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Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities Through Soundscape Composition and Critical Reflection

Kelly Bylica, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Schmidt, Patrick, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
in Music

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the development, implementation, and impact of a musical learning project in two middle school general music contexts. Specifically, this study sought to consider in what ways, if any, such a project supported critical reflection, created opportunities for border crossing, and encouraged multiple ways of knowing in the music classroom (Giroux, 2005). Co-designed by the researcher and two participating educators, the five-week project focused on the creation of digitally designed student soundscape compositions that aimed to help students draw connections between learning practice and in-the-world experience. Critical listening and dialogue were utilized as pedagogical approaches to help students build upon their diverse knowledges, challenge taken-for-granted norms and draw connections between personal experience, educational endeavors, and the social world.

Both the project and study were grounded in the overarching theoretical framework of border crossing (Giroux, 2005) wherein “existing patterns of thought, relationship, and identity are called into question” and “juxtaposed with alternative ways of knowing and being (Hayes & Cuban, 1996, p. 6). This framework was complemented by those of dark and politicized funds of knowledge (Gallo & Link, 2015; Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2009), critical listening and mis-listening (Lipari, 2014; Schmidt, 2012b), authorial agency (Matusov et al., 2016), and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004) throughout the analysis.

A critical, qualitative approach was utilized in order to consider the problem from the perspectives of the participants and to contextualize it within the realities of individual classrooms (Matsunobu & Bresler, 2014). A hybridized methodological framework of design-based research (McKenney & Reeves, 2012), critical educational action research (Kemmis, 2010), and case study (Yin, 2014) was employed. This framework allowed for the development

of a learning project that was iteratively implemented alongside two music educators in order to critically explore and understand classroom practice. Data collection involved interviews with students and educators, focus groups, participant observation, and journaling.

This study found that project-based approaches to middle school general music, when predicated on students' experiences and implemented in a way that promotes critical reflection, can help students engage in border crossing practices. Through this project, students in this study interrogated the strengths and limitations of their experiences, juxtaposed their own beliefs with those of others, and began to critically and creatively reimagine their role in and with the world. Cross-case data analysis uncovered themes related to both student and educator experience (Miles et al., 2014). For students, the creation of space for engagement with diverse perspectives, modeling of and practice in critical listening and reflection, and compositional prompts that encourage a critical view of the world emerged as important. For educators, opportunities for dispositional and pedagogical reflection, curricular self-authoring, and discourses based on the complexities of student funds of knowledge arose. Based on these findings, a conceptual model that places practices of border crossing into a creative musical setting was developed. This model, which focuses on the cultivation of critical artistic dispositions wherein students imagine, creatively generate, and artistically actualize ideas that interrogate and engage with local and global realities, was generated to help educators seeking to design critical curricula in the general music setting.

Keywords: Middle School General Music; Curriculum; Project-Based Learning; Critical Literacy; Composition; Soundscape; Critical Reflection

Summary for Lay Audience

This study focuses on exploring the design, implementation, and impact of a musical learning project in two middle school general music contexts. Specifically, I sought to consider how such a project might support critical reflection and encourage multiple ways of knowing in the music classroom. The project was co-designed with two participating music educators and centered on the creation of digitally designed soundscape compositions that aimed to help students draw connections between their in-the-world experiences and their learning in school. In addition, I utilized critical listening and dialogue as pedagogical approaches to help students critically explore these experiences and draw connections among their personal lives, educational endeavors, and the social world.

The concept of *border crossing* was used as the foundational framework for this study. Within this framework, personal patterns of thought are problematized and contrasted with the ideas and perspectives of others. Using this framework, I analyzed the ways in which students interacted with the learning project, as well as the pedagogical practices employed by the participating educators. As I served as both researcher and educator in this study, implementing the project alongside the participating teachers, I also examined my own experiences. Throughout the analysis, I drew upon additional frameworks to help me explore the role of students' diverse experiences and perspectives in the classroom, the importance of modeling and engaging in reflection, and the ways in which educators design and implement critical curricula.

Findings from this study suggest that learning projects, when developed in a critical manner, can help students explore the strengths and limitations of their own experiences, consider those experiences in juxtaposition with others, and begin to critically and creatively reimagine their role in and with the world. Based on these findings, I designed a conceptual

model that places practices of border crossing into a creative musical setting. This model focuses on the cultivation of *critical artistic dispositions* wherein students imagine, creatively generate, and artistically actualize ideas that interrogate and engage with local and global realities. This model is intended to support educators seeking to design critical curricula in the general music setting.

