspectives offered by the participants about other topics, suggesting that this particular part of the music department doxa was especially significant. By grades, the students meant graded examinations such as those offered by ABRSM, whose certificates are recognized by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). These exams contribute to university entrance requirements and demonstrate the
accumulation of middle-class cultural capital. In the Friars Hall field graded exams are given additional currency: students who pass certain combinations of the ABRSM exams are awarded two levels of *music ties* in assembly. In many schools, distinctions such as this are known as *colours*, and are awarded at junior and senior levels. Recipients can then choose to further publicize their elite status as a musician by wearing the music tie as part of their school uniform. Student participants with and without music ties commented on how this visible recognition as a musician was important to teachers, students and parents. This extract from the focus group with Year 11 girls Peggy, Eliza and Angelica was a typical response:

Alison: How would the school describe successful musicians, what would they say?

Eliza: You can just see that, like school musicals, school concerts and things –

Angelica: People who have reached a certain grade -

Peggy: Yeah, because if you get Grade Five, my mum pushed me to get Grade Five so I could get a music tie! I didn’t do Grade Five so I had to get one for Grade Six instead.

Eliza: But. You know this tie [that I’m wearing], this is like the junior music colours. You get the, it’s kind of like, “you’re a good musician, music department respects your input and we appreciate you’re a good musician.” If you get the advanced tie, you are like the god of the music department and they worship you.
Angelica: I think –

Alison: Who’s “they”?

Eliza: That’s like the Grade Eight musicians.

Alison: No, who’s “they” [doing the] worshipping?

Eliza: Like, the teachers who have run the band. Only the good musicians make the school sound good, […] so they ask these people who are really amazing musicians to do it, and they only really – the school, they only really show off the best. They don’t really ever give a kind of less-experienced person to do a solo in choir, or do um – or have like a part in concert band that’s more important – […]

The girls highlighted how music’s value within the school field was making both individual pupils and the school “sound good.” Achieving a music tie was a visible way to demonstrate one’s position within the music subfield. Eliza differentiated between the status of junior music colours representing appreciation and senior music colours (“the advanced tie”) meaning “they worship you”. This highlights the hierarchy of positions within the music department subfield. As I discuss below, those participants with senior music colours almost all considered the department to be a family, whereas those who had junior colours often seemed less secure in their status as musicians.

When I asked Year 11 students Rocket and Gamora a similar question about the school’s perception of musical success, they began in a typical manner but produced some unexpected details that lead me to further investigate the criteria for music ties:
Alison: And in this school, what do you think is admired in musicians? Like, you’ve given me some examples of people who you think are successful -

Gamora: [Interrupting] Grades.

Rocket: Yeah, going up in assembly, I think that’s quite a big thing. [Gamora agrees]

Alison: What, to get your tie?

Rocket: Yeah. That’s what’s weird though, is you don’t get that for guitar.

Gamora: Really?

Rocket: No, you just get hand-, ‘cause it’s done externally, you get handed it in your lesson.

Alison: So, the music ties are only if you do ABRSM exams?

Rocket: No, the music ties aren’t. But the actual like, receive, going up, I’m pretty sure.

Gamora: Ah. I didn’t know.

Rocket: I’ve never seen anyone go up who’s a guitarist. […] I know for a fact there’s like Grade Sevens here. Can’t remember his name, but there’s definitely a really good guy a year ago, and he done RGT [Register of Guitar Tutors, another exam board] and never went up. So, I dunno.
Rocket’s comment about the public awarding of music ties reflects a significant detail of the departmental doxa. ABRSM is the largest of the music exam boards and focuses on providing formal assessments of Western classical music practices. Several other exam boards offer graded exams that are regulated by Ofqual and therefore hold the same value as ABRSM exams, including the Register of Guitar Tutors (RGT) board that Rocket mentioned. Many of these boards offer a more contemporary approach to examination, for example by focusing on popular instruments and repertoire, using backing tracks and assessing improvisation. They also do not require candidates to take written exams. In contrast, ABRSM candidates must pass Grade Five music theory (or an equivalent practical exam, which also requires additional tuition and preparation alongside ‘normal’ instrumental study) before taking the Grade Six to Eight instrumental and vocal exams. Rocket assumed that the lack of public recognition for students taking other exams was due to them being taken externally, rather than organized by the school music department. However, when I asked Walter about how music ties were awarded he explained that the lower-level tie was for passing “Grade Five anything including theory”, whilst the higher level of tie had additional, more subjective criteria (email correspondence, October 2018). The music tie system provided a physical embodiment of the department’s doxa and illusio, visibly labelling as musicians those students who took ABRSM graded exams (which are themselves a legitimized label within the national field of music education) whilst rendering other students, including those who took pop music exams with other boards, less visible. Indeed, it is possible that students such as the Grade Seven guitarist Rocket mentioned would not even be identified as musicians in the music department subfield, given that they did not qualify for a music tie. Even within the highly-regulated
national system of music exams, which is arguably only accessible to children who already have considerable economic and cultural capitals, the Friars Hall music department had made further distinctions and legitimations.

6.4. A family, or an inner circle

The Friars Hall community is socially and racially diverse, illustrating Savage et al.’s (2015) argument that the “middle” of the contemporary class system is a complex space with many variables. This was apparent in the data gathered. The student participants at Friars Hall presented far more varied educational biographies (and music education biographies) than Stonefarm student participants. Specifically discussing the Friars Hall music department, however, the Year 11 and 12 participants described a more binary experience. Those who benefited from involvement in the music department described it as a family, whereas those who felt excluded from it spoke about an inner circle. My own observations of lessons and social interactions correlated with these accounts of contrasting experiences within the department. There appeared to be distinct groups amongst the students, and these groups had notably different relationships with

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14 None of the Year 8 participants used language about the music department as either a family or inner circle, which may be due to their younger age and not feeling as accepted (or as frustrated at their continued lack of acceptance) in the music department. It may also be relevant that none of the Year 8 participants were members of school ensembles, which appeared to be a core requirement of family membership.
the music teachers. As the data show, these groups underpinned the doxa of the department.

The students were not alone in speaking about a family. Walter used the family analogy at great length in the teacher interview. His description of those who participate in the department provided a useful summary of the attributes valued in the family (or inner circle: I will use the words interchangeably, reflecting the positions of the participants being discussed). These attributes are all doxic. It is notable that Walter doesn’t mention concrete forms of cultural capital such as graded exams in this description, although elsewhere he clearly associated them with being identifying musicians:

Alison: How would you describe the children who choose to get involved with music here?

Walter: Um, I think that they’re very cooperative, they’re quite enthusiastic, they’re very helpful. Um, they’re loyal. Um, they’re enthusiastic. I think they like music because music down here is often perceived to be quite a fun place, and a bit of a family-like atmosphere I suppose. I suppose –

Alison: Yeah, they’ve actually mentioned that.

Walter: I suppose I would be the dad and Mrs Carter would be the mum of the, the musical family. And then we’ve got sort of, our peris would be the uncles, and the aunts and things. So it does feel like a family-run place, and I think they buy in to that. Um, quite a few of us have similar senses of humour, and there’s quite a lot
of, sort of, banter, that they enjoy. And I always think, if kids are – if it’s fun for
the kids then they’re much more likely to do it, and I think, I’d like to think that
they do the music because it is fun, because they wanna be here. […] we’ve got
all these wonderful musicians to use, so I think we’re lucky, we have got really
good musicians, and they do form a bit of a family

[…].

[Lyndsey arrives]

Alison: We were just talking about how we’d describe the kids here who do
music.

[Pause]

Lyndsey: I think they’re probably slightly different to a lot of places. [Pause] In
that I think they’ve probably – I think maybe because they get a lot more
opportunities in the younger years to – expand their practical skills, and they tend
to be a little bit, I think they’re a little bit more classical-focused, I think, a lot of
them. You get the odd guitarist, the odd drummer. But even they are – [pause – I
suppose a lot of high schools, you get a lot of – um, rock musicians, a lot of – but
even our rock musicians tend to be –

Walter: Quite musical.

Lyndsey: Yeah. [Laughs] I was trying not to use the word musical. But yeah, tend
to be a bit more into, - a bit more traditional music than they necessarily –
Walter: Yeah, I would say we do run a very traditional – department. And probably younger members of the profession probably wouldn’t do the sorts of things that we perhaps focus in on. [Lyndsey agrees] And if we were to leave, then the department might change completely in its nature, ‘cause it would obviously then reflect the traditions of the new incumbent, really.

This discussion reveals a great deal. Firstly, the students who are considered part of the department are valued for their cooperation, loyalty and focus on (Western) classical music. Other musical genres, and the attributes valued in those genres such as creativity and entrepreneurship, are not considered here. Instead, those who are admitted to the family share the illusio of loyalty to Western classical music practices. Griffiths (2018) describes illusio as a “collusion [that] is endorsed, legitimised and sustained by fetishism” (p. 43), which seems particularly apt for understanding the creation and maintenance of the elite family group.

Lyndsey joined the interview halfway through this discussion and the implications of her contribution are ambiguous. It is possible that she was alluding to the typical middle-class habitus of the Friars Hall student population when she said that “they get a lot more opportunities in the younger years”. It may also be that she was actually referring to Key Stage 3 curriculum music, perceiving it as offering more opportunities than in other secondary schools, or that she was only speaking about those students who arrived at Friars Hall already playing instruments at a sufficient standard to join ensembles, thus gaining immediate entry to the family. We did not get an opportunity to clarify this, since Walter interrupted her to confirm that even their rock musicians were
“quite musical”, revealing the doxic tendency to devalue popular musics and musicians.

Exchanges of this sort were common between the two teachers in both the interview and our informal conversations. Lyndsey rarely contradicted Walter, but she did often seem to think before speaking in front of me, particularly about subject-specific issues such as repertoire, pedagogy, or her philosophy on music education. It was unclear if this was because she actually disagreed with Walter’s strongly-communicated opinions and was trying to negotiate a respectful professional relationship accordingly, or whether she was being cautious because of my presence as a researcher.

This excerpt also revealed several other aspects of the subfield’s doxa and illusio. It was notable that Walter described the family as a hierarchy. He listed himself and Lyndsey as the dad and mum, and identified the peris, who were essential to the music education of students in the family, as uncles and aunts. He did not actually mention the students themselves as being explicitly part of the family, however. Similarly, Walter did not prioritize the students in his concluding point about the department being reflective of his and Lyndsey’s musical values. His prediction that “if we were to leave, then the department might change completely in its nature” not only highlights his awareness that the general field of music education is changing (and that many music teachers now explicitly value popular music!), but it prompts questions about how (or if) students can shape a school music department, or whether hierarchies such as the one Walter describes mean that school music education reflects teacher interests rather than those of their students. This is especially pertinent given that Walter perceived the students as “buy[ing] in” to the doxa of the family. This is a clear reference to illusio, belief in the game, yet
many of the student participants felt that the family was either irrelevant or unattainable to them, and found its traditions such as “banter”, which Walter mentioned in his family description and is discussed in more detail later in the chapter, uncomfortable.

The student participants expressed varying opinions about the family/inner circle. Year 11 girls Mrs Birling and Sheila identified considerable benefits to being part of the music department family. They described it as “a close-knit community” and spoke about the holistic nature of their music education, in which GCSE Music was made easier because of their prior experience with individual instrumental lessons on an orchestral instrument, enabling participation in school ensembles. In this extract from our conversation, the girls had just spoken about how they had found Music to be an easier GCSE than some other subjects. They realized, however, that this wasn’t the case for everyone in the class, and felt that these other students were not invested in the subfield:

Mrs Birling: That really frustrated me at the start of last year. Because obviously the singers came in, and obviously they didn’t, um, they don’t play instruments, so – and some of them couldn’t even read music.

Sheila: Yup. That was really frustrating, having to move at such a slow pace because they had to, sort of, re-learn and learn everything. Even the notes and how it works. And I guess that was frustrating, considering quite a lot of us knew it.

[...]
Mrs Birling: It’s quite obvious who plays an instrument and who doesn’t. [Sheila agrees]. There’s almost like a palpable divide. You have the people who don’t really have an idea what’s going on, because - obviously I know this information because I’ve played an instrument, whereas, you really have to understand.

Sheila: So you can almost feel it when some people don’t know what you’re talking about and when others do. [Mrs Birling agrees]

Alison: And how does – or, does that divide link in with social things, with this music community that you’ve spoken about before?

Mrs Birling: Yeah, I mean the singers in our class, um, aren’t really a part of the music, sort of, community. Because also they don’t do any of the clubs or activities, or get to know anyone. [Sheila agrees] So, you’d expect them to be, I mean, they’re not – they’re not really involved.

The “palpable divide” that Mrs Birling describes is similar to Walter’s frequent references to musicians and non-musicians. Again, we see that the doxa of being a musician includes playing an instrument (rather than singing) and reading staff notation. Given that the Key Stage 3 music curriculum does not focus extensively on these skills, it is unsurprising that those students who begin GCSE Music without having had individual instrumental lessons “don’t really have an idea what’s going on.” Indeed, the data from Year 11 outlier Lucy, presented at the end of this chapter, confirms that some of the singers did not read staff notation and resented how lacking this skill furthered their sense of failure compared to those with musician status. They had chosen GCSE Music based on their experiences
at Key Stage 3, which had not provided an accurate representation of the doxa in other areas of the music department subfield.

Rocket and Gamora were also in the Year 11 class and met the criteria for being musicians: they were both in school ensembles and had done graded exams. They did not feel part of the family though. In this conversation, they describe their discomfort at going into the music staffroom, a space that was officially only for staff and A Level Music students but where younger members of the inner circle were also welcomed:

Rocket: There’s just like a musical circle […] you’ve got the sixth formers taking music [Gamora agrees], and like [student] and – you can see it in our class, like, you know, Mrs Birling’s a bit like that, dunno.

Alison: That’s interesting that you talk about a musical circle, because some other people have talked about a sort of family dynamic, and there are other people who’ve talked about feeling left out of music. And I’m wondering if what you’re getting at is something similar.

Gamora: They’re like – it’s the people who are always down here, I guess. ‘Cause there’s like the staffroom, and I remember, I didn’t really go down there because I’m GCSE, but when I did, they were all congregating in there and they all seemed really close and stuff. But they’re all really close with the teachers. So there is kind of that group dynamic.

Rocket: Once you’re allowed in that room, you’re in that circle. If you’re allowed to sit in there, you’re in the circle.
Alison: OK. And are there people who are allowed in who are not sixth formers?

Gamora: Yeah.

Rocket: I think so. Yeah.

Alison: OK. That’s really interesting, isn’t it, that, um, that dynamic of everyone’s welcome, but some people are welcome somewhere else as well. Is that right?

Rocket: It’s not as though you’d get kicked out, but – I mean, there’s never any reason for anyone to be there. I mean, I went to put my guitar [in there] when I was in Year 8, I was told to get out, and I was [little voice] “Then where do I put it, please?” I mean, the sixth formers are having a laugh, but still – [tails off]

Alison: But when you’re 12, and ‘this’[gestures] tall, that looks quite scary.

The unwritten rules about access to the music staffroom is reminiscent of Khan’s study of an elite U.S. boarding school in which certain couches were accepted as being only for seniors, an unwritten rule that motivated some younger students to keep believing in and rearticulating the illusio of the field (Khan & Jerolmack, 2013). Rocket and Gamora, however, had recognized that they did not feel comfortable continuing to follow the doxa of the music department subfield at Friars Hall.