Dedication:
To my grandparents
For the strength, perseverance, compassion, and kindness you modeled in your lives
Your memory lives on in my life and in my work

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Keywords.....	iii
Summary for Lay Audience	iv
Acknowledgements	vii
List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures.....	xiv
List of Appendices.....	xv
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Introduction	1
Narrative Background	3
New Opportunity, New Directions.....	5
Background of the Problem.....	5
Functional and Critical Literacies	6
Searching for Purpose in Middle School General Music	10
Statement of the Problem	11
Statement of Purpose.....	12
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Overview.....	12
Border Crossing Pedagogies.....	14
A Project-Based Approach.....	15
Research Questions	16
Methodological Overview	17
Entangled Subjectivities	19
Summary.....	20
Chapter II: Review of Literature	22
Introduction	22
Critical Approaches	23
Critical Pedagogy	29
Curriculum and Agency	30
“Doing” Critical Pedagogies	32
Strategies for Enacting Critical Pedagogies	34
Educators & “Everyday” Critical Pedagogies	38
Recognizing, Interrogating, and Crossing Borders	41
Contact Zones.....	43
The Role of Educators in Border Crossing.....	44
Limitations of Critical and Border Crossing Pedagogies	47
The Learning Project	50
Project-Based Learning	51
The Deweyan Roots of Project-Based Learning	52
Locating Project-Based Learning for this study.....	53
Project-Based Learning in Music Education.....	55
Limitations of Project-Based Learning	56
Engaging with Positionalities through Deliberate Critical Reflection	59
Limitations of Critical Reflection.....	62

Engaging in Productive Dialogue.....	63
Dialogue Beyond Freire	64
Composition as a Path to Critical Engagement	66
Soundscape Compositions.....	67
The Fostering of Critical Artistic Dispositions	71
The Identity Crisis of Middle School General Music	71
Outlining Critically Artistic Dispositions.....	74
Dark and Politicized Funds of Knowledge.....	76
Critical Listening and Authorial Agency	80
Critical Listening.....	81
Authorial Agency	83
Finding Intersections	85
Self-Authorship	85
Summary.....	90
Chapter III: Methodological Considerations: Border Crossing as a Path of Inquiry	91
Introduction	91
Situating the Inquiry	92
Paradigmatic Context	93
Combining Frameworks: How the Inquiry Drove Methodological Decision-Making	95
Design-Based Research	96
The Design-Based Research Process.....	97
Limitations.....	100
Action Research.....	103
Critical Educational Action Research	105
Case Study	106
Cross-Case Analysis.....	107
The Project Sites.....	108
Edgewood Middle School	110
Forest Glen Junior High School	111
The Project Outline.....	112
Data Collection.....	114
Interviews	115
Interviews with Educators	117
Interviews and Focus Groups with Students	119
Relationships of Power.....	121
Observations	122
Field Notes & Researcher Memos.....	122
Journaling	124
Artifacts	126
Data Analysis.....	126
Coding	127
Establishing Validity	129
Summary.....	132

Chapter IV: The Learning Project	134
Introduction	134
The Learning Project	135
Development of a Framework	136
Project Design	137
Part 1: Introductory Activities	138
Part 2: Soundscape Composing	140
Part 3: Musical and Dialogical Encounters	144
Part 4: Closing Conversations	147
Implementing the Project	147
Edgewood Middle School	148
Introductory Activities.....	148
Soundscape Composing.....	153
Musical and Dialogical Encounters.....	157
Closing Conversations.....	161
Forest Glen Junior High School	162
Introductory Activities.....	163
Soundscape Composing.....	166
Musical and Dialogical Encounters.....	170
Closing Conversations.....	172
Summary.....	173
Chapter V: Funds of Knowledge in Musical and Dialogical Encounters.....	174
Introduction	174
Framing this Chapter	175
The Funds of Knowledge Framework	176
Themes of Dark and Politicized Funds of Knowledge.....	178
Dispositional and Pedagogical Reflections	179
“We just don’t talk about it”: Finding the gray areas in student experience	180
Modeling Reflection and Embracing Transparency.....	185
Drawing Connections	190
Recognizing and Engaging with Complexity	191
Collective Reflective Practice	193
Cultivating Reflective Relationships	199
The Complexities of “Knowing”: Funds of Knowledge as Layered and Multiple	204
Pedagogical and Curricular Implications	206
Concluding Ideas and Lingerin g Thoughts	209
Chapter VI: Intersections Between Critical Listening and Authorial Agency	211
Introduction	211
Framing this Chapter	212
From Functional to Critical Listening	214
Creating Space for Authorial Agency	216
Themes of Critical Listening and Authorial Agency	218
Reframing the Familiar.....	220
A Critical Reframing of Media.....	221

Resituating Sound.....	228
When Authorial Agency is Missed: A Counter-Example	232
Interpretive Divergence	235
Whose Agency Matters?.....	236
Educative Engagements between Teacher and Student	240
Aligning with and Expanding upon Compositional Intent.....	245
A Spiral of Agency.....	250
Pedagogical and Curricular Implications	253
Concluding Ideas and Lingerin g Thoughts	258
Chapter VII: Consumers, Authors, and Producers: Self-Authorship as Border Crossing	
Practice	260
Introduction	260
Framing this Chapter	261
Dimensions of Self-Authorship.....	263
Student Manifestations of Self-Authorship	265
The Complexities of “Telling My Story”	266
Self-Authorship as Perpetual Renegotiation: Jake	266
Self-Authorship as Participatory Politics: Madison	270
Entering the Contact Zone.....	272
When the Intrapersonal becomes Interpersonal: Madison Revisited	273
Getting Defensive: Blanca.....	276
Self-Authorship and the Mashup.....	278
Voices in Conversations: Shelley.....	279
Self-Authorship through the Medium of Music	283
Creating Conditions for Self-Authorship	288
Educator Self-Authoring	292
Ms. Green’s Epistemological Shift.....	293
Limitations, Risks, and Realities	295
Concluding Ideas and Lingerin g Thoughts	296
Chapter VIII: Summary, Findings, and Looking Ahead	298
Summary.....	298
The Possibilities and Limitations of Learning Projects.....	302
Composing with a Critical Lens	302
Engaging in Dialogue	305
The Centrality of Critical Reflection.....	307
Project Design	309
Roles and Responsibilities of Educators in Supporting Critical Practice.....	310
Critical Artistic Dispositions: A Model for Middle School General Music.....	313
Areas of Future Research	317
A Final Thought	318
References	319
Appendices	352
Curriculum Vitae – Kelly Bylica.....	375

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Project Framework	138
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Theoretical & Conceptual Frameworks	23
Figure 3.1: Methodological Design	95
Figure 3.2: Design Based Research Process (Barab, 2014)	98
Figure 4.1: WeVideo Platform	142
Figure 4.2: Soundtrap Platform	143
Figure 4.3: Stereotypes Word Cloud	165
Figure 6.1: Spiral of Agency	250
Figure 7.1: Dimensions of Self-Authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).....	264
Figure 8.1: Model of Critically Artistic Dispositions.....	315

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Information and Consent – Educators	355
Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent – Parents/Guardians	355
Appendix C: Letter of Assent - Students.....	359
Appendix D: Learning Project Research Plan.....	362
Appendix E: Email Script for Recruitment – Educator/School Participants.....	364
Appendix F: In-Personal Verbal Script - Students	365
Appendix G: Participant Observation Protocol.....	366
Appendix H: Student Focus Group Schedule.....	368
Appendix I: Student One-on-One Interview Schedule.....	370
Appendix J: Educator Interview Schedule	371
Appendix K: Edgewood Project Implementation.....	373
Appendix L: Forest Glen Project Implementation	374

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

We live in a world delineated by borders. They may be physical, symbolic, or social and are often developed from our experiences, histories, and contexts. These borders shape the way we think and give meaning to our perspectives, ideas, and values. They help us make sense, both independently and communally, of the varied roles we play in the world. When borders go unproblematized, however, they can create blockades. They may constrain our worldview, promote assumptions and stereotypes, and lead us to see knowledge as linear, unified, and unchanging. Within the realm of education, curricular choices that focus on the formation and reinforcement of dominant discourses can further solidify borders, whereas those that encourage students to critically explore diverse perspectives may help them engage in border crossing. Practices in border crossing can help students “understand difference in its own terms” (Giroux, 2005, p. 20). This is important if we hope to help students meaningfully engage with diverse others and become active participants in a changing society

Grappling with our bordered ways of thinking is not often thought to be a purpose of music education. Music education, however, “exists in and of the social and natural worlds, making it inevitably implicated in – and susceptible to – the socio-political forces of inequality, inequity, and injustice” (Gould, 2009, p. xi). As class divisions deepen, racial tensions heighten, and school demographics continue to shift in the United States (NCES, 2018), I believe music educators ought to play a role in creating opportunities for students to critically examine their own ways of thinking. If we hope for our practices to remain relevant and connected, music

education and music educators cannot ignore the world in which we and our students live and work.

In this study, I explore the implementation of a musical learning project that sought to help students engage in border crossing practices in two Chicago-area middle school¹ general music programs. Drawing on scholarship that questions and explores how music education might be reconceptualized in ways that promote critical, socially impactful educational environs (e.g. Benedict et al., 2015; Gould et al., 2009), I developed a project that involved critical listening, soundscape composition, reflection, and dialogue. My aim in this study was to gain a better understanding of how students used these engagements to cultivate their own critical artistic dispositions. Developed over the course of this study, critical artistic dispositions is a conceptual model that considers the ways in which students imagine, creatively generate, and artistically actualize ideas that interrogate and engage with cultural, civic/political, social, economic, racial, and interpersonal structures in the world. In addition, as this project was implemented alongside the music educators at these schools, this study also explores how pedagogical choices made during this project both supported and curtailed opportunities for students to develop these dispositions.