Throughout their focus group discussion, Rocket and Gamora demonstrated a considerable level of awareness about how the music department operated. It was significant that, despite their own musician credentials, they could see the musical circle (as Rocket called it) and recognized its elitism. They shared several anecdotes like the one above about attempting to negotiate the department subfield in their younger years at
the school and seemed comfortable with their current positions slightly outside the circle which did not require them to demonstrate the same level of commitment to the doxa and illusio.

Rocket and Gamora were not the only Year 11s whose field positions were slightly outside the family. In contrast to them, however, Angelica, Eliza and Peggy were frustrated by their lack of recognition within the music department. The following extract was part of a larger discussion about who was valued within the school ensembles:

Alison: Is there a sense of having to serve like an apprenticeship? –

Eliza: [Interrupting] Yes, you work your way up. Which is singing in school choir, apprenticeship. Some of us have been in school choir since Year 7: the first solo I ever got in [school choir] was last Christmas. And I’ve been going every lunchtime, half an hour, since I first joined this school. And […] the only time I really felt appreciated was the solo I was given at Christmas. […] You have this group of people that turn up to choir every week, it’s not so much like [the teachers] go “I just want to thank you all for coming”, it’s more like “Right, that’s all for this week, see you all next week,” […] [the] ones who are always there, if we all left, choir would be –

Angelica: Would collapse.

Eliza: Would literally, there’d be hardly anyone there.

Peggy: There’s hardly anyone there to begin with.
These girls felt very frustrated that their attempts to follow the doxa of the music department by committing to school ensembles had not been appreciated. Observing the Year 11 class in their GCSE music lessons, it was clear that Eliza, Peggy and Angelica did not have the same status as Mrs Birling and Sheila. All five girls were white, lived locally, had individual music lessons and took part in school ensembles. They all expected to stay at the school to do A Levels and then progress to university. Yet this small group of girls, all occupying a similar middle-class habitus, demonstrated significant variations of comfort within the music department subfield. Whereas Mrs Birling and Sheila spoke positively about the music department as a family, the other three girls had given similar levels of commitment to the department subfield but did not feel a sense of ease within it. This variation illustrates Power, Edwards, Whitty and Wigfall’s (2003) observation that “even for middle-class and academically able pupils, transitions which appear ‘smooth’ in aggregate figures can be anything but smooth for the individuals whose progress the statistics summarize.” (p. 3) It is also worthwhile referring to Savage et al.’s (2015) discussion about accumulation and reinforcement of capitals:

It is not impossible for those without one or more of these [capitals] to join the upper reaches, but it is harder for them to do so. This is not because they are formally excluded, but because, in the competitive race to the top, those with the most advantages on all possible scores are the ones who are likely to have that extra bit of leverage to do better. (p. 204)

Mrs Birling and Sheila, and the other family members, had leveraged their advantages consistently in order to secure their positions. Several other participants, notably Lucy,
had recognized that they did not have the capitals required for success in the subfield and had therefore self-excluded from the race. Eliza, Peggy and Angelica, however, occupied an uncomfortable middle ground. They had not been formally excluded from the family, yet their efforts had not been enough to be welcomed into it either. Unlike Rocket and Gamora, who had quietly rejected the musical circle, they continued to seek membership of the upper reaches of the music department subfield, and that their efforts went unrecognized was a source of considerable discomfort to them.

6.5. Banter

One of the most significant doxa in the music department subfield was banter. Walter mentioned it in his description of the musical family, saying that “quite a few of us have similar senses of humour and there’s quite a lot of, sort of, banter, that they enjoy.” This banter featured frequently in my field notes from lesson observations and is also mentioned by some of the students in their descriptions of the music department. How individuals interacted with it seemed to be a key indicator of their position within the family or outside of the inner circle, which I described in the previous section. Banter was often mentioned at the same time as the music staffroom (the space which Rocket and Gamora perceived as symbolizing membership of the inner circle). In his focus group interview with fellow Year 12s Shrek and Joanne, Dizzy associated banter with the family wanting to help you become a better person:
Dizzy: I imagine the purpose of music, or one of the primary purposes of music here, is obviously to get good grades. Because it’s a school and they want to do well. But I’ve found coming up through here that I’ve never been in a department or a school that’s had as much of a sense of – not family exactly, but like, being down here, like community. And it’s a rubbish building, but we don’t care because everyone’s amazing down here. And the teachers have been more than just teachers of a subject. Particularly having been here since Year 7, which is, what six or seven years now. Six years. And you get to know them much better than you would just, you know, your Spanish teacher or your tech teacher or whatever. Because that became more apparent, the fact that they’re not just interested in getting good grades for you, but now they know you so well they want you to succeed, and try and make you into a better person, whether that’s all the banter that goes on - [Shrek laughs at this, but Joanne does not]

Dizzy identified getting good grades as the most significant part of the doxa in the music department, but he also mentioned family, not caring about the “rubbish building” and banter as key features of his experience there.

It was notable, however, that Joanne did not endorse Dizzy’s reference to banter or appear to enjoy participating in it during lessons and time spent in the staffroom. Banter is increasingly seen as a remnant of 90s ‘lads culture’ and recognized as a form of white masculine domination (Bland, 2017). Although Lyndsey often demonstrated the same tendency towards banter as Walter, she did not mention it in the interview. Indeed, none of the female participants mentioned it in a positive tone. Although the study was
not constructed to research issues of gender, this was one example of the underlying traits of male domination that I informally observed within the Friars Hall music department subfield. Some of the focus groups, also had conversations that offered examples of male dominance within the department subfield. One such example was in the focus group with Rocket (male) and Gamora (female), who referred again to the family metaphor when they discussed hierarchies within the school music ensembles:

Alison: Does it affect – do you think it’s easier to be a good musician if you’re charismatic?

Gamora: I think it’s easier to be part of the – family. But I wouldn’t say it’s necessarily easier.

Rocket: So, that’s - that’s one of the good things about music, is that you can do it on your own, you can do it in a group, it doesn’t really matter. It’s, it’s – you can hide away in a corner, and just play so no one can hear you. But, that’s fine, but you can also play as loud as you possibly can. In a group of other people, and you can fit anywhere on that spectrum.

Alison: So are you kind of saying that it doesn’t affect how good you are, but it affects whether or not people notice you?

Gamora: Yeah. [Rocket agrees] ‘Cause my sister, she did concert band and she’s really shy. She only came, she sat down in the corner, did what she had to do, and left. And she never talked to anyone, stuff like that.

Alison: Yeah, OK. Do the kids at this school, do people kind of make an effort to bring them in? Or is it kind of, well, -
Rocket: Nope.

Gamora: Just leave them out there.

Alison: OK. ‘Cause some other people have talked to me about concert band, saying how there’s this real kind of hierarchy of – where people sit, and lots of power dynamics. [Gamora agrees]

Rocket: I don’t know what it’s like [in concert band]. In jazz band, it’s front circle, back circle, you have people like Dizzy Gillespie and – stuff like that.

Alison: Right. OK. So, the people who maybe don’t feel that they have the confidence to be charismatic, other people won’t look to bring them in to the circle, is that right?

[Pause]

Rocket: Yeah?

Alison: So they don’t get noticed as much?

Gamora: Yeah.

Rocket: I’d say almost it’s, they’re noticed, but no one really cares. In a way.

This conversation showed that Rocket and Gamora did not share Walter’s understanding of musicians as those who join in and enjoy banter, instead referring to musical activity as covering a spectrum of social situations. Their account also suggests that students such as Gamora’s sister, who are loyal to the department but do not have the self-confidence to engage with the aspects of its doxa, are not valued by those who dominate the subfield. Other similar examples mentioned by the pupil focus groups also implied that boys such as Dizzy Gillespie were more dominant within the inner circle. Similarly, none of the
male participants expressed frustration about their efforts and commitment not being appreciated within the family, as Angelica, Eliza and Peggy did. Again, the Friars Hall student participants demonstrated a diverse response to what initially appeared to be a common understanding of the music department culture. The family/inner circle and banter characteristics of the doxa appeared to be problematic for more students than they benefited.

6.6. Instrumental teachers

Having instrumental lessons was an essential criterion for membership of the musical family. The student participants offered varied opinions about their experiences with the peri teachers. Those who were in the family, or who wanted to be in it, tended to tell me about their positive relationships with their teacher. The following comments are from separate Year 11 and Year 12 focus groups:

Dizzy: You have some teachers who are sort of doing it because they have to pay the bills a bit, I mean they haven’t been that inspiring. Whereas some, like the one I’ve got at the moment, […] He’s just breathing music. That’s really good.

Peggy: My singing teacher has an uncanny ability to be able to pick songs for the emotion I’m feeling at that time.
Fred: My music teacher wants me to be in the marines band. Um, ‘cause that what he had done. That’s what a lot of music is, I think, is passing it on.

Comments such as these supported Walter’s suggestion that the “peris would be the uncles, and the aunts” within the music department family. Dizzy, Peggy and Fred valued the one-to-one relationships with their instrumental teachers, which included opportunities for emotional support, careers advice, and a shared love of music for its intrinsic value.

For students outside the family, however, instrumental lessons were not always a positive experience. Year 8 participant Kim had piano lessons, but was frustrated that her teacher expected her to learn staff notation when she preferred to play by ear:

Kim: I need help! I’m not gonna be rude to my teacher but like, she doesn’t really help me. She’s like, “Oh you need to just get your notes right.” And like I don’t know how to. I always memorize, and when I go and sit down on that chair, I just go like “Yeah, I don’t know what I’m meant to be doing.”

Despite having piano lessons, Kim didn’t feel that she was a good enough musician to take GCSE Music, suggesting that the illusio of graded exams and staff notation as essential is required to make individual lessons a valuable asset within the subfield. In contrast, Year 11 girls Lucy, Renee and Alisha Daniels all began singing lessons in Year 9 when they opted to take GCSE Music. As Walter had explained, peri lessons were subsidized by the school for all GCSE and A Level Music students, with the intention of preparing for the performing requirements of these exams. Renee had also recently taken
a Grade Five exam, although she was yet to receive her tie. Lucy and Alisha Daniels, however, described less positive experiences of individual tuition:

Lucy: They like, they pay for us to have music lessons like, a certain instrument, or singing, or whatever. And it’s not really an option to not take them, is it.

[Alisha Daniels agrees]

Alison: So everybody who does GCSE gets two years of lessons, is that right?

[They all agree]

Lucy: But it’s not an option. Like, if you say no, they’re “well you have to do it.”

Renee: You have to do it.

Lucy: And I think it’s – they focus on, - well, they don’t focus on any music that I would ever listen to […]

Alison: [But] you can do songs that you like [for the GCSE performing unit]?

Lucy: I got given my song.

Renee: Really? [Alisha Daniels is also surprised at this]

Lucy: I didn’t get a choice about my song. And I got put in my ensemble, I didn’t get to choose my ensemble. So, yeah.

Renee: That’s not good.
Lucy: Exactly. So yeah, my music teacher was like, “Oh I’ve got this” - because he’s got another student in my class as well, he was “Oh, you can go with her and this is the song you’re gonna do [for the ensemble performance]”, and I was like “Okey dokey but I don’t really wanna do that”. Obviously, it didn’t change. And then he gave me my solo, and I didn’t really get to choose it.

Alison: So does part of the experience depend on who is your singing or instrument teacher? [They agree]

Alisha Daniels: Because in Year 9 I had this singing teacher, he used to make me sing all this [sic] classical songs, and all this stuff, and I really didn’t like it. So I had –

Lucy: Was that Mr Blake?

Alisha Daniels: Yeah, I think so. So I asked Mr Williams if I could change teacher, and then I got Mr Simons and I learnt to sing songs that I want, like he gives me the option of what I want to sing.

Renee: Mr Simons is quite into musical theatre.

Alisha Daniels: He’s really good.

Whilst none of the girls described familial relationships like those that Dizzy, Fred and Peggy depicted with their peri teachers, Renee had used the mandatory lessons as an opportunity to acquire additional cultural capital, taking a graded singing exam, and Alisha had managed to negotiate a teacher-student relationship that at least improved her
experience of GCSE Music. For Lucy, however, singing lessons offered no enjoyment or musical agency. Her account of not being allowed to choose performance repertoire illustrates the tendency for both class and instrumental music teachers to push candidates towards pieces that are legitimated by exam boards in documents such as the GCSE, AS and A level Music Difficulty Levels Booklet (Pearson, 2015). Although these documents are intended for guidance only, many teachers feel that such legitimized repertoire is ‘a safe bet’ for securing high grades and limit their students’ choices accordingly, therefore reducing the musical freedoms that the exam boards theoretically offer. Since the repertoire included in the Pearson document is largely drawn from notation-based resources previously legitimized by music exam boards like ABRSM, success in GCSE and A Level Music is therefore often limited to the relatively narrow confines of music exam criteria. This is a further example of how the doxa of school music intersects with the elite doxa of individual music lessons.

6.7. Resources for music

Friars Hall School occupies a large campus surrounded by farmland. The music department is housed in its own building, physically separated from other academic departments. Its nearest neighbours are boarding houses, staff homes and the sports centre. Walter considered this location to be beneficial:

Alison: So tell me about how music sits within the school, in terms of – resources, shall we say, -
Walter: Well the building itself is sixties, [...] It was a sixth form block, it was then converted [...] the group of four practice rooms in a square, you can see they’ve just partitioned off one big room. The trouble is, in the building we’ve got single-glazing, which is awful, lots of glass, lots of awful old sixties windows, and you can pretty much play a saxophone in any room in the building and you can hear it in any other room in the building. So it was never designed, sort of acoustically designed, and in terms of noise and sound reduction it’s dreadful. But then I’ve always worked in ghastly buildings. I’ve always worked in ghastly buildings with, with um, lovely people, or with talented students, - and, I think to myself –

Alison: Yeah, it’s definitely the better way around, isn’t it?

Walter: Like Portlands [a high-profile boarding school in Hillyon] have got a new music building that cost millions and millions and millions of pounds, but I hear from the colleagues that teach there that they’ve got these wonderful facilities but they’ve got no decent musicians to put in it to actually use it. Whereas obviously we would have the musicians to put in it and use it, but we’re working in ghastly buildings. And we always get told –[…] we’re always told at music department review meeting[s], “we don’t know how you get the results that you do and you put on the things that you do, working in that awful building.” […] But yeah, the building is ghastly. But then in some ways I quite like it, because we’re out of the way, we can make as much noise as we like, it is our own – we don’t have to share it with anybody, and they tend to leave us alone on tours and things ‘cause
it’s a long way to walk, so we don’t get disturbed by – if you’re up there near the main offices and car parks, they’re in and out of your lessons every five minutes. So, I think, if I said how many senior managers have I had in lessons since September, I’ve probably had two – two visits. Whereas I know some teachers have had two visits in a week, because of where their classroom’s situated. So it’s all about people and not buildings. But yeah, it would be lovely – [tails off]

Walter’s response revealed a great deal about the Friars Hall music department subfield. This was one of several occasions where he compared it to the Portlands music department, or to the music departments of the other independent schools in Hillyon. Walter was confident that his musicians had more musical capital than the students at these elite schools and that Friars Hall offered them more valuable musicking opportunities than they would receive elsewhere, regardless of resources. This connects to Walter’s comment about “decent musicians”, further highlighting the extent to which early involvement in formal music education was a requirement for success in the subfield.