I begin this chapter with a narrative of my own experiences, highlighting my personal connection to this inquiry. The problem to be explored is then situated, focusing on music education's historical reliance on functional literacy and the need for an expansion to the development of critical, responsive literacies. I also frame the setting of middle school general music and delineate why it was chosen as the context for this study. I then identify the purpose of this study, articulate the research questions to be explored, and frame my inquiry through the

¹ For the purposes of this study, I define middle school or middle-level as grades 6-8 (approx. ages 11-14)

theoretical and methodological lenses I employed. Finally, I outline the chapters that follow, offering a roadmap for how this dissertation unfolds. My hope is that from this work a better understanding might be gained of the possibilities and limitations of musical learning projects such as this one in helping music educators develop a vision of critical and artistic approaches to middle school general music.

Narrative Background

In 2016, a non-profit organization in Chicago started a fundraising campaign that included a video entitled “One Chicago.” For three minutes, the video follows the parallel lives of two boys, one white and one African American, growing up in Chicago. The video uses imagery to evoke emotion, but it also uses a soundscape to paint a sonic picture of each child’s experience. For the child who is white, his world is represented in the sounds of children laughing, basketballs bouncing, and birds chirping. For the child of color, gun shots, police sirens, and security alarms paint a much different picture. The boys come together at the close of the video on a public transit platform as a narrator states, “There are two ways to grow up in Chicago, but with your help there doesn’t have to be.”

The first time I saw this video, the assumptions, stereotypes, and dualistic view presented both troubled and surprised me. I was familiar with these neighborhoods and had taught in these very contexts. I respect the work of this organization and recognize that the purpose of this narrative was to raise funds to support much needed social programming. However, I was concerned by the stereotypes this soundscape and video seemed to perpetuate. I presented the video to students I was teaching at a socially and culturally diverse middle school just outside the Chicago city limits. I was not sure what they would make of the video, nor had I prepared opportunities for critical reflection to accompany it. Originally, I thought we might engage in a

discussion together that considered how soundscape, a compositional process we had used in class, was being used as a tool in this campaign to evoke an emotional response and “sell” an idea or product (or, in this case, to raise money). As students critiqued and dialogued about the sonic impact of the video, their conversations quickly turned to their opinions of the campaign’s perpetuation of stereotypes and missing perspectives. They began to challenge each other’s views, engaging in practices of border crossing as they problematized and interrogated this soundscape. Some viewed the video as unproblematic, comparing it to what they saw in the news and other media. Others called upon personal experiences both within and outside of school as a challenge to the narratives presented. They were entering it from their own positionalities, and I realized how limited my knowledge was of the complex and varying ways in which they saw the world.

The day after I presented that video, we returned to the previous projects and repertoire as planned, but I began to think through possibilities for engaging students in their own lived experience soundscape compositions as a response. How might a musical project be developed that connected to students’ lives and encouraged the critical dialogue that had emerged when we listened, viewed, and responded to the video? Critical dialogue and the cultivation of activist dispositions were a regular part of this classroom. The students and I often co-constructed spaces for interrogating narratives in repertoire, engaging in small group creative compositional projects, and considering multiple musical epistemologies. However, I had never before considered how their experiences and lives could be the initiative for our musical engagements, potentially helping them explore and critically reflect on their own “histories, knowledges, and practices” (Hayes & Cuban, 1996, p. 6). I began to wonder how I might reframe this middle

school general music curriculum as one that purposefully created opportunities for students to engage critically with both the world and their own individual experiences through music.

New Opportunity, New Directions

In preparation for this study, I conducted a pilot project in a Chicago high school in 2017, wherein students did create their own lived experience soundscapes (Bylica, 2018). This pilot study significantly informed the development of the research design and, more importantly, convinced me of the necessity of this work. In the pilot, I focused specifically on how collecting and composing with environmental sounds might promote critical dialogue. During the project, students debated with one another and considered how their positionalities led to different ways of seeing the world. They were eager to speak openly and debate issues they felt were untouchable in many of their other classes. For several weeks, we grappled with questions of diversity, class, inequality, and perspective together as the students created their own soundscapes and engaged in dialogue with their classroom teacher and myself.

While the compositional experience in the pilot provided space for multiple ways of knowing that challenged the narratives present in the video, opportunities for deliberate critical reflection (Finlay, 2008; Fook & Askeland, 2007) were still missing, and a more thorough consideration of dialogue and the roles of the educator and myself were needed. These teaching experiences and the insights and questions raised led me to this study to explore how students cross borders to explore, interrogate, and critically reflect upon their own positionalities and ways of making meaning in the world through musical engagements.

Background of the Problem

Failure to engage with diverse/multiple ways of knowing in the classroom is an issue that is “simultaneously systemic and embedded in human actions” (Hess, 2017, p. 18). While existing

constraints guide and regulate possible choices, the everyday practices of educators can also define the parameters of engagement in the classroom (Bouillon & Gomez, 2001; Niesz, 2006). Democratic practices that help students and educators explore how positionalities legitimize, perpetuate, devalue, and/or challenge knowledges and narratives can be viewed through an overarching conceptualization of curriculum. I follow Gaztambide-Fernández (2017) in conceptualizing curriculum as more than “designs, implementations, or evaluations” (p. 241). Curriculum, then, is not a passive document, but an ongoing, interactive pedagogical practice. Critical, responsive approaches to curriculum, I argue, can create spaces for multiple ways of knowing wherein students’ diverse experiences are valued and the development of critical literacies are prioritized (Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017).

Functional and Critical Literacies

In order to help students engage with social realities in and through music, curriculum should promote the development of both critical and functional literacies in tandem. Scholars argue, however, that opportunities to develop critical literacies are often absent or lacking in music education practices (Benedict, 2012; Gould, 2009; Willingham, 2009). Rather, we often rely on “the primacy of functional literacies...as an endpoint in the formal process of learning” (Benedict, 2012, p. 152).

In terms of music education, Gould (2009) states that functional literacy focuses on “basic skills necessary to function in traditional general, instrumental, and choral school music programs. Typical curricula are based on pre-packaged materials, such as music series books, beginning band, orchestra, and choral method books, and the U.S. National Standards” (p. 47). Practices in functional literacy are often individualistic and lead educators to value students’ “efficiency and time on task” (p. 48). While functional literacy is important in that it helps

students develop “competencies needed to function...within a given society,” an education that is predicated solely on functional literacy can serve to maintain the status quo, thus preserving, or even reinforcing and exacerbating, inequities (Gutstein, 2006, p. 5).

Critical literacy expands upon functional understandings in order to “approach knowledge critically and skeptically, see relationships between ideas, look for underlying explanations of phenomena, and question whose interests are served and who benefits” (Gutstein, 2006, p. 5). In music education, this means that the curriculum is comprised of musical endeavors that explore and problematize students’ and educators’ “everyday (musical) world[s]” (Gould, 2009, p. 48). At its core, critical literacy can help students actively engage and participate in societal action toward both equity and justice.

Finding opportunities to develop curricular engagements that promote the development of critical literacies can be challenging. This is particularly true in the context of the current educational climate in the United States. A focus on “data-driven instruction, scripted lessons, and top-down decision making” as well as “increased surveillance and de-professionalization, corporatization and standardization and the fragmentation of knowledge and skills” can make criticality feel secondary (Tobias et al., 2015, p. 40).

Benedict (2012) notes that all educators face challenges when it comes to embedding and prioritizing critical literacy in the curriculum, but music educators often face additional obstacles. For many music educators, their own musical educations have been instilled with skills-based tasks that have prioritized their ability to reproduce great works of art from a particular set of traditions. When space is afforded in the music curriculum for students to compose their own music, there may be opportunities for increased creativity (e.g. Hickey, 2012;

Upitis, 2019), but few examples explore how these compositions can connect to students' lived experiences (e.g. Kaschub, 2009).

Further, a focus on the "methods and models" of functional literacy can lead to spaces of teaching, but not necessarily learning (Schmidt, 2012a, p. 6). A value of "sequentialism" over "moments of interaction with students' query, identity, and desire" can instill a culture of conformity (p. 6). Music class can become predicated on a singular narrative that prioritizes a focus on predetermined outcomes. Diverse voices, multiple ways of knowing, and divergent ideas may go unnoticed.

In addition to the neglect of variant forms of student experience and expression, there are additional potentially oppressive consequences to privileging certain ways of knowing and devaluing others. Concentrating solely on standardization and focus on performance can reduce educators' capabilities to respond to and encourage engagements with different beliefs, opinions, and ideas in the classroom (Fautley, 2015; Kannelopolous, 2015; Kratus, 2007). Students who operate outside dominant narratives may feel silenced, believing their stories and opinions to be inferior, when they are only non-normative (Kumashiro, 2000). Each of these consequences can lead to the creation of spaces where students do not engage with the different understandings and experiences of their peers. Consequently, criticality and opportunities for students to challenge assumptions can disappear in a culture of taken-for-granted norms where valued knowledge is narrowly understood.