Walter was also pleased that the music building provided a home for the family, where “it is our own, […] we don’t get disturbed […]”. This allowed the subfield of the music department to maintain a sense of independence from the school field, and cultivate its own doxa and illusio, including valuing people more than resources. Only certain people were given this value, however, and Walter seemed pleased that the school’s Senior Leadership Team were not visibly concerned about or interested in the music department, which allowed the building to be dominated by the musical family
doxa rather than that of the school field. This was apparent throughout the data collection process, when I rarely saw members of the wider school staff visit the music building. Walter did not consider whether the music building should be a space that shared in whole-school customs or that welcomed those students and staff whose musical interests were not aligned with that of the department. As I discuss below, however, many student participants also commented on the poor design of the music building, generally with far greater frustration than Walter. Unlike him, most of the students did not believe that the “decent musicians” and “lovely people” were sufficient to make up for the poor-quality musicking spaces and resources.

Compared to other buildings at Friars Hall School, and to Stonefarm High School’s music department, the music building really was poorly equipped. In addition to the structural limitations that Walter mentioned, the classroom instruments and music technology resources were similar to those associated with secondary school music education in the 1990s. Given this, I was surprised by Walter’s response when I asked about funding. He told me about the separate budgets available for costs associated with curriculum music, buying and repairing instruments, tuning pianos, and fully subsidizing instrumental lessons for all students who took GCSE and A Level Music. He also mentioned the “concert fund”, made up of takings from departmental events:

Walter: We’re slightly self-financing through things like concerts and the Dunn Shield [the school’s annual house music competition, which parents pay to attend]. So if we want to go on trips we never charge our pupils for trips, if we go to the high schools’ choir festival, if we do a trip to primary schools […] And also
if, if there’s something, like for instance, we’ve got a few instruments that are school instruments, if we needed a new baritone sax, I would think about buying that out of the concert fund, because that would then be used to create concerts. [...] And that would probably mean that, in any one year [...] I would nearly have about nine thousand pounds to play with if I put all the monies together. And that’s a lot of money.

This amount is a lot of money for a state-funded secondary school to spend annually on music. Walter’s example of a baritone saxophone as a suitable investment, however, shed light on my perception of a lack of funding for resources used in classroom music: the minimum cost of a baritone saxophone would be over £2000. Instruments like this added to the prestige of the school’s concert and jazz bands, but they were only played by one student each year. This conversation provided a monetary example of how the department prioritized the experiences of musicians at the expense of opportunities for the wider school population.

Almost all of the student focus groups raised their concerns about the poor resources with me during our discussions, and many were disappointed that I didn’t have the power to arrange repairs to both the building and the instruments. The Year 11 and 12 participants complained about the building, but they appeared to have become inured to the limited provision of instruments and music technology resources. They knew that the music department subfield valued playing (and probably owning) orchestral instruments, rather than using school instruments or technology to create music. In contrast, several of the Year 8 focus groups felt that the music curriculum would be more relevant to them,
and therefore GCSE Music a more appealing option choice, if it were better resourced. This experience was similar to those observed by Mills (2005), who noticed that some music teachers “allocate their best resources, for example instruments or rehearsal spaces, to the students who they feel have earned them”, often inadvertently reducing motivation for other students (p. 172). Several Year 8 boys mentioned the lack of music technology:

Malonkadonk: I think what the school could do, is they could – let’s say they get iPads for all the students, yeah, you tap your name in, and then you have your own little folder and stuff. And then you can sort of like create music on it as well, [Barbara agrees] and it’s like, there are a few apps out there that are like, magic squares, and you can like play songs off them. They’re really good.

Like many of his peers, Malonkadonk was far more familiar with contemporary music technology resources than Walter and Lyndsey appeared to be. Yet whereas he wanted access to resources that would allow the curriculum to change, Year 8 girls Kim and Kylie primarily focused on the limitations of the existing resources:

Kylie: I think, the school is always like, “oh yeah it’s a music and sports school, it’s all equal.” But it’s not. But the school spends a whole lot more money on sports, like, have you seen all the facilities for sports? [I say yes]. And then this place [the music building] is old – it’s really old. It’s all tatty.

Alison: And what about the instruments and stuff you use?

Kim: The instruments are good. The instruments are good.
Kylie. It’s alright. There’s a good range.

Kim: But sometimes the instruments could be a bit – because, you know the drum kit? [There is only one drum kit regularly available for student use during class lessons]. It’s kind of, so basically, [Kim mimes that the drum kits rocks, rather than standing stable], basically, […] There used to be, and now there’s no [hi-hat]. And it’s kind of broken, the drums. […] You can’t do this [mimes playing a bass/snare/hi-hat beat], you have to go like that with the other cymbal [mimes reaching over towards the ride].

Kylie: The thing with sports is, like if a ball breaks or something, if anything breaks, they will replace it straight away. If something breaks in music – [she mimes it being pointless].

Alison: That’s that?

Kylie: Yeah, that’s that. And they might replace it, but that’ll be like, another five years’ time. They don’t have enough funding to support music. Because they have loads towards sport, but, not so much music.

Whilst I didn’t know any details about funding for sports at Friars Hall, Walter’s description of the funding for music left me feeling sad for Kylie and Kim. Were the drum kit a priority, it could easily have been repaired or replaced. A new kit of a similar standard would cost less than £200. But to Kylie and Kim it seemed not to be a priority, just at Malonkadonk felt that providing music technology resources was not a priority. It was clear that the Year 8 participants felt that the lack of contemporary musical resources,
and the poor quality of many resources that were available to them, had negatively impacted their interest and sense of achievement in Key Stage 3 music.

6.8. Jazz

Listening to music was important to almost all of the Friars Hall participants and distinguishing oneself through listening habits was a key doxa within the musical family. Conversations in the music staffroom often included sharing YouTube videos or Spotify playlists, and the student family members cited jazz as being of particular significance to their identity as musicians. Their illusio included differentiating jazz from other popular music genres, which they perceived as requiring less committed, informed listening, embodying Bourdieu’s claim that “tastes are no doubt first and foremost distastes” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 56, in Skeggs, 2004, p. 41). It was these students that Walter thought of when I asked the teachers about listening habits amongst the pupils. In contrast, Lyndsey tried to give an answer that showed awareness of the wider student population:

Alison: What do they listen to? The kids here […]

Lyndsey: I don’t know because I think, there’s a wide range, […] When [my mixed-age tutor group] have socials, they’re all like this dance music, heavy kind of bass, and they had the eighties kind of songs on the other day, they were all singing along, they knew all the words. So yeah, I think it depends, it’s a wide range of stuff. I mean quite a lot of our sixth formers, musicians, will obviously
listen to classical music and –

Walter: Jazz. They listen to a lot of jazz.

Lyndsey: Jazz, yeah. I suppose the younger year groups will – I don’t know if they listen to all that much. I think quite a lot of the Year 7s, if you say “Who are you listening to?”, a lot won’t have any idea. […] I think it’s different [to] when we were younger, because I think we had MTV and stuff, and that was kind of – more accessible and stuff.

Alison: And it was more physical, you gave people CDs or you made people tapes, so you were much more aware of physically what people were listening to.

Lyndsey: [Then] people always listened to the same sort of stuff, but I don’t think there necessarily is that now, ‘cause people can download anything they want.

Alison: Yeah, makes it much more varied, doesn’t it.

Lyndsey: So they can [have a] bit of a broader range, in music, that they listen to.

As was frequently the case in the teacher interview, Lyndsey did not actively disagree with Walter, but extended his answers so that they provided a more balanced picture of the department and the school. Yet whilst Lyndsey did show more awareness than Walter, she still referred to the musicians more confidently than other students outside the family, as demonstrated in this excerpt where she didn’t mention any specific genres that other pupils were listening to. As a result, Walter’s certainty about the family was often the message that appeared to be doctrine about the department subfield, both to me as a visiting researcher and to the student participants.
Walter was right to identify jazz as part of the doxa for the musical family. James Bond and Fred (Year 12) explained how GCSE and A Level Music had a significant impact on musical knowledge and awareness, creating a distinction between those who studied music as an option subject and the rest of the pupils at Friars Hall. This was then furthered by participation in school ensembles, particularly belonging to the jazz band:

James: If you’re like a student here [in the music building] you listen to like other music as well. You, you will have like, more music knowledge than them, [and can] work out why it is better, - [pause]

Alison: What music [is better]?

James: Yeah.

Alison: OK, yeah.

Fred: I think – [pause] taking music sort of broadens your horizons a bit. Like, I wouldn’t listen to a lot of stuff I listen to if I hadn’t studied [music] at GCSE, [but now I realize] well actually it sounds quite good. [Pause] And also like, say me, Dizzy and Shrek, we listen to – quite a similar style of music, we listen to jazz, funk, and rock and that sort of thing. Um, and we’re all in the jazz band. And kids that aren’t in jazz band won’t necessarily listen to that sort of music as well. So I think taking part in, like in class, GCSE and A Level, but also taking part in the bands outside of school, really broadens your horizons into different listening cultures.

The processes that Fred described, choosing to study music and join the jazz band, further confirmed these as the doxa for family membership. Fred didn’t appear to see this as a
competitive or elite process, however, but rather one that could “broaden your horizons”. He and James Bond focused on “why [some music] is better”, subtly linking knowledge to the formation of tastes but not directly commenting on their distastes. The other Year 12 focus group, however, were more explicitly judgmental when critiquing what they perceived to be the uninformed musical tastes of those students who weren’t musicians, stressing the “complexity” of jazz which requires knowledge on the part of the listener, compared to pop music which is “consumed”:

Joanne: I think jazz is like, seen as quite cool. Like, if you’re in jazz band –

Dizzy: Only to musicians. I’d say jazz [Shrek is trying to talk, but Dizzy drowns him out] is the music of musicians.

Shrek: Yeah, it’s like –

Dizzy: Because it gets so complicated and like, I think -

Shrek: I don’t quite – to be honest, when I first started doing music in, like, Year 8, […] I did the lessons but I wasn’t actively involved and I didn’t really seem interested. But jazz music didn’t appeal to me at all. But then as my music knowledge grew, I learned to, like, accept it, and I dunno, -

Dizzy: Because it’s quite complicated. It’s quite complicated, and for yer average joe who’s never done anything music at all, it’s hard, it’s quite hard to consume. [Shrek agrees] I think. When I say consume I mean, like, listen to. Because a pop song is really easy to listen to –

Shrek: I think that’s the simplistic nature of it.

Dizzy: Whereas like, jazz, you can have these mental chords going on. And if
you’re not a musician, you’re sitting there going “well what is going on,” [Shrek agrees] “like, that chord sounds a bit weird.” But if you’re, say, a jazz musician, you’re sat there going “wow, they’ve added that note in there, it sounds cool because it resolved.”

Shrek: You, like, you can pick stuff out.

Dizzy: And I, I find pop songs boring.

[They all start talking simultaneously, agreeing that they cannot listen to pop.]

Dizzy: It’s just the same formula every time, just chuck it out to the masses. Let’s just put this beat in the whole way through.

Shrek: Especially when there’s nothing different.

Dizzy: There’s no, like nothing going on.

Joanne: It has no substance.

Shrek: It’s so thin.

Dizzy: It’s just so boring and unimaginative. And they just chuck the same thing out, let’s just put on a dollop of auto-tune. [they laugh] It’s so boring. There’s no imagination to it at all.

Shrek: I think it might be like maths. So people who don’t like maths, like easy sums. But [people] who don’t, like, listen to music, don’t take any joy [Dizzy tries to interrupt here], like simple music. Well, not simple music, but formulaic.

Dizzy: Something that they’re used to. I think they only enjoy listening to music – but they don’t, like, necessarily take joy in it. Or like, really enjoy listening. They just listen to it because, yeah, it sounds cool and it’s groovy and – well, not
groovy, but just like “ah, this is a great, great beat, woah.” [a patronising tone here]

Alison: So if I was to go up to the boarding house and talk to people there who don’t necessarily come down here [to the music building] for anything, and say “tell me about your experiences with music” –

Dizzy: I reckon they’d chuck a load of pop artists at you. And the charts and –

Shrek: Charts.

Alison: Do they go to gigs?

Shrek: They would go to pop.

Dizzy: Pop gigs, like Justin Bieber or, or Imagine Dragons, or something like that. They wouldn’t go to, like, Ronnie Scott’s in London, or something. Whereas I’d rather go to Ronnie Scott’s or something, than go to a Justin Bieber gig.

Through this conversation the participants demonstrated their own status as musicians, and the need for musical knowledge in order to understand and appreciate jazz. The complexity of jazz was part of the illusio of being a musician and also of the illusio of the music department subfield: “yer average joe” was only capable of “consuming” pop music, whereas being a musician enabled the participants to appreciate the complexity of jazz and other less mainstream genres. Simplicity was considered to be formulaic and unattractive, a distaste as much as complexity was a taste.
Dizzy’s final comment about Justin Bieber was similar to those made by almost all of the focus groups. Regardless of their own musical interests, the Friars Hall students consistently made negative comments about Bieber, similar to the teenage participants in Mendick, Allen, Harvey and Ahmad’s (2018) study who felt that he had not worked hard for fame and represented “manufactured popular culture” (p. 145). At Friars Hall, even those students who spoke about their enjoyment of popular music were keen to separate themselves from commercial pop culture:

Lucy: And I really like Haim because they’re not, like – I don’t really like, like, you know –

Renee: Popular music.

Lucy: - Justin Bieber. I don’t really like pop that much. Like maybe there’ll be one or two pop songs and “Oh, ok.” But they won’t be like the whole, like, I don’t know. I just don’t really like pop. I’m really into alternative music. [Renee agrees]

Although Renee and Lucy liked a diverse range of popular music (they also mentioned artists such as Janelle Monáe, Aretha Franklin and Hillsong), they did not like the term popular. Renee used it to mean commercially-successful music and Lucy differentiated between pop music and alternative music, demonstrating a level of distinction that was actually similar to those in the inner circle. Believing that one’s musical tastes were different to those of the masses, to use Dizzy’s phrase, was actually a unifying factor amongst all of the Friars Hall student participants. For those in the family, this was part of the illusio of being a musician. They also needed to maintain the illusio that others were
only consumers of music, rather than active listeners and critics. To acknowledge that their non-musician peers also “take joy in it” would blur the distinction between the masses and the musicians, and therefore threaten the stability of the music department subfield.

6.9. The wider music education field

The data presented thus far shows that the subfield of the Friars Hall music department has much in common with dominant sectors in the national field of music education. Both legitimate the performance of notated music through formal instruction, using ABRSM graded exams as a measure of success. Both are stable fields where reproduction of social inequity continues, for example in the value ascribed to orchestral instruments compared to music technology. Walter, feared, however, that this reproduction was under threat both at Friars Hall and on a more national level. This was his response when I brought our interview to a close:

Walter: I think the only thing I’m slightly concerned about is just, sort of, you know, music generally, and just how much – like, I’ve gotta work probably another ten years ‘til I retire, just – I, I sometimes wonder how much music there’ll be, even in a place like this, in ten years’ time. Because the gradual trend everywhere is, - and you already hear it on the news that music is – and I’m sometimes thinking “will there be enough music for ten years, or will I have to go
in eight, or will it be six?” Will it be – you just don’t know. It’s more likely to survive here because of the boarding –

Alison: Have your numbers for GCSE and A Level stayed fairly constant?

Walter: Not really, they’ve been on a bit of a downward, um, trend. […] But that’s why I, I sometimes worry – um, about, you know, will music survive. I, I feel, when I arrived music was pretty weak here, um, in 1999, and we got the first what I call a really good vintage year in 2006. So it took me six years to get it up.

Alison: It does, doesn’t it, ‘cause you need kids that you’ve had since Year 7.

Walter’s reference to a “a really good vintage year” demonstrated his focus on the annual reproduction of traditions, which enabled him to make direct comparisons when discussing what he deemed to be success in the music department. Posters and photo displays around the music building confirmed that the same calendar of music events was repeated every year, focused on directed ensembles that maintained their formats and style of repertoire annually. Walter explained to me that “a really good vintage year” occurred when there was a large group of “musical sixth formers who we’d sort of built up”. Unlike his previous descriptions of how musicians are those who arrive at the school already immersed in the doxa and illusio of Western classical practices, this comment did suggest that Walter saw the music department as helping to nurture students’ musical development over their time at Friars Hall. Yet he still worried that music wouldn’t survive (and therefore prompt him to retire earlier than planned) because of the gradual decrease in musicians joining the school. Walter recognized that this “downward trend”
was slowed at Friars Hall “because of the boarding”, which attracted that socially
advantaged demographic of students and thus increased the likelihood of children
entering the school as “musicians”.

Although the Friars Hall music department is in many ways successful, the
approach it takes is increasingly uncommon in many other schools. Instead, English
school music education has generally evolved towards being more contemporary,
culturally responsive and inclusive (Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019; Mills, 2005;
Ofsted, 2012b). Conversations amongst other secondary school music educators tend to
reflect these changes, and also often reference factors such as the negative impact of the
EBacc on GCSE option blocks, cuts to staffing and Key Stage 3 curriculum time, and the
increased focus on Western classical practices in the latest GCSE and A Level
specifications. When Walter did not mention any of these factors as part of his concern
about music surviving, I interrupted his statistics about the number of children having
private instrumental lessons to ask about the impact of the EBacc:

Alison: [Interrupting Walter] Yes! Do you think the EBacc-type conversation
plays in there, or is it more about kids having private lessons?

Walter: I think it’s more the private lessons really. [Pause] And I think it’s just
sheer economics that the music, music is a luxury, it’s a luxury item, you know,
and when times are hard it’s one of the first things that go. You know, ‘cause
they’ve gotta pay for the lessons, they’ve gotta pay for the instruments, they’ve
gotta pay for the music, the reeds, you know, in some cases they’ve gotta change
the car they have. And it’s just an easy thing to cut. So yeah, I think that would be my worry about music teaching, […]

Again, Walter confirmed that his understanding of music education (and therefore that of the Friars Hall music department subfield) was based around individual lessons. Without a sufficient proportion of the students having instrumental lessons and bringing the skills associated with them to departmental ensembles, there would not be a music department as Walter conceived of it. The GCSE and A Level specifications, with their reference to the structures and practices associated with individual instrumental lessons, perpetuate this way of thinking about school music education.

It was unclear whether Walter’s emphasis on the financial impact of instrumental lessons was an accurate understanding of their waning popularity. The school’s intake had become “more comprehensive”, to use his own words, during Walter’s time as Director of Music, but both the instrumental lessons offered for a cost and the free music activities such as directed ensembles remained firmly focused on the Western classical tradition and other white, middle-class musical practices. The music department was thus no longer reflective of the wider school population. The student participants at Friars Hall who mentioned having stopped instrumental lessons repeatedly cited lack of interest as the reason for this decision. Of course, this was not the focus of my study and a focus group setting with children would not be the best way to investigate such an issue, but I posit that the relevance of the music being studied and the pedagogies used to access it was, for many of the participants who mentioned stopping instrumental lessons, as significant a factor as money. I also suspect that, like Lamont and Maton’s (2008)
participants who did not choose to continue with school music, these students saw instrumental lessons as “not for the likes of me” and thus self-excluded from the field, without their instrumental and school music teachers actively seeking musics and pedagogies that would be of interest to these students.

The department’s alignment with dominant sectors in the national field of music education was beneficial to those students who excelled within the subfield of Friars Hall music. When I asked Walter and Lyndsey what local music activities the students were involved in, they listed several, including county-funded youth ensembles, community ensembles largely populated by adults, church choirs and a regional workshop for elite young musicians. For these students, all of whom were in the music department family, developing the skills prioritized in the Friars Hall subfield had facilitated movement into other, highly legitimized, music education subfields. Walter and Lyndsey were disappointed by the county-funded provision for music, however:

Walter: [...] but I think generally county music has weakened and weakened and weakened, and it’s had more and more cuts since I’ve been here for twenty years, and it wouldn’t surprise me if it totally disappeared, completely, in the next few years, [...] They get rid of all the experienced staff, the more senior staff, just because they’re more expensive[ [...] and they had to try and build it back up again and that’s why they are playing second fiddle to certain neighbouring counties [...] But it’s, we wouldn’t say it was very well-organized would we? It’s very disorganized now, you don’t know who to talk to –
Lyndsey: The high schools choir festival was run by a lady this year, and we didn’t have the music by the start of term, three or four weeks in, wasn’t it, that we got the music. And then it wasn’t completely right, and then we got there and we were like “Well, what do we do in this song” because it wasn’t very clear, it was just a hand-written scrawl on a piece of paper.

This discussion showed that the Friars Hall music department did not always have a positive relationship with other music education sites. Some of Walter and Lyndsey’s frustration could be interpreted as hysteresis. County-organized events such as the high schools choir festival had changed their format. Reading staff notation was no longer a prerequisite for participation and the repertoire included contemporary popular music (the song Lyndsey mentioned above was Human by Rag’n’Bone Man, released in 2017). At Stonefarm High School, this was welcomed as an opportunity for students without middle-class cultural capital to get involved in large-scale, formal musicking. Walter and Lyndsey, however, believed that “the music” was staff notation and felt disadvantaged when other, more inclusive approaches were used. Similarly, Walter felt that “you don’t know who to talk to” about county-wide music provision, whose approach has changed to include active use of social media for communications. While the Friars Hall music department subfield had remained stable, the fields surrounding it had evolved.
6.10. An outlier’s perspective (Lucy)

The student population at Friars Hall School is both more ethnically diverse and socially advantaged than the local community. In lessons and around the school, the students formed distinct groups. Their collective appearance and demeanor were more varied than that of the Stonefarm High School students, and individuals were often keen to tell me how they and their friends were “different” to others in their year group. Many participants expressed frustration at aspects of their school music education, but Year 11 student Lucy was unusual in the extent to which she identified the doxic processes that contributed to her own alienation. Her status as an outlier was also confirmed unconsciously by other Year 11 focus group participants who discussed the dynamic of their GCSE Music class, and during informal conversations with Walter Williams and Lyndsey Carter about the class. They frequently mentioned what they perceived as Lucy’s total lack of interest in the music that they valued, which is reminiscent of Savage et al.’s (2015) description of a former headteacher who demonstrated “remarkable belief in the innate and redemptive qualities of his highbrow cultural tastes”, differentiating “between those with it, and those without it – and who could do with more of it.” (pp. 100-01) Lucy was certainly not a willing participant in the departmental doxa, referring to the banter as *roasting*, a slang term that implies a more explicitly mean and one-sided exchange than banter:

Lucy: if I’m just sitting there looking confused, he’s like ‘Lucy you look’ [said in a silly voice] and he roasts me every lesson as well [Renee and Alisha Daniels agree], telling me I’m terrible at music, […]
As I will now explore, Lucy was very unhappy with her experience in the music department subfield and felt that it did not correlate with her identity as a musician.

Lucy was white, lived locally, and had attended Friars Hall as a day pupil since Year 7. She formed a focus group with her friends Renee and Alisha Daniels, both of whom were Black and lived in or near London. They had both joined the school in Year 9 as boarders. Since Friars Hall teaches GCSE Music over three years, Renee and Alisha Daniels had therefore not experienced Key Stage 3 Music at the school. They also had less negative experiences of GCSE Music than Lucy, although all three girls were certain that they would not continue with music at A Level. As the data earlier in this chapter show, Renee and Alisha Daniels had managed to navigate the system of instrumental lessons more successfully than Lucy and I did not hear other students or the teachers talk about them as outliers in the way that Lucy was presented. Renee and Alisha Daniels did express frustration with the music department and the school generally, clearly articulating how their education was dominated by white, male, European culture. Both girls had clearly thought about this before, however, whereas Lucy verbalized several epiphanies during the focus group session, which furthered my perception of her as being an outlier amongst a diverse group of student participants. Perhaps these realizations contributed to the level of thought she demonstrated during the discussion as she stripped away layers of symbolism at Friars Hall, questioning how the school and the music department doxa were established and maintained. As I discuss below, many of these doxa are also part of the doxa in the national music education field.
When our formal interview began, Lucy immediately verbalized her discomfort with GCSE music:

Alison: I thought it might be useful if you start by telling me what GCSE music’s like, and whether what I’ve seen this term, when I’ve been coming in, is typical.

[Pause]

Lucy: Um, I don’t think they focus enough on people who take music but didn’t know anything about it before. There aren’t any revision guides or anything, they don’t really give us past papers or anything, like any other subjects do. And they kind of, if you don’t know about music; you’re stupid.

Alisha Daniels: They assume that you know. And when you don’t, they don’t explain “this means this” or –

Lucy: They’ll literally be like “Oh, you should know this.”

Alisha Daniels: They’ll just continue on with the lesson and you’re just sat there like “I have no idea what’s going on.”

As Lucy observed, compared to other subjects, there are relatively few GCSE-focused publications for music students, especially for this particular year group who were the first cohort to enter for the current specification. Whilst it is logical that exam boards will invest more in resources for popular subjects, this discrepancy with other school subjects further illustrates music’s status as both a minority subject and an elite subject. Lucy perceived that this systemic elitism was compounded by the lack of clarity and encouragement from her music teachers. Indeed, throughout the
discussion Lucy repeatedly emphasized her frustration at the relationships she had with the music teachers and at the GCSE course requirements:

Alison: So what have you learnt, in GCSE music lessons?
Renee: Well, set works.
Alison: Be completely honest with me. Not what have you done – what have you learnt.
Lucy: I personally have probably learned nothing. Simply because, in the lesson, I don’t even know what happens in the lesson. Like, if he’s teaching us something, if he’s teaching – to be fair, I am a pretty bad, I am a pretty bad student in music. But even if, like he does not explain things, […] if he writes something on the board, he’ll be “this is this” and then move onto the next thing. But he doesn’t explain it, and I’m just like “-what?” And then with the set works, you have to go away, revise it and learn it yourself, and then do a test, come back and do a test on it. […] Basically, it’s just a memory test. It’s like, “could you actually teach me something?” [Pause] If you tried to show me a piece of music, and you’re like “can you tell me what this note is, can you tell me what this means?” I literally would be like “I have no clue.” That’s like reading a foreign language.

Lucy was aware of her own disadvantaged position in the music department field, where the required understanding of staff notation was “a foreign language” to her. Lucy frequently juxtaposed her lack of effort in music with her frustration at the teaching styles and the curriculum content of GCSE Music. Despite her clear dislike of the teachers, she
also acknowledged that they were limited by the exam board curriculum. Lucy and her friends frequently returned to the significance of musical content in the curriculum:

Lucy: So, have we been taught about one rapper or one alternative musician or modern day, or have we been taught about Bob Marley or anyone like that? [The other two give passionate no’s]

Alison: What, not even Bob Marley? He’s old!

Lucy: We’ve not been taught – we’ve not been taught about one Black person, one woman, no-

Alisha Daniels: The youngest person we have is that person that does the samba -

Alison: Esperanza Spalding.

Alisha Daniels: Yeah, her. And Queen. That’s literally our […]

Lucy: And we’ve been doing [GCSE music] for three years now. [pause] I can’t count the number of times I’ve heard baroque or classical. Beethoven, Beethoven, Beethoven, Beethoven, Beethoven.

Alison: He’s still dead.

Renee: Exactly!

Alisha Daniels: The romantic era, yeah. [laughs sarcastically]

Renee: [Teacher voice] He’s a mixture between a classical and a romantic. [they all laugh]

Alisha Daniels: He’s on there. [points at the wall display]

Lucy: Literally, look at that poster. To just prove our point. [It’s the Daydream
poster of musical eras, with six blocks, each illustrated with a picture of a relevant white man] …

Esperanza Spalding, Queen and Beethoven all feature on the current list of set works for the Edexcel GCSE listening exam, highlighting the extent to which many musical content choices are beyond teachers’ immediate control. Yet the other data in this chapter show how the Friars Hall music department is a field in which Western classical musics and practices are prioritized without the critical engagement and reflection that is sometimes found in schools. Lucy recognized that the way in which the GCSE material was approached meant that the class hadn’t “been taught about one Black person, one woman”, emphasizing a set of values that were furthered by the physical resources in the department such as the Daydream poster. That Esperanza Spalding had not been presented to the class as a Black woman infers a great deal about the values of the department.

The impact of national education policy on curriculum was not limited to music. Having aired their frustrations with the GCSE Music anthology, the girls compared it to other subjects and school events. Walter had told me that as the school had grown in size, it had become more ethnically and racially diverse:

Walter: But I think we’re, we’re even more diverse now. We’re getting quite a lot of students coming up from London, so we’re getting a lot of Nigerian students, and there’s other sort of, um, nationalities that we wouldn’t have had. Like there’s
strong groups of nationalities that we wouldn’t have had 20 years ago. But that –
so it is much more diverse, there’s much more going on.

Walter’s perception of diversity as “more going on” was not shared by the girls, however, who felt that the educational experience at Friars Hall did not reflect its population:

Alisha Daniels: We don’t celebrate Black History Month. Like, International Women’s Day, like, was it last week? Two weeks ago? No one knows about that. But we’re celebrating World Book Day [sarcastic tone]. Who cares about World Book Day? Like, all the books we read in English, all written by white males. Shakespeare, [the other two agree] –

Renee: except for the anthology. [They all talk at once – it seems that the GCSE English anthology includes Daljit Nagra’s Singh Song as the only example of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) poetry.].

Lucy: And everyone else [in the anthology] - is white. They may be women, but they’re all white.

[Pause]

Alisha Daniels: And they’re all from like – back in the day.

[...] Renee: Shambles.
Alisha Daniels: It’s kind of like – when you go to school, it’s kind of like, you’re being whitewashed in a way, because you learn about things discovered by white people, things made by white people, everything is just white people, white people, white people, so you don’t hear about a single black person or any other person of colour. [Renee agrees] It’s just white people.

Alisha Daniels was right to imply that these curriculum and event choices were not exclusive to Friars Hall but commonplace in the education system. Yet within the Friars Hall field, where teachers such as Walter saw increasing diversity based on student profiles, the girls saw the continued dominance of an education system based around white, male achievements and values. Indeed, the girls’ conversation included several examples of other subjects and school rituals that lacked awareness of minority groups, with Alisha Daniels commenting that the only exception was GCSE “sociology, which you kind of have to, because that’s what it’s about.”

Although Lucy, Renee and Alisha Daniels didn’t feel that the school’s music department encouraged their musical interests, they did participate in musicking within the wider school field. Just before our interview I had attended the school’s annual inter-house music competition, which featured ensemble performances directed by Year 12 students. All three girls had represented their houses in vocal items. Renee and Lucy had performed in a small ensemble arrangement of Cyndi Lauper’s *True Colours*. Their creative contribution to this performance was a stark contrast to the attitudes they displayed in composing lessons:
Alison: So Renee, and Lucy as well, you were in the True Colours thing weren’t you? [They agree] Did you have a part in developing the ideas for that?