Eric Gutstein's (2006) work in mathematics provides an example of functional and critical literacies working in concert with one another. His experiences with middle schoolers in Chicago highlights the need for curricula to be viewed as complex engagements bound by socio-political realities. Rather than placing functional literacy as the primary purpose of the

curriculum, with criticality relegated to a distant second, critical and transformative literacies are at the heart of his curricular engagements. In his class students use their personal experiences in order to “investigate and critique injustice” through mathematics (p. 4). Mathematics is seen not as a discrete subject, but as an opportunity to understand the world in order to “effect change in it” (p. 4).

The work of educators Tucker-Raymond and Rosario (2017) with middle school students in Chicago is similarly structured. They developed a curriculum that is grounded in community experience. Students draw upon personal experiences, political realities, and the complexities of living in a diverse environment in their dialogical and written work. They develop skills in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and science through curricular engagements that directly connect to the economic, political, and cultural realities of their everyday experiences. Tucker-Raymond and Rosario, along with other scholars (Grenardo, 2008; Gutstein, 2006) note that the development of critical and functional literacies is of particular importance in areas of high diversity where student experiences differ and opportunities to problematize perspectives is even more urgent.

Benedict (2012) notes that “for those who believe that functional literacy prepares people for the real world...there is a blind kind of hopeful-hope, in which the present is sacrificed for a future that desires to protect the past” (p. 157). This hope, she articulates, is not one that leads to real possibilities for actionable change in the world. If we aspire to help students cross borders and actively engage in the realities and possible imagined futures of their civic and social worlds, curricular practices that embrace both critical and functional literacies should be embedded throughout music education.

Searching for Purpose in Middle School General Music

The absence of curriculum that promotes critical engagements is particularly apparent in middle school general music. Those who have investigated this context have described it as often taught in a way that is “rudderless” (Reimer, 2003, p. 246), lacking vision (Davis, 2011), inconsistent (Giebelhausen, 2015), uncreative (Menard, 2013), and an “inconsequential, irrelevant hodgepodge” of activities (Reimer, 1966, p. 43). Furthermore, despite calls for an increase in creative and critical engagements (Kannelopolous, 2015; Kennedy, 2004), much of the content is still a “replication of existing music prescriptions” and functional skills (Bartel, 2004, p. xii-xiv).

Cronenberg (2016) notes that general music is “simultaneously one of the most often used and least well-defined terms within music education” (p. 9). These classes are often positioned in contrast to performance-based courses such as band, choir, and orchestra (Fitch, 1994). They are generally defined as being inclusive of all students and comprehensive in nature (Abril, 2016; Barrett, 2016). Beyond these characteristics, however, there is little consensus on how these classes are conceptualized, particularly at the middle school level. They vary in length and focus. They are required at some schools and elective at others. This ambiguity related to the purpose and practice of middle school general music has led educators to articulate feelings of underpreparedness when it comes to teaching in these contexts (Giebelhausen, 2015).

Further, middle schoolers are often viewed through a deficit lens as unpredictable and impulsive (McMahan, 2008). They may be perceived as lacking in ability and engagement in both societal and educational contexts (Regelski, 2004; Sweet, 2016). Middle school is a transitory space where students are exploring their continually emergent identities and experiencing physical and cognitive development on a daily basis, which can conjure negative

feelings or images (McMahan, 2008; Sweet, 2016). As such, there tends to be a “widespread bias... [toward] negative aspects of this developmental period rather than positive aspects” in both educational research and general societal understanding (Sweet, 2016, p. 4).

Scholars note, however, that middle school general music is also filled with possibility (Davis, 2011; Giebelhausen, 2015; Menard, 2013; Regelski, 2004; Reimer, 1966). It can and should be a space for criticality and artistic creation wherein students learn how to engage in ongoing consideration of their role(s) in and with the world and grapple with societal issues and concerns. In response, scholarship suggests a need for changes in how we view music curricula in middle school general music if we hope to engage students both critically and artistically.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars recognize a need for more opportunities for critical literacy development in music education curricula (Benedict, 2012; Gould, 2009, Willingham, 2009). This is particularly true in middle school general music, where pedagogical practices are often inconsistent. Though many music educators recognize the unique musical and social knowledges possessed by students, they often face challenges when trying to amplify and build on these knowledges in the classroom. If music educators hope to help students orient their perspectives to examine their positionalities, engage with multiple ways of knowing, and view the borders that shape their understandings as flexible, then there is a need to develop curricular and pedagogical practices that support these goals. This includes exploring engagements that build upon students’ diverse knowledges and help them use creative work to challenge taken-for-granted norms and connect learning practice with local and global realities. By doing so, we potentially help middle schoolers develop and be seen as capable and creative musician-citizens who possess the critical artistic dispositions to actively and critically participate in civic society.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore, through the implementation of a musical learning project, the ways in which interactions between students and educators impact opportunities for critical engagement and the development of critical artistic dispositions. Situated within the framework of critical and border crossing pedagogies, this study combined soundscape composition, critical listening, reflection and dialogue to explore how existing patterns of thought related to the self, experience, and others can be called into question. This study also aimed to trace potential links, gaps, and challenges between learning practice and in-the-world experience, as a critical conduit in facilitating multiple ways of knowing and being in the middle school general music classroom.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Overview