Renee: Yeah! Yeah. Definitely. We were harmonizing.

Lucy: They [the music teachers] weren’t involved in that though. That was just –

Alisha Daniels: Your house.

Alison: But do you, in your heads, think of that as composing and arranging?

Renee: Yeah. Because when you, – say that you have the tune, […] and to be able to harmonize and think of a way to make the music sound better, by harmonizing, is definitely composing.

Lucy: I know it is, but I never really thought of it like that. Because they’ve never explained it to us like that, they’ve never said “Oh, you know, this counts as composing too.” [Renee agrees] So when we were doing that, that never crossed my mind. That we were composing or anything.

Again, we see Lucy’s need to distance herself from the music teachers, and her surprise that her own musical activities could be considered worthy of a legitimizing label such as composing and arranging. The composing unit for GCSE music at Friars Hall was taught almost entirely in a computer suite where the only musical resource available to students was the Sibelius score-writing programme, and all compositions were submitted as Sibelius-generated scores and MIDI recordings. For Lucy, and others who felt that staff notation was “a foreign language”, this offered a far less musical experience than creating harmonies in a vocal group.
Throughout our interview, Lucy showed remarkable perception about power in the field of the Friars Hall music department. Ending a discussion about why a particular student in the class was ‘overlooked’, Lucy concluded:

Lucy: Do you know why? Do you know why? They overlook Rocket as well. It’s because they don’t play classical instruments.

Alisha Daniels: I actually think they’re both guitarists.

Lucy: They both play guitar and drums, and they are completely overlooked in that class, because they don’t play classical pieces.

Alisha Daniels: Yeah, because I feel like this school only focuses on you if you sing classical songs or you play the flute –

Lucy: Or you’re in the orchestra.

Lucy and Alisha Daniels saw that the Friars Hall music department field valued the cultural capital of classical music and instruments, and like other participants they associated these legitimizing skills and labels with membership of the family. Whereas most participants did not give a clear opinion about their exclusion from the inner circle, however, Lucy clearly explained how this affected her own musical identity:

Lucy: […] I’d call myself musical because I listen to music all the time.

Alison: So, because it’s part of your life?

Lucy: Yeah. […] Part of my life. Like, I would never ever call myself a musician. […] This school has made me feel like a musician is someone who plays piano,
Grade Seven. So, [...] even if I did play an instrument, I would not call myself a musician.

Lucy returned to the theme later in the interview, further explaining how the school’s musical values were at odds with her own:

Lucy: And all I do is listen to music, because my music is my every – it’s every emotion that I have, can be, thought out in my music or whatever. Then I come here and it puts me off because I don’t enjoy it at all, and it’s all irrelevant stuff that would never apply to me ever. So yeah, I would describe myself as musical. I would describe Renee and Alisha Daniels as musical, but then obviously they [the music teachers] could be like “they’re rubbish”.

Lucy’s understanding of a musician as “someone who play[s] piano, Grade Seven” is remarkably similar to that suggested by Walter and Lyndsey in their discussions about musicians and non-musicians. Returning to Bourdieu’s description of doxa, their unconscious understanding of what makes a musician was “a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma” (Bourdieu 2000a, p. 16). In Reproduction, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) describe how the doxa of education legitimates that which is valued by the dominant classes, which often results in the dominated classes’ self-exclusion from education due to “their cultural unworthiness” (p. 41). Lucy valued music immensely and disliked how the departmental doxa implied that she was unworthy of musical participation. Most of the other participants who felt alienated from the music department did not voice their feelings so
clearly. Whereas Lucy had the confidence to say that “this school has made me feel” like she wasn’t a musician, other participants with similar music education biographies were happy to accept that school music was “not for the likes of me.” (Lamont & Maton, 2008, p. 271) and that they were non-musicians. Their self-alienation allowed the rhetoric of musicians and non-musicians to continue without question, perpetuating the understanding of the musical family at Friars Hall School as being a community that was welcoming and inclusive.

6.11. Concluding thoughts

The data presented in this chapter show that an elitist doxa controls entry to the subfield of Friars Hall School music department. Teachers’ and students’ unconscious perceptions about being a musician or non-musician disguise the extent to which social advantage determines access to the subfield. These categories have contributed to the sense of stability in the subfield which is more obviously attributed to the lengthy tenure of Walter Williams and Lyndsey Carter. The categorisations of musicians and non-musicians also further the understanding of the music department as a family but creates a sense of division between those students who identify as family members (the dominant players in the subfield) and who feel that the music department is irrelevant and/or unwelcoming to them.

The subfield is maintained through doxa and illusio that support the division between musicians and non-musicians. These stem from the doxa and illusio of Western
classical music, particularly the pedagogies and repertoire associated with graded music exams. Graded exams are prominent in many subfields within the national field of music education, but they are further legitimized at Friars Hall through the awarding of music ties to distinguish those students who succeed in the subfield. Because the musical family are so committed to this doxa, they have not considered actively altering the practices of the department to move towards a more inclusive, culturally-responsive model of music education that reflects the musical biographies of the changing school demographic. Government policies such as linking GCSE and A Level Music requirements to music exam boards like ABRSM legitimize the music department’s commitment to this doxa.

In many ways, music education is successful at Friars Hall School. The number of students choosing to study music as an option subject is above the national average, as is the number of students who have instrumental lessons and take graded music exams. Membership of school music ensembles offers entry to other formal music education subfields. For those children who share the doxa of the music department subfield, there is much to be gained from joining the musical family. Yet conducting this study highlighted the potential for dissatisfaction and alienation amongst students who do not identify with their school’s music education offer. The majority of students did not question this and attempts by individuals such as Lucy to question the prevailing doxa and illusio were unsuccessful. Whilst a steady stream of students continue to adhere to the doxa of the musical family, and in doing so acquire musical capital that by association benefits the school, it is unlikely that the musical lives of other students will be given serious consideration.
7. Discussion and Conclusions

I came to this study with questions about how English secondary school music education reproduces social inequities, both in small fields (individual secondary schools) and within the much larger national field of music education, which is closely aligned with the field of power. Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977) enabled me to approach these questions with particular attention to doxa, the unwritten rules that maintain stability within a field, and illusio, belief in the game being played in a field. The data collection and analysis process demonstrated how doxa and illusio constantly interconnect with and reinforce the other concepts within Bourdieu’s theory. Particularly relevant to these data were habitus and cultural and economic capital, as was the understanding of how a subfield operates within a larger field.

The research questions were:

1. How do the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education in England compare to those of the subfields of case study secondary school music departments?

2. How do doxa and illusio influence student and teacher perceptions of success in these subfields?

3. What are the implications for students and teachers who challenge the doxa and illusio of music education?
The chapter begins with an overview of the data gathered at each case study school, which illustrates the doxa and illusio of each music department subfield and provides context for the conclusions reached later in the chapter. This is followed by a comparison of the doxa and illusio in each of the subfields. I then present my findings, which also draw on labelling theory and concerted cultivation. The central themes are the implications of disrupting the doxa and illusio of music education, the role of GCSE Music in shaping the national field of music education, and the value of doxa and illusio as research tools. I also summarize the limitations of the study and areas for further research.

7.1. Stonefarm High School

The school field at Stonefarm High School provided data about small schools, rurality and working-class isolation. These factors limited many of the students’ access to legitimized music education opportunities beyond school, and similarly impacted the music department subfield. The music teacher Tom Pryce felt that creating a departmental illusio based on legitimized music education values such as reading staff notation and formal ensembles would not benefit or engage the majority of Stonefarm students, given the financial, geographical and cultural implications of their mainly working-class, rural habituses. Instead, he used school-wide initiatives such as a growth mindset ethos and conscious avoidance of labels to aid the development of a departmental illusio based on creativity and risk-taking. This approach, which avoided privileging individuals who had additional musical capital through activities such as instrumental lessons and graded
exams, also aligned with the school’s doxa of modesty. The doxa of the school field was interconnected with the rural, working-class habituses of most of the students and the local community. These financial and geographical constraints limited the musicking opportunities available to children, and the doxa of the school music department was therefore one where instrumental lessons were not assumed to be necessary for musical success. Instead, the departmental doxa was of music requiring hard work but being open to all. The students considered the school music curriculum to be a sufficient structure to accumulate the capitals required for musical success. The majority of student participants enjoyed this musicking experience. They saw Tom as a musical role model and his charisma had a significant influence on students’ enjoyment of music.

Tom was aware, however, that the music education experience he cultivated for the Stonefarm students did not align with the national illusio for music education as it is legitimized through government policy instruments such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) specification and those from other organizations within the national field, such as graded instrumental exams. Unlike at Stonefarm High School, these systems promote the use of labelling to define musical success, which contributes to the parallel labelling of those children who are not considered to be musicians (Lamont, 2002; Lamont & Maton, 2008). Frequently, these labels signify access to financial and cultural capital. Tom himself expressed frustration that achieving a high grade in GCSE Music required access to Western classical music practices beyond those that could easily be taught in class music lessons. He was concerned, however, that aligning the curriculum towards these practices would alienate “the many” Stonefarm students whose
habituses did not align with this middle-class approach to music education, and that such a curriculum would not ensure legitimized success for “the few” individuals who might be better served by such an approach but would still face the challenges associated with rurality. At Stonefarm High School, music education was therefore a positive experience for many children, but one which was unlikely to facilitate students’ access to wider music education fields or the accumulation of legitimized capitals to improve their position within the field of power.

7.2. Friars Hall School

The illusio of musical success at Friars Hall School was strongly aligned with the traditional values of the national field of music education, particularly the performance of notated music in teacher-directed ensembles and in graded exams. Accessing these musicking opportunities also required students to have individual instrumental lessons and build positive relationships with both their instrumental teacher and their class music teacher. The data support the study by Larsson et al. (2018), which showed the importance of sharing the teacher’s illusio in order to secure a good field position. The doxa of the subfield included identification of the music department as a family (seen as an inner circle by those who felt excluded from it) and accepting the banter that existed amongst the family members. The family also privileged certain distinguishing musics, notably jazz, actively demonstrating that their musical tastes were different to those of the non-musicians in the school. The doxa perpetuated the application of labels legitimized through the graded exam system, which were given further currency within the school.
field. Students and teachers who believed in the illusio categorized individuals as
*musicians or non-musicians*, further labels that were understood as creating a musical
family or, from the perspective of those who were non-musicians, an inner circle. The
department and the school publicly rewarded those students who excelled in this system.
These students wore music ties as part of their school uniform, visibly demonstrating
their distinction from the rest of the student population, and several of them used the
capitals they had acquired in the music department to secure entry into more prestigious
music education subfields. However, this status was most easily achieved by children
who arrived at Friars Hall with experience of individual music tuition and graded exams.
Those who did not possess this either perceived the school music curriculum as irrelevant
to their own musical interests or found that their attempts to participate in the music
department subfield were dependent on committing to its doxa and illusio.

The music subfield at Friars Hall was dominated by Walter Williams, the school’s
Director of Music for 19 years. He had cultivated stability within the subfield, focusing
on the maintenance of “traditions” despite significant changes in the school’s population.
The wider music education field had also changed during this time, prompting Walter to
perceive other local music education subfields as decreasing in value. Although systems
within the national field such as the GCSE specification and Associated Board of the
Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) graded exams continued to legitimate Walter’s
approach to music education, the extent to which they were prioritized at Friars Hall had
furthered music’s status as an elite and exclusive subject. To use Tom Pryce’s
descriptions, the departmental doxa was therefore one of music “for the few” who
identified as musicians on arrival at the school, rather than “for the many” who took
music as a compulsory subject in Key Stage 3. Walter himself spoke about “getting less
and less musicians” in Year 7 each year, but the level of commitment made by the family
members to the music department was such that he did not need to reshape the doxa and
illusio in order to engage a higher proportion of the school in musicking.

7.3. Doxa and illusio in the two music department subfields

The data presented in this thesis show that Stonefarm High School and Friars Hall
School are very different schools. Both are state schools located in the same county, yet
they contrast significantly in size, pupil demographic and status within their respective
communities. Data collection showed that the music departments varied even further,
since the teachers at each school prioritized different musical content, pedagogies and
resources. At Stonefarm High School, the doxa and illusio of the music department
subfield were largely aligned with those of the school field. Success was measured by
personal growth rather than by comparison to others or external validation such as graded
exams. The musical doxa at Stonefarm demonstrated Wright’s (2010) summary of
Green’s argument that informal music learning approaches can increase student
commitment and enthusiasm for music whilst also improving inclusion in music
classrooms. This doxa was still relatively new and unstable, formed in the last few years
after a period of significant change at the school. Tom Pryce’s accounts of navigating and
constructing the new doxa hinted at the reflexivity described by Rimmer (2017), who
wrote that
In challenging my own expectations of myself as a teacher and the students’ expectations of dance technique, the rules of the game were being shifted. [...] I can remember feeling concerned that we could all end up feeling like fish out of water. (p. 229)

In shifting the rules of the game at Stonefarm, Tom had succeeded in making music a more appealing and accessible subfield for the students. Yet he was struggling to align this with the national field of music education and was concerned that many of the students risked feeling “like fish out of water” should they try to participate in other music education subfields.

In contrast, successful musicians at Friars Hall were those who excelled beyond their peers and conformed to the doxa and illusio of the music department subfield, which was isolated geographically and socially from the wider school field. Those who succeeded in the subfield continued to reinforce its stability. This is evident in other studies where improved status within a field made players less inclined to question the legitimacy of the game being played (Griffiths, 2018). The teachers at Friars Hall did not consider whether the rules of the game should be altered to reflect a changing student demographic, and dominant student players in the field often demonstrated the attitude of a participant in Larsson et al.’s (2018) study of student PE teachers, who felt that the teacher should be authoritarian and thrilling. The teacher is the master. In the learning process the aim is to educate the pupils to be like the PE teacher and to acquire the same
knowledge. It is important to become and be like the teacher. (Student voice 2, p. 119)

This attitude was apparent in social interactions, such as how the dominant players in the subfield identified as part of a family that shared in banter.

At both schools the music teachers’ own habituses (and interconnected doxas and illusios) influenced the illusios that they sought to cultivate in their respective departments. This was evident when the teachers told me about how particular students pleased or disappointed them, such as when Walter described the musicians at Friars Hall as “very loyal, they’re enthusiastic”, or when Tom told me that “you can sort of work out who came from Stonefarm Junior ’cause […] the kids come from there extremely confident. Like, really arrogant.” Throughout the data collection, the teachers displayed varying levels of reflexivity, although none of them interrogated their own doxa and illusio in the manner of Rimmer’s (2017) recognition of her own unconscious expectations as a teacher. For example, at various points in the data collection process, all three teacher participants complained about children who did not conform with their own doxa and illusio for music education, expressing this as frustration at non-engagement or non-compliance. As Rimmer noted, it is difficult for teachers to recognize how much they impose particular agreements and systems on their students, and the extent to which these doxic systems may contain rules that benefit the teacher’s status or way of working within the subfield.
In both case study schools, the teacher participants held considerable power within the music department subfields, occupying dominant positions within them. They ensured the maintenance or metamorphosis of their departments’ doxa and illusio, and established the rules by which students might accumulate capital and improve their field position. The student participants recognized this power dynamic, and in both departments the illusio included seeking to please the teachers. At Friars Hall, Year 11 student Eliza described serving an apprenticeship in order to access more high-profile opportunities: “you work your way up. Which is singing in School Choir, apprenticeship.” At Stonefarm, Year 9 pupil Everly expressed the importance of hard work and resilience: “being able to keep on going even when you fail. Like, Sir doesn’t care about your musical ability, it’s how much you work towards it.” Yet the illusio did not make the students blind to this power structure. In both schools, the students also described feeling frustrated by the teachers’ disapproval, such as when Stonefarm Year 10 G-dragon complained about Tom Pryce being “like a dad” or Friars Hall Year 11 Lucy criticized Walter’s tendency to “roast” her. These themes were present in almost all of the student focus groups, highlighting the extent to which teachers can affect children’s experiences of school education. This was an interesting comparison to Griffiths’ (2018) work with students in Year 7, who did not blame their teachers when they were labelled as less able or less motivated, which Griffiths attributed to Bourdieu’s concept of méconnaissance, ‘induced misunderstanding’ or misrecognition. Since the participants in my own study who did voice frustration were largely in Years 10 and 11, it may be that student awareness of doxa and illusio increases as they progress through the school and
have a greater wealth of experience on which to base their own evaluations of their teachers.

Whilst it is evident that the music teachers controlled the doxa and illusio of their departmental subfields, the data also demonstrate how the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education inform school music department subfields. At Stonefarm, the doxa and illusio were largely aligned with those of the school field even when this caused a mismatch with the national field of music education. In contrast, at Friars Hall the music department doxa and illusio were firmly aligned with the more traditional aspects of the national field of music education, even when this meant it did not reflect the increasingly diverse habituses of the school’s student community. As I discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, these differences appeared to be linked to the music teachers’ attitudes to their department’s role within the wider field of the school, and to their personal music education philosophies. I did not anticipate such significant differences between the two departments when I recruited the schools. However, I did consciously choose schools that served different socioeconomic communities, which may have contributed to other reasons for the differences between the two departments. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 shows that the national field of music education is largely focused on middle-class practices and norms, which may encourage schools with a largely middle-class pupil demographic (such as Friars Hall School) to align their own music department subfield doxa and illusio with those of the national field. This in turn makes it easier for students who succeed within such a subfield to move into other areas of the national field of music education, thus further increasing their advantage over children from more
working-class communities (particular those whose working-class habitus is compounded by rural disadvantage, as was common at Stonefarm High School). Additionally, Friars Hall, which consistently tops local league tables and is therefore regularly over-subscribed, had not had an Ofsted inspection since 2007. Stonefarm High School, however, had undergone a period of considerable intervention from Ofsted, including time spent in *special measures*. My own professional experience is that such external intervention often prompts school leaders to require consistency across subject areas. This was certainly the case at Stonefarm, where the music department had become aligned with the growth mindset ethos of the re-shaped school field rather than the elitist doxa of the national field for music education. In contrast, the lack of external scrutiny at Friars Hall may have allowed the leadership team to pay less attention to departmental deviances from the school’s doxa and illusio. As has been illustrated thus far in the chapter, the significant differences between the two case study music departments cannot therefore be explained simply by one factor.

### 7.4. Labelling theory, doxa and illusio

At the planning stage of this study, I was interested in labelling theory because of the abundance of labels in English music education contexts, many of which appeared to be both doxic and tools for maintaining elitism within music education subfields. In both case study schools the use of labelling emerged as a significant theme, and one that I did not predict prior to recruitment. At Stonefarm High School, the school-wide growth mindset initiative meant that teachers and pupils actively avoided labels such as grades,
instead focusing on the development of transferable skills. Year 10 Billy commented that “you wouldn’t say talent, charisma, or being gifted in something, you’d say one of the growth mindset qualities.” This approach was more inclusive than systems that rewarded prior knowledge and experience. It also encouraged children to believe in the school-wide illusio of education for its intrinsic value, rather than limiting their “student identity” to a label such as a GCSE grade. Year 9 Heinrich, whose middle-class habitus made him an outlier amongst the Stonefarm participants, recognized that his familiarity with the labels of graded music exams was unusual within the school field, saying that “not many people in the school who aren’t linked to music would know what a Grade Eight would mean.” The data certainly suggest that most of the other participants were unfamiliar with this labelling system, and therefore with the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education.

At Friars Hall, the visible labels of music ties were central to the doxa and illusio of the music department. Built on the labelling system of ABRSM exams, which are a central aspect of the national field of music education, the music ties allocated further capital to students who adhered to the illusio of instrumental lessons and graded exams. In further stabilizing this illusio, the music ties helped to ensure that the illusio was itself doxic and beyond question, discouraging individual players from questioning their value (Grenfell, 2014a). This became clear to me when Year 11s Rocket and Gamora discussed why guitarists did not get music ties for passing graded exams with an exam board other than ABRSM. Our conversation, and my follow-up email dialogue with Walter Williams, illustrated Moncreiffe’s (2007) warning that labels become dangerous when not critiqued,
especially since they allow individuals and groups to avoid challenging their assumptions. Moncreiffe also argued that “persons who accept or feel unable to confront the stigma may opt to exclude themselves” (p. 84). This was also visible at Friars Hall, where many students demonstrated Lamont’s (2002) finding that children who do not actively participate in musicking aligned with the school’s doxa may develop a negative musical identity. Walter’s verbal categorization of children as *musicians* and *non-musicians* suggests that the process of using labels to exclude or self-exclude from the school music education offering was common at Friars Hall.

Labels were also used unconsciously in conversation. In both schools the music teachers mentioned descriptors such as *talent, musical, gifted* and *charisma* when they told me about individual students who they perceived as standing out from their peer groups in a positive way. This illustrated Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) assertion that the teachers’ illusio requires a belief in students who are *gifted* and an equal belief that others are not:

The language of these reports inexhaustibly stigmatizes the congenital ‘mediocrity’ of the ‘great mass of candidates’, the ‘greyness’ of the ‘dull’, ‘insipid’ or ‘flat’ scripts from which there ‘fortunately stand out’ the few ‘distinguished’ or ‘brilliant’ scripts which ‘justify the existence of the examination’. (pp. 110-11)

Bourdieu and Passeron explain that such an illusio also allows the teacher to “blame his students when he does not understand their utterances”, since it is the role of the student
to become like the teacher, rather than for the teacher to seek to understand the student. In my study, this was evident in the students’ accounts of feeling their teachers’ disapproval, such as in the “dad” and “roasting” comments above. Bourdieu and Passeron demonstrate that such disapproval is itself doxic, which was also apparent in my own data. For example, Walter did not critique his definition of *musicians* at any point in our communications and, whilst Tom did frequently reflect on the implications of such labels, his own unconscious habitus and illusio did not make this process automatic. On one such occasion he said “anyone can read a book. But not everyone can play an instrument.” When I pointed out that this contradicted his earlier statements about everyone being a musician, he exclaimed “this is so interesting. I could talk about this all day!” Despite data such as this, however, it would be unfair to blame the teachers for apparent obliviousness to class structures and inequities in music education, particularly given that the conditions of their employment are so regimented by the requirements and practices of the national field of music education. As Rimmer (2017) concluded, the doxa within a particular context cannot be changed unless “all social agents [are] enabled to reflexively consider their position; […] the teacher alone cannot change the culture” (p. 233). This is evident in the discussion below about the relationship between Key Stage 3 music and GCSE Music.

### 7.5. Disrupting music education subfields

As I described in Chapter 3, I have conceptualized the national field of music education to include school music education, music services and music hubs,
organizations such as ABRSM that offer graded instrumental exams, universities, conservatoires, and community music groups. The doxa of the national field is focused on Western classical music: its canon, tonal harmony, staff notation, and the hierarchy of participants. Where other genres have become accepted within the national field, it is often due to their gentrification and alignment with these Western classical music values (Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skårberg & Nielson, 2014). Central to maintaining this doxa is the role of individual instrumental tuition, which is more readily available to children from families with larger amounts of cultural and economic capital. The illusio of the national field of music education is equally focused on privileging Western classical music practices. Those who succeed must believe in this illusio, but they must also have sufficient economic and cultural capital to gain access to its resources. This study found that, whilst there is certainly great variety in how much individual school music departments perpetuate the national field’s doxa and illusio, it is not possible for them to maintain a doxa and illusio that are truly separate to those of the national field.

Overarching government-mandated school music education policies such as the GCSE Music specifications must be adhered to in almost all secondary school music education subfields, meaning that dominant players within these fields (such as Tom Pryce at Stonefarm High School) cannot truly counteract the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education, even when it disadvantages the players in their own subfields.

It is clear from the data presented in Chapters 5 and 6 that the national field of music education has a stable doxa and illusio which serve to maintain its hierarchies. The two case study music departments approached this doxa and illusio differently, yet in both contexts individual children were disadvantaged by systems influenced or prescribed
by the national field of music education. Often this was invisible symbolic violence: those involved saw their experiences as legitimate, blaming themselves for failure rather than questioning systemic inequities. Yet many of the participants did suggest awareness of their own position within music education hierarchies, and some individuals actively challenged the systems that worked to dominate them. As the data presented in Chapter 5 show, Tom Pryce had consciously cultivated a doxa and illusio for music at Stonefarm that were different to those of the national field of music education. The value of this, however, is limited when it is measured through the lenses of GCSE Music and ABRSM graded exams, which together dominate perceptions of musical success in the national field. Although Tom had the support of his students and colleagues in the school field, his challenge to the national doxa and illusio was limited by the unavoidable requirements of the GCSE exam.

The data also suggested that it was equally difficult for students to challenge the doxa and illusio of their music education contexts. Lucy, the Year 11 ‘outlier’ student at Friars Hall, provided valuable data about this. As I discussed in Chapter 6, Lucy was keen to have her voice heard in my study of music at the school. Her comments in a focus group were notable for their level of insight. She had an awareness of the departmental doxa (and the doxa of the school more broadly) that allowed her to articulate thoughts such as “This school has made me feel like a musician is someone who plays piano, Grade Seven.” Not only could Lucy see these doxa and their impact on the subfield structure, she also critiqued their validity. Rather than adhere to the expectations of GCSE musicians, such as willing participation in singing lessons and learning about “Beethoven, Beethoven, Beethoven, Beethoven, Beethoven”, Lucy openly questioned the
value of these activities which were so unmatched to her own musical interests. This proved to be problematic since, as Grenfell (2014a) writes,

The smooth running of social mechanisms depends on maintenance of the illusio, the interest, in economic and psychological senses. Where this breaks down, for example, commonly among adolescents not yet fully invested with the illusio, there is a reluctance to “play the game”. (p. 159)

The music teachers and several other Year 11 participants certainly seemed concerned that Lucy’s behaviour might disrupt the illusio of the department. Several participants mentioned without prompting that they perceived Lucy as being disruptive, uninterested and rude. Yet as Larsson et al. (2018) observed, identifying an illusio is more likely to disrupt the field position of the individual with this awareness than the position of others in the field. This happened to Lucy when she questioned the doxa and illusio of music at Friars Hall. During my lesson observations and informal conversations with the participants, it was rare for teachers or other students to enquire about Lucy’s musical interests or give her work any considerable attention. By challenging the doxa and illusio of the subfield, Lucy had drastically reduced her power within it. Were it not the norm for children to follow their GCSE subjects from the beginning of Key Stage 4 until completing all examinations at the end of Year 11, I have no doubt that Lucy would have been encouraged to drop the subject and leave the class.
7.6. Concerted cultivation and illusio

The data from both schools demonstrated how the doxa of the national field for music education, which is based around the middle-class values and practices of Western classical music, is foundational to the doxa of GCSE and Advanced Level (A Level) Music and graded instrumental exams. Nationally, this benefits children whose habitus aligns with these values and practices, particularly those who experience concerted cultivation. Lareau (2011) explains concerted cultivation as the processes through which middle-class parents ensure their children ‘develop’ talents that may contribute to their advancement in the future. It is key to becoming a musician (as it is defined by the Friars Hall family), which involves the knowledge learnt through individual instrument tuition, such as staff notation and following the instructions of a composer or conductor. As Bull (2016) explains, however, these aspects of Western classical music “culture” have a long history of being used for their “moral” and “civilizing” effects on the working classes:

Classical music is used to make [working-class children] resemble middle-class young people who play this music. This teaches them to value middle-class culture, and suggests that in their difference from middle-class young people, they themselves are deficient and need to change [...]. (p. 131)

For working-class children, participation in the national field of music education (dominated by the Western classical music tradition) therefore requires belief in one’s own deficit. This may be exacerbated for rural working-class children, for whom formal music education opportunities are likely to be geographically as well as culturally inaccessible. Middle-class children, meanwhile, may feel more ‘at home’ in the field and
more entitled to be there but, as the data presented in Chapter 6 show, belief in the illusio
of delayed gratification is still a requirement for achievement. Bull (2016) describes how
even passable success in Western classical music requires many years of “sustained,
detailed, daily disciplining of the body” (p. 129). As Stonefarm student Heinrich
demonstrated in his comments about his own musicking, this process is often at the
expense of creativity and musical risk-taking, in line with Lareau’s (2011) observations
that concerted cultivation limited children’s opportunities for creative play and decision-
making.

I posit that this process of concerted cultivation, and its doxic reduction of
creative and individual agency in musicking experiences, is made more tolerable by the
development of an illusio around being special. Lareau (2011) found that concerted
cultivation allowed middle-class children to develop an individualized sense of self as
special, evident during her initial study when the participants were aged 10-11, and that
ten years later her middle-class participants still “stressed how hard they had worked,
implying that they thought they had earned on their own the position of privilege they
held.” (p. 285) It is easier to attribute musical achievements to a combination of innate
talent and hard work than to recognize the extent to which social advantage has made
them possible, as shown by Bourdieu’s argument that charisma is the “products of
learning” disguised as “gifts of nature” (1984/2010, p. 21). Thus, the musical children are
considered special and gifted, and labelled accordingly. At Friars Hall, these children
belonged to a distinct group, the family, which added a collective aspect to specialness in
addition to that of the individualized self. This illusio, in which musical success requires
one to be special, contributes to the reproduction of social inequity: the *unmusical* must therefore be innately un-special and un-gifted, rather than disadvantaged by a lack of access to the experiences by which one becomes *musical*.

Perceiving musicians as special aligns with Lamont and Maton’s (2008) work using legitimation codes, which also draws on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice. Lareau’s (2011) research into concerted cultivation is yet to receive much attention in the music education literature, but those authors who do employ her theory have reached similar conclusions. Ilari (2013) found that middle-class parents considered music to be a special and unique activity worth investing in, and the teenage girls in Maxwell and Aggleton’s (2013) study felt that musical achievements such as graded exams and competition wins would help them appear special to university interviewers. Both studies highlight how individuals are more likely to consider music and musicians as *special* than *advantaged*. Again, we are reminded of Bourdieu’s (1984/2010) warning that “the ideology of charisma, which imputes to the person, to his natural gifts or his merits, entire responsibility for his social destiny,” (p. 389) is a more attractive explanation for success than social inequity. Intertwining with the doxa and other conditions within the national field of music education, this further facilitates symbolic violence hidden in the reproduction of the field. As Bourdieu and Passeron explain,

[…] the School today succeeds, with the ideology of natural ‘gifts’ and innate ‘tastes’, in legitimating the circular reproduction of social hierarchies and educational hierarchies.
Thus, the most hidden and most specific function of the educational system consists in hiding its objective function, that is, masking the objective truth of its relationship to the structure of class relations. To be convinced that this is so, one only has to listen to a consistent planner, discussing the most reliable way of selecting in advance students likely to succeed academically and so of increasing the technical efficiency of the educational system: [...] (1977, p. 208)

This process was evident in the Friars Hall School data, where children were identified as *musicians* without consideration of the social advantages that enabled them to access such a label. Interestingly, at Stonefarm High School some of the student participants demonstrated awareness of these hidden systems, such as when Year 10 Shaz commented that musical achievement is linked to “your habitat, like, in your home, in your family” and Year 9s Eloise and Everly expressed frustration at feeling invisible to London-based power structures. Yet the geographical and socioeconomical positioning of most Stonefarm students (and others with a working-class habitus) means that they are unlikely to gain enough dominance in either the national field of music education or the field of power to be heard by those who control the fields, who are themselves far more likely to prefer explanations that maintain the current conditions of their fields, such as linking musical success to charisma or being special.