This study was framed through the lenses of critical and border crossing pedagogies. Critical pedagogies and social justice oriented curricula can be ways to approach classroom interactions that may help students not only acquire skills, but also critically engage with and respond to diverse perspectives and experiences through spaces of questioning and problem-posing (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2007; Shor, 2012). Critical pedagogies seek to draw attention to the formation of dominant discourses, and attempt to help students critically question, challenge, and disrupt power relations, encouraging liberatory educational spaces where students may be prompted to create actionable change (Shor, 2012). Though worthy in its attempts to challenge dominant narratives, some scholars find critical pedagogies limiting and unrealistic (Ellsworth, 1989; Klein & Stern, 2009; Perrine, 2017; Pinar, 2009). These critics are concerned with the idealistic nature of critical pedagogies, the actual influence they have on the classroom, and the

ways in which they may exacerbate the conditions they claim to work against. These critiques are further explored in chapter two.

Critical studies contextualize schools within the sociohistorical and political contexts in which they operate, highlighting how particular knowledges and backgrounds are treated and privileged differently in order to maintain social hierarchies (e.g. Anyon, 1980; Apple, 2004; Bradley, 2007, 2012; Delpit, 1988; Fine, 1987; Hess, 2017). Fewer studies have explored the “everyday practices of critical pedagogies in the *context* of life in schools” (Niesz, 2006, p. 335, emphasis in original), and the experiences of the educators who employ these practices (e.g. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Fine and Weis, 2003; Gutstein, 2006; Niesz, 2006; Shor, 2012), particularly in music education (Barnett, 2010; Hess, 2013). While theoretical discourse is important, it is equally essential to consider the “gritty materialities” of everyday pedagogical contexts and curricular implementation (Apple, 2000, p. 229).

The enactment of critical pedagogies and socially just practices on a classroom scale, while popular, can often be superficial, as there can be a small, but categorical difference between curricular engagements that are actually critical, and those that masquerade as such through symbolic choices and false restructuring of power relations (Gould, 2008). Mantie (2009) argues that “simplistic prescriptions for social justice in the [music] classroom” are often based on “unexamined assumptions” (p. 92) and a focus on social justice as something to be achieved, a finite ideal. Vaugeois (2009), however, argues for social justice as the ongoing practices of “undoing structures that produce raced and gendered oppressions and systemic poverty as well as the work of challenging discourses that rationalize these structures” (p. 3). Understanding social justice in this way necessitates consideration of how these structures are maintained or challenged through everyday, localized interactions (Martin et al., 2007).

Border Crossing Pedagogies

In this study, I consider these localized interactions through the lens of border crossing. Border crossing pedagogies seek to promote critical spaces for students to understand, explore and interrogate their own positionalities and assumptions. These pedagogies speak to educational opportunities in which students operate in liminal spaces “in order to understand otherness in its own terms,” and to “allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power” (Giroux, 2005, p. 28). Borders can be understood as defined spaces and topics that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them, and to reify and perpetuate social norms and understandings (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Border crossing pedagogies focus on the micro level of engagement, that is interactions within the classroom, in that they ask students to enter spaces “where existing patterns of thought, relationship, and identity are called into question” and “juxtaposed with alternative ways of knowing and being,” providing the opportunity for reconstructions of knowledge, culture, and the ways we engage with difference (Hayes & Cuban, 1996, p. 6). More than reconsider and speak from their own histories and experiences, students are asked to “cross over borders that are culturally strange and alien to them,” (Giroux, 1991, p. 255). This may challenge them to think through the co-mingling and clash of multiple identities, histories, and experiences. Curricular choices that engage students in understanding and examining their own positionalities can help permeate and transcend borders, offering the “possibility for the development of a new consciousness” (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. 377) in which contradictions, complexities, and critical encounters with difference are possible and encouraged (Hayes & Cuban, 1996).

Pedagogical practices in border crossing often involve spaces of dialogue in the form of contact zones wherein different positionalities “meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (Pratt,

1991, p. 34). Rather than narrow-mindedly focusing on goals of consensus and amicability (Burbules, 2006), contact zones are construed as a “collision of voices” (Lu, 1994, p. 455), in which a multiplicity of opinions, experiences and positions are expressed, explored, and interrogated (Young, 2001). They can encourage students to “explore ways of resisting the unifying forces of ‘official’ discourse” (Lu, 1994, p. 453) by crossing borders to “see real dialogue and possible conflict as a constructive, engaged, and politically charged practice” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 167).