7.7. Doxa and illusio as research tools

The analysis presented in this study is primarily focused on Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts of doxa and illusio. Bourdieu himself gave detailed accounts of how doxa and
illusio are used to maintain stability within the field of education, and the literature by Davey (2012), Griffiths (2018), Larsson et al. (2018) and Rimmer (2017) have provided me with valuable examples of how these tools can be used in educational research. Whilst these authors all focused their analyses on either doxa or illusio (often in conjunction with habitus and/or capital), my own study has benefited from the simultaneous use of both concepts. I believe that this is due to illusio’s own doxic nature and the unconscious nature of both concepts, which has prompted greater reflexivity on my part during both data collection and analysis. It also demonstrates the holistic nature of Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice, and the benefit of understanding the tools he developed alongside the more familiar habitus, capital and field. I found the two concepts particularly useful for gaining a better understanding of the subfields in which I was gathering data and for articulating their relationships to larger fields (in this study, the school fields and the national field of music education). I also became aware of how much music education in general relies on doxa and illusio. This prompts questions about how music compares to other subject areas within schools regarding the extent to which vital information is assumed and implied rather than clearly communicated.

As with all research tools, doxa and illusio have limitations. Their invisible nature increases the need for readers to be given clear information about the context of the research and my own positionality as the researcher. It is also possible that their invisibility will make it easier for dominant players within a given field to deny their existence, and therefore the value of any resulting data. Music educators, however, should be particularly cautious about responding in such a way. Given that Bourdieu
described music as an invisible art that “says nothing and has nothing to say” (1984/2010, p. 11) but which is the clearest indicator of class and taste, it would be a particularly sad irony if musicians rejected findings about doxa and illusio because of their apparent invisibility.

7.8. Key Stage 3 music and progression to GCSE

This study has highlighted differences between the doxa and illusio in two secondary school music department subfields, and between the ways in which they intersect with the national field of music education. One of the most significant differences between the two music departments was the value placed on Key Stage 3 music. The data collection process increased my own awareness of the extent to which a doxa prevails in the national field of music education where individual instrumental lessons, rather than Key Stage 3 class music lessons, are often considered the ‘norm’ for successful progression to GCSE Music. When asked about indicators of musical success, almost none of the participants at Friars Hall mentioned Key Stage 3, GCSE or A Level Music. They focused instead on graded exams and opportunities beyond the school music department subfield. At Stonefarm, however, the student participants described success as working hard and trying new things, generally assuming that the context of my question was class music lessons. This mismatch is also demonstrated by Lamont and Maton’s (2008) analysis of legitimation code shifts in curriculum documents, which highlights how “the rules of the game” change between Key Stage 3 and GCSE Music. Across the national field of music education, this has a considerable impact on the perceived value
of compulsory school music education for children aged 5-14, which is increasingly under threat (Allen, 2019; Daubney, Spruce & Annetts, 2019).

In schools like Friars Hall, where a significant number of children have a background of participating in instrumental lessons (and connected activities such as graded exams and directed ensembles), this system, rather than Key Stage 3 class music lessons, is preparation and recruitment for GCSE Music. As Year 11 student Mrs Birling commented, “it’s almost not worth teaching [Key Stage 3 classes], because they’re not gonna bother to learn it, and it’s just a bit of a waste of time really.” Walter Williams also raised doubts about whether GCSE Music was appropriate for students who didn’t already have a background of instrumental lessons, explaining that he would “encourage them and say ‘look, you can do it, but you’re not probably gonna get […] a level 9 or a level 8 or a level 6 [at GCSE].’” For both students and teachers, Key Stage 3 music did not appear to be a subject that was taken seriously in order to prepare all children at Friars Hall for access to GCSE Music.

At Stonefarm High, and similar schools where the majority of children experience all of their formal music education in whole-class settings, Key Stage 3 music does need to be the main source of recruitment and preparation for GCSE music. Year 9 Samuel perceived music as “requir[ing] more work” than other subjects, because there were so many distinct skills to develop simultaneously. The other student participants appeared to share this view but felt that this hard work positively influenced their achievements in Key Stage 3 music. Indeed, the high proportion of Stonefarm students choosing to take GCSE Music suggests that the school’s focused, equitable approach for compulsory Key
Stage 3 music was itself successful. The longitudinal benefit to children is unclear, however, when GCSE Music is itself much more strongly aligned with the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education and GCSE grades have significant currency for further education and employment. The data show that most of the children at Stonefarm lacked the capitals normally acquired through experience of instrumental lessons. Tom Pryce expressed his frustration at this, noting that he “tried to find a [GCSE] course that was open to everyone, so this [elitist] approach wasn’t so obvious – but there isn’t one.” This finding mirrored that of Hallam, Creech and McQueen’s (2017), who found that teachers, having altered their Key Stage 3 curriculum approach to be more inclusive, perceived the Key Stage 4 curriculum options (which are dominated by GCSE Music) to be much more elitist.

At both schools, therefore, the teacher participants felt that Key Stage 3 music was insufficient to prepare children for success with GCSE Music. Given that the teachers employed such different pedagogies and content in their Key Stage 3 curricula, we must ask whether any Key Stage 3 approach provides both an equitable and engaging entry to GCSE Music – and if none does, whether it is GCSE Music itself which needs to change. My discussions with Tom highlighted how government policies such as the GCSE Music specifications frequently support approaches that reward socially-advantaged students. Writing about classism in classical music, Bates (2017) warns that “as societies become more diverse, a one-size-fits-all approach becomes ever more tenuous” (n.p.). This is relevant to the data from Stonefarm High School and Friars Hall School. Both music departments followed the same GCSE specification, albeit with
different approaches, and in both schools the GCSE qualification seemed to be most accessible to those students who already occupied the middle-class habitus associated with Western classical music practices. Walter continued with a “one-size-fits-all approach” based on compulsory instrumental lessons but was concerned about the dwindling number of children for whom this was engaging or accessible. In contrast Tom was trying to provide a more diverse music education “for the many” but felt that the GCSE specification continued to privilege a more elitist approach. Thus, in both schools there were children for whom the one-size policy of GCSE Music did not fit, and who were therefore excluded from opportunities for musical success.

These exclusions can be identified and understood using Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence, supporting Savage et al.’s (2015) argument that Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice is particularly relevant to understanding social class in contemporary Britain. Invisible and unrecognized forms of domination allow hierarchies to be maintained without questioning from either the dominant or dominated players within a field. Tom tried to change the doxa and illusio of music at Stonefarm but he could not challenge systems such as GCSE Music, which come from the national field of music education and allow the maintenance of a doxa and illusio that aligns musical success with social advantage. Although the literature shows that music education is a field where these inequalities are especially prevalent, they exist throughout the field of education. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, this was evident when Zuzu described GCSE success as “get a C or higher”, demonstrating his lack of knowledge about the new GCSE grading systems and the value of GCSE grades in the education field generally (under the
previous grading system a C was indeed known colloquially as a *pass*, but it was common for schools and colleges to require B grades or above at GCSE from their incoming A Level students). Data such as this showed how, despite Tom’s best efforts to the contrary, symbolic violence still occurred throughout many of the Stonefarm participants’ experiences of music education. This prompts questions about whether sub-field changes to music education systems can ever realistically increase equity for dominated communities within the larger field of power, unless the doxa and illusio of the field of power also change.

### 7.9. Limitations of the study and areas for further research

This doctoral study was small-scale and focused primarily on social class. Although some data emerged about gender and race, the study was not designed to explore these themes. However, they are certainly valuable areas for future research using Bourdieu’s concepts of doxa and illusio to understand experiences of music education. Additionally, the study was not designed to categorize individual children into different socioeconomic groups: the information provided by participants did not include comparative measures such as parental income and education, postal code or house size. Were future research to gather such information about its participants, a more detailed understanding of the relationship between children’s social class and their responses to school music education might emerge.
The two schools used as cases for this study both have unusual features compared to other state secondary schools. Stonefarm High School is much smaller than the average secondary school, and Friars Hall is a state boarding school. Whilst they were excellent cases for this particular study, the research is not intended to be a reflection of secondary school music as it is experienced across England. Furthermore, since the participants were not screened in any way it must also be acknowledged that the student data is not necessarily representative of the whole school population at either Friars Hall School or Stonefarm High School, and that the data provided by music teacher participants may not reflect the experiences and approaches of other teachers within the two schools. Despite these limitations, however, I anticipate that many English music teachers and school leaders will recognize aspects of their own school music departments in the qualitative data, and that the findings may therefore be useful for prompting reflection in other settings.

This study focused on the doxa and illusio of two case study music departments, rather than those of the national field of music education. As I discussed in Chapter 3, I conceptualized this as a wide range of subfields serving different communities and with different priorities, within which school music education is significantly influenced by organizations such as ABRSM and the government-accredited GCSE requirements, which are based on Western classical music practices and middle-class assumptions about concerted cultivation. Further research focusing specifically on the doxa and illusio of the national field, and how they are experienced within its varied subfields, could provide
valuable insight into the extent of exclusion and alienation throughout the field and potentially identify strategies for increasing equity and inclusion.

The theoretical framework for this study, whilst largely focused on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977), also made reference to labelling theory (Rist, 1970/2000, 1977), concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2011) and the recent work about contemporary social class in the UK (Savage et al., 2015). All three sources offered useful lenses for understanding engagements with music education, yet they rarely feature in the music education literature. They offer considerable value to future studies in the sociology of music education.

This study has also highlighted the significance of the GCSE Music course. The data collection and analysis process were intended to be about secondary music education generally, but they demonstrated the extent to which the GCSE examinations dominate secondary education and influence the futures of both individual students, teachers and schools. Whether GCSEs generally are fit-for-purpose is an entirely separate debate to the topics covered in this thesis! The study does, however, raise questions about the extent to which GCSE Music influences and intersects with other subfields within the national field of music education. Contrary to common belief, it is not a legal requirement for children to take GCSEs and a small number of (mainly independent) schools do not enter 16-year olds for the exams at all, often instead choosing to follow a curriculum aligned with another country or the International Baccalaureate. Research undertaken in such a school could provide valuable insight into the role of GCSE Music within the larger field
of music education, and its influence on the doxa and illusio of school music department subfields.

7.10. Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I have presented the significant findings from this study. My first research question compared the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education with that in the case study school departments. As the discussion above demonstrates, secondary music teachers have considerable power to control the doxa and illusio within their own departments, but they are ultimately judged by dominant systems within the national field of music education. At Friars Hall School the national field also influenced teacher and pupil perceptions of success, which was the focus of my second research question. At Stonefarm High School, however, the teacher and pupils expressed their understanding of musical success in a way that more closely reflected the doxa and illusio of the school field. This suggests that it is possible for music subfields to generate a doxa and illusio that better serves their players than the doxa and illusio of the national field.

My final question asked about the implications for students and teachers who challenge the doxa and illusio of music education. The data highlighted the difficulties faced by those who do seek to disrupt field conditions. It would therefore be logical to end this thesis with the conclusion that challenging doxa and illusio is a risk that most will not be willing to take. Yet I keep returning to Lucy’s comment that “my music is my every – it’s every emotion that I have”, despite her negative experiences of school music education. If those of us who control music education subfields actively try to make space for our
respective Lucys and develop a more inclusive doxa and illusio, we may be better placed
to collectively challenge the doxa and illusio of the national field of music education.
References


citations


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Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research

Dear NAME OF HEAD TEACHER,

My name is Alison Butler, and I am a doctoral candidate in music education at Western University, Canada. My doctoral dissertation research is investigating pupil participation, and teacher and pupil perceptions of success, in the English secondary music setting. I hope to carry out data collection in COUNTY and I’m writing to ask if the NAME OF SCHOOL music department would be interested in taking part.

My plan is to visit two schools that contrast in terms of size, pupil age (i.e., 11-16 and 11-18), location, and number of music teachers. I want to find two places that are close to each other, so that I can visit each school for a couple of days a week throughout the Spring term.

For the study, I anticipate visiting each participant school for a few days in late January, informally observing a range of the music lessons and activities in the school, and talking with the music teacher/s to identify two or three classes for further observations over the rest of the Spring term. These children and their parents would then be asked to provide written consent for participation. Any children who do not wish to participate can of course be discreetly removed from the data-collection process. Alongside lesson observations, I hope to do some short focus group interviews with a small number of children in each observed class, and with the music teacher/s. Apart from these interviews (which would last for roughly 45-60 minutes per group), there should be no disruption to normal school routines.

I look forward to hearing from you, or one of your colleagues, if NAME OF SCHOOL is interested in learning more about the project.
Appendix B: Teacher recruitment verbal script

Alison Butler is visiting us from Western University, where she is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Music Education. She is studying how teachers and children understand success in school music lessons, and is recruiting participants who are in this music class.

This research will hopefully lead to better understanding about who chooses to take music at school, and why.

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, Alison will observe what you are doing in your music lessons this term. You may also volunteer to take part in a group interview if you wish.

The focus group session(s) should take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time.

If you are interested in participating, please ask your parents to complete the consent form that they have been sent. You also need to read the assent letter that you have been sent and sign the accompanying form. You should return both signed forms to Alison.

Thank you.
Appendix C: Student letter of information and assent

Project Title: An Investigation of Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Relationships Between Class, Capital, and Charisma on Participation and Success in English School Music Education

Document Title Assent Letter – pupil

Principal Investigator + Contact in Canada

Dr. Ruth Wright, Ph.D., Music Education CONTACT DETAILS

Additional Research Staff + Contact in England

Alison Butler CONTACT DETAILS

1. Why are you here? The music department at NAME OF SCHOOL is taking part in a research study about secondary school music education. Your music class has been chosen as one of the groups to participate in the research.

2. Why are they doing this study? The research study is about how pupils and teachers participate in secondary school music education, how they talk about these experiences, and how they define and acknowledge successful participation. The study is part of Alison’s Ph.D. research about the factors that affect participation and success in school music.

3. What will happen to you? Alison will be attending your class music lessons during the Spring and Summer terms to observe what your class does in music lessons. If you would like to take part in the research study, you are invited to sign up with other members of your class to take part in a focus group interview, to talk with Alison about your musical experiences and interests. This will take about 45-60 minutes, and will be at a time that suits you and your teachers. The study activities will take no more than 60 minutes in total.

4. What is the full list of study activities? The study will involve Alison observing your class music lessons, and group interviews. You can choose to take part in some, all, or none of these activities.

5. Will there be any tests? There will not be any tests. Your music lessons will carry on as normal during the study, and taking part in the study is optional. Your decision to take part in the study will not affect your music assessments.

6. Will the study help you? The research study will not help you specifically, but we hope that the results will help teachers and policy makers to improve school music education in the future.
7. **Do you have to be in the study?** Taking part in the study is optional and will not affect the work that you do in music or the grades you are given by your teacher. Both you and your school will have your names changed in the study write-up: if you choose to take part, you will be asked to select a pseudonym to protect your identity, and this will be applied to any contributions that you make in music lessons or a group interview. Alison may also take video footage of your work during music lessons and of your participation in a group interview. The interviews may also be audio-recorded. These videos and audio are for data collection only: they will be stored securely and destroyed once the research has been completed. If you choose not to take part in the study, you will not be included in any video recording and you will not be asked to take part in a group interview. You can withdraw from the study at any time and your data will be removed. This will not affect your assessments in music. If your music teacher or the head teacher decide to end the study, your data will be removed.

8. **What if you have any questions?** You can ask questions at any time, now or later in the study. You can talk to your music teacher, to Alison, or to your family.

9. **Consent** If you are interested in participating, please ask your parents to read and sign the form they have been sent, read and sign the assent form you have been sent, and return both signed forms to Alison, either in person at your next music lesson or by email to EMAIL ADDRESS, or give them to your music teacher if you prefer.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.
An Investigation of Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Relationships Between Class, Capital, and Charisma on Participation and Success in English School Music Education

I want to participate in this study.

Print Name of Child ______________________

(NAME OF SCHOOL)

Date_______________________________

Age __________________________________

I agree to being included in the lesson observations  YES  NO
I agree to taking part in a focus group interview  YES  NO
I agree to being audio-recorded in this research  YES  NO
I agree to being video-recorded in this research  YES  NO

Name of Person Obtaining Assent ________________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent ________________________________
Appendix D: Parent letter of information and consent

**Project Title** An Investigation of Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Relationships Between Class, Capital, and Charisma on Participation and Success in English School Music Education

**Document Title** Letter of Information and Consent - Parents

**Principal Investigator + Contact in Canada**

Dr. Ruth Wright Ph.D., CONTACT DETAILS

**Additional Research Staff + Contact in England**

Alison Butler CONTACT DETAILS

10. **Invitation to participate** Your child has been invited to participate in a research study about secondary school music education. Your child’s music class has been chosen to take part in the study, along with two other classes at NAME OF SCHOOL.

11. **Why is this study being done?** National statistics show that very few children choose to continue with music once it becomes an “option” subject. This study is looking at how children participate in music at secondary school, and what children and teachers think counts as a successful musical experience. We hope that our findings will lead to a better understanding of the factors that influence children to take music.

12. **How long will your child be in this study?** Your child’s class will be participating in the study for the Spring and Summer terms 2018. Their music lessons will continue as normal throughout this time, and your child’s decision about whether or not to participate in the study will not affect their academic standing in music lessons.

13. **What are the study procedures?** Alison Butler, who is a Ph.D. candidate and former music teacher, will attend their lessons to observe teaching approaches and pupil activities. If your child wants to take part in the study, they will also be invited to sign up for a group interview if they wish. The group interview will last for about 45-60 minutes, and will be a chance for the children to talk further about their musical experiences and interests. The group interviews will take place at a time that is convenient to the children and their teachers. These activities will take no more than
60 minutes total. The full list of study activities is Alison’s observations of music lessons and the focus group interviews. Your child can choose to take part in some, all, or none of these activities.

14. **What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?** There are no anticipated risks or harms to participating in this study.

15. **What are the benefits of participating in this study?** Your child may not directly benefit from participating in this study, but information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole which include helping teachers and policy makers to improve music education in secondary schools in the future.

16. **Can participants choose to leave the study?** Your child can choose to leave the study at any point if you or they wish, for any or no reason. If they do choose to leave the study, their data will not be included in the written results. If your child’s music teacher or head teacher decides that the school will withdraw from the study, your child will also be withdrawn and their data will be removed.

17. **How will participants’ information be kept confidential?** All of your child’s contributions to the study will be anonymized, and the data will be stored securely. The researchers will keep any personal information about your child in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of seven years. The study participants will be video recorded during some music lessons and in the interview, but these videos are for data analysis purposes only and will be destroyed once the study is completed. Additionally, the interview will be audio recorded, and this will also be destroyed after analysis. If your child does not want to be audio- or video-recorded, measures will be put in place to make sure that they are out of sight and earshot from the recording devices. Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers will remind participants to respect the privacy of their fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. All data will be reported anonymously: all names and identifying features will be removed from the data.

18. **Are participants compensated to be in this study?** Your child will not receive any compensation for their participation in the study.

19. **What are the rights of participants?** Your child’s participation in this study is voluntary. They may decide not to be in this study. Even if they consent to participate they have the right not to answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If they choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time, it will
have no effect on their academic standing in music. We will give your child new information that is learned during the study that might affect their decision to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

11. **Whom do participants contact for questions?** If you have questions about this research study, please contact Dr. Ruth Wright in Canada (CONTACT DETAILS) or Alison Butler in England (details above). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (CONTACT DETAILS).

    **This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**
**Project Title:** An Investigation of Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Relationships Between Class, Capital, and Charisma on Participation and Success in English School Music Education

**Document Title** Letter of Information and Consent - Parents

**Principal Investigator + Contact in Canada**
Dr. Ruth Wright, Ph.D., CONTACT DETAILS

**Additional Research Staff + Contact in England**
Alison Butler, CONTACT DETAILS

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree that my child may participate as shown below. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to my child being included in the lesson observations  **YES NO**

I agree to my child taking part in a focus group interview  **YES NO**

I agree to my child being audio-recorded in this research  **YES NO**

I agree to my child being video-recorded in this research  **YES NO**

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research  **YES NO**
Child’s Name: ______________________________________________ (NAME OF SCHOOL)

Parent / Legal Guardian / Substitute Decision Maker (Print): _______________

Parent / Legal Guardian / Substitute Decision Maker (Sign): _______________

Parent / Legal Guardian / Substitute Decision Maker (Date): _______________

Please return this completed form and the assent form directly to Alison Butler at EMAIL ADDRESS or print copies for your child to pass on to Alison in their next music lesson.
Appendix E: Teacher letter of information and consent

Project Title: An Investigation of Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Relationships Between Class, Capital, and Charisma on Participation and Success in English School Music Education

Document Title Consent Letter - Teachers

Principal Investigator + Contact in Canada

Dr. Ruth Wright, PhD, Music Education CONTACT DETAILS

Additional Research Staff + Contact in England

Alison Butler CONTACT DETAILS

1. Invitation to Participate You have been invited to participate in a research study about secondary school music education, in your role as a music teacher at NAME OF SCHOOL.

2. Why is this study being done? National statistics show that very few children choose to continue with music once it becomes an “option” subject. This study is looking at how children participate in music at secondary school, and what children and teachers think counts as a successful musical experience. We hope that our findings will lead to a better understanding of which children choose to take music, and why.

3. How long will you be in this study? You will be participating in the study for the Spring and Summer terms 2018, during which time your teaching will continue as normal. Up to three of your music classes will be identified to take part in the study.

4. What are the study procedures? Alison Butler will attend the lessons of your participating classes. She will observe teaching approaches, pupil activities, and how you and the children interact with one another during music lessons. You will also be asked to take part in an interview with Alison, at a time that is convenient to you. If you have colleagues who are also participating in the study, you may choose to do a focus group interview rather than an individual interview. The
interview will last for about 45-60 minutes, and will be a chance for you to talk further about your experiences as a music teacher and your understanding of musical success. Your time spent on study activities should therefore be no more than 60 minutes total.

5. **What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?** There are no anticipated risks or harms to participating in this study.

6. **What are the benefits of participating in this study?** You may not directly benefit from participating in this study, but information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole, which includes helping teachers and policy makers to improve music education in secondary schools in the future.

7. **Can participants choose to leave the study?** You can choose to leave the study at any point if you wish, for any or no reason. If you do choose to leave the study, your classroom site will also “shut down” and no further data will be collected about your music class/es. You can decide whether or not the previously-collected data may be used for analysis, and your decision will be final.

8. **How will participants’ information be kept confidential?** All of your contributions to the study will be anonymized, and the data will be stored securely. The researchers will keep any personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of seven years. The study participants will be video recorded during some music lessons and in the interview, but these videos are for data analysis purposes only and will be destroyed once the study is completed. Additionally, the interview will be audio-recorded, and this will also be destroyed after analysis. If you do not want to be audio- or video-recorded, measures will be put in place to make sure that you are out of sight and earshot from the recording devices. If you participate in a focus group interview, please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers will remind participants to respect the privacy of their fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. All data will be reported anonymously: all names and identifying features will be removed from the data.

9. **Are participants compensated to be in this study?** You will not receive any compensation for your participation in the study.

10. **What are the rights of participants?** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to
participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw
from the study at any time. We will give you new information that is learned
during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study. You do not
waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

11. **Whom do participants contact for questions?** If you have questions about this
research study please contact Dr. Ruth Wright in Canada (CONTACT DETAILS)
or Alison Butler in England (details above). If you have any questions about your
rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The
Office of Human Research Ethics (CONTACT DETAILS).

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.
**Project Title:** An Investigation of Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Relationships Between Class, Capital, and Charisma on Participation and Success in English School Music Education

**Document Title Consent Letter - Teachers**

**Principal Investigator + Contact in Canada**

Dr. Ruth Wright, PhD, CONTACT DETAILS

**Additional Research Staff + Contact in England**

Alison Butler, CONTACT DETAILS

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research

**YES NO**

I agree to be video-recorded in this research

**YES NO**

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

**YES NO**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Name of Participant</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)</th>
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My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

<table>
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<th>Obtaining Consent</th>
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Appendix F: Student focus group interview guide

Pupil focus group interview

• Introductions.
• Purpose of the study, reminder about withdrawal/choosing not to answer questions.
• Thinking about your music lessons this term, what are your thoughts about what you’ve done? (prompt: mention particular activities that I have observed).
• How does this term compare to previous music lessons? (prompts: content, working style, assessments, use of resources).
• What were your music experiences before you came to this school?
• What other music are you involved with outside of the class lessons? (prompts: listening, creating music, going to see live music, play in an ensemble, individual instrumental lessons).
• What musicians do you admire? (prompts: why? how did you find out about them? has your idea of a good musician changed over the last few years? what has influenced that change?)
• How do you define musical success?
• What does musical success look like at school? (prompts: What are you proud of about your work in music? How do you know when you’ve done well? What are you aiming to get out of your music lessons?)
• You’ve told me what success looks like for you. What do you think your music teachers are looking for?
• When other people perform at school, either in your class lesson or at any other time at school, what impresses you about a performance?

Year 7 only:

• What are you looking forward to about music during the rest of KS3? (prompts: opportunities for music at secondary school generally - performance, trips etc.)
• Do you think you’ll take music after KS3? Why?

Year 8/9 and KS4/5:

• Will you carry on with school music classes after KS3? (prompts: why/why not, what influenced your decision).
• Does your decision about taking music as a subject affect your involvement with music clubs or ensembles at school?

• Part of my study is looking at how people use words like charisma, talented, gifted, and musical:
• How do you define these words? (prompt: How do you think the adults that you know use the terms? And the mainstream media?)
• The set of definition cue cards, the text for which is shown below (Appendix H), will be used to further prompt this section of the conversation.
• Do you think any of the words apply to you? Do you know anyone you think they could apply to? (prompt: why do you say that?)
• What are your musical ambitions and intentions for the rest of this academic year, and the future?
• How do you expect music to be part of your lives when you leave this school?
• I am looking at these words because I am interested in what leads to musical success. Do you have any other thoughts about what contributes to being successful in music, at school and beyond school?
• Review the key points from the interview and ask the group to summarize what they’ve talked about.
• Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experiences with music?
• Thank you-s.
Appendix G: Teacher interview guide

**Teacher interview** (TBC whether individual or focus group, depending on the wishes of the teachers in each school).

- How long have you been at this school? (prompt: describe your role here).
- Can you talk about how and why you became a music teacher? (prompts: your teaching experiences elsewhere prior to your current post, what brought you here).
- What do you think are the particular successes of music at this school? (prompt: have these changed during your time here?)
- How would you describe the children who choose to get involved with music here?
- What do you want children to get out of their school music education?
- Has your perspective on this changed during your time as a teacher?
- What are your thoughts about the GCSE/A Level etc. courses that you offer? (Prompts: do they influence your teaching at KS3/are there particular children who you encourage to take optional music courses?)
- Reflecting specifically on the classes in the study, what are your thoughts about the work they have done this term? (Prompts: is it typical of classes in this school? What has stood out for you with NAME OF CLASS this term, both good and bad? Can you describe some particular children in NAME OF CLASS, and talk about them as musicians?)
- What music opportunities are available in the local community, and are you aware of children who take part in them?
- What musical interests and commitments do you have beyond your job as teacher?
- Part of my study is looking at how people use words like charisma, talented, gifted, and musical:
  - How do you define them? Do you consciously use them in your role as a teacher?
  - *The set of definition cue cards, the text for which is shown below (Appendix H), will be used to further prompt this section of the conversation.*
  - I am looking at these words because I am interested in what leads to musical success. Do you have any other thoughts about what contributes to being successful in music, at school and beyond school?
- What are your thoughts about the experience of taking part in the study? (prompt: lesson observation, visitor to the school, building a relationship).
- Thankyou-s. Make arrangements about member-checking the transcription.
Appendix H: Flashcard texts

Charisma:

1. Compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others. (Google)

2. A divinely conferred power or talent. (Google)

Talent:

1. A natural aptitude or skill. (Google)

2. A talent is a group of aptitudes useful for some activities; talents may refer to aptitudes themselves. (Wikipedia)

Gifted:

1. Having exceptional talent or natural ability. (Google)

2. Children are gifted when their ability is significantly above the norm for their age. (NAGC)

Musical:

1. Someone who is musical has a natural ability and interest in music. (the free dictionary)

2. Musicality is a set of “inner skills” which let you freely and confidently express yourself in music. (Musical-U)
Curriculum Vitae

Name: Alison Jennifer Butler

Post-secondary Education and Degrees:

Guildhall School of Music and Drama
London, England
2004-2005 CHE

UWIC (now Cardiff Metropolitan University)
Cardiff, Wales
2005-2007 BA (hons) (QTS)

The Open University
Milton Keynes, England
2011-2013 MA

Western University
London, Ontario, Canada
2015-2019 Ph.D.

Honours and Awards:

Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Entrance scholarship (double bass)

UWIC (now Cardiff Metropolitan University)
2007 music prize award

Ontario Trillium Scholarship
2015-2019

Related Work Experience\textsuperscript{15}

Teacher of Music
\textit{a rural 11-16 state secondary school}, England
2007-2011

Director of Music
\textit{a 7-18 state boarding school near London}, England
2011-2015

Research Assistant
Western University, London, Ontario
2015-2018

\textsuperscript{15} School names have been omitted since they are referred to in this thesis.
Teacher of Music
*a 4-18 selective independent school in London*, England
Trinity term 2016

Director of Prep School Music
*a 4-18 selective independent school in London*, England
Trinity term 2017

Teaching Assistant
Western University, London, Ontario
2017-2019

Publications:

Butler, A., Bylica, K., & Wright, R. Informal Learning of Popular Music: Gender Monoglossia and Heteroglossia' to the British Journal of Music Education. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.