A Project-Based Approach

In order to enact pedagogical practices of border crossing in the music classroom, this study also drew from project-based learning (PBL) curricular design. Tobias, Campbell, and Greco (2015) define project-based learning (PBL) in music as a series of “interrelated learning experiences built on substantive disciplinary ideas that involve inquiry and musical engagement,” which often emerge from student experience (p. 40). PBL does not seek to empower students, but to create a space where students are agentic in the learning process, using what they know to “explore, negotiate, interpret, and create,” (Maida, 2011, p. 764), as well as critically challenge, critique, and interrogate their experiences within and outside of schools (Tobias et al., 2015). This project did not seek to implement grand ideas (Pinar, 2009), but rather aimed to create space for the observation of “everyday” criticality (Martin & Brown, 2013).

Like all curricular approaches, PBL also has its limitations. Scholars have argued that PBL can be confounded with more traditional, assigned projects wherein critical frameworks, student inquiry, and a focus on process are left behind (Bender, 2012; Falter, 2018; Strevy, 2014). The project designed for this study sought to follow a critical approach that created opportunities for students to problematize their own experiences and explore ways of knowing

through both music and dialogue. To that end, the design of the learning project had three concomitant facets: (1) composing, (2) dialogue, and (3) critical reflection. Over a period of five weeks during the 2018-2019 school year, middle school students at two schools, Edgewood and Forest Glen,² participated in this project, engaging in critical listening, designing compositional soundscapes that spoke to their experience and worldview, and participating in dialogue and critical reflection prompted by their compositions. Both the project and theoretical frameworks are delineated in further detail in the coming chapters.

Research Questions

To carry out the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. In what ways, if any, can a musical learning project serve as a catalyst for spaces that promote border crossing pedagogies?
2. In what ways and through what processes do students conceptualize curricular engagements as promoting or inhibiting multiple ways of knowing in the music classroom?
 - a. How do students articulate the connections and disconnections between curriculum in the music classroom and their own experiences and realities?
3. What role and impact do the pedagogues have in supporting or curtailing opportunities for critical engagements through the learning project?
 - a. What role and impact do the music educators in two schools have in supporting or curtailing these opportunities?
 - b. What role and impact does the researcher have in supporting or curtailing these opportunities?

² All school and participant names are pseudonyms. While I chose the pseudonyms for the schools and teachers, the students chose their own. In addition, gender pronouns were selected by participants. When pronouns were not selected, they/them/theirs is used.

Methodological Overview

This study employed a critical qualitative approach, offering opportunities for me to consider the phenomena and problem from the perspectives of those involved. In qualitative research, knowledge is “perspectival and multiple” and epistemologies “presuppose that knowledge is neither inside a person nor outside in the world but exists in the relationship between them because humans are not mere repositories of knowledge but active constructors of meaning” (Matsonobu & Bresler, 2014, p. 23). A qualitative lens also allowed me to contextualize the problem within the particular socio-cultural-political realities of each individual classroom context (Glesne, 2006).

Within the qualitative paradigm, design-based research (DBR) was used as the overarching guiding methodological framework. DBR involves the exploration of a problem that is informed by literature and observation within a given context. An intervention then seeks to further illuminate the problem and offer possibilities for change. Within the scope of DBR, interventions are broadly understood and can manifest as products, learning materials, processes, programs, and/or policies (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In this study the learning project modified the role of an “intervention” and served as a catalyst to explore the problem in multiple contexts and from multiple perspectives (Easterday et al., 2014).

In order to address the added complexities of the larger socio-cultural-political realities of the heterogeneous communities in this study, as well as align my methodology with my conceptual framework of border crossing pedagogy, my research design was also informed by case study and critical action research. The study took place in two schools, each of which served as its own case. A cross case analysis then allowed me to explore patterns and divergences between each case (Miles et al., 2014). Critical action research guided the participatory nature of

the project in that I participated in its implementation alongside the music educators in order to critically explore and understand classroom practice (Kemmis, 2010).

Over several weeks, as outlined in chapter three, I worked alongside the participants on the learning project. Student and educator responses to the learning project were explored through interviews, observations, and journaling. The use of multiple data sources helped support triangulation and process validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Interviews and ongoing member checks helped promote democratic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005), ensuring the inclusion of multiple voices in the research process. Journaling and researcher memos assisted in catalytic validity, monitoring and documenting ongoing changes that deepened my own understandings throughout the study (Lather, 1986). Focus groups, and my participation in them as an active member, helped me keep my own reflective process transparent and open throughout the study, as well as helped participants engage in meta-analysis.

Data for this project were organized by case and analyzed independently. This process was followed by a cross-case analysis that drew together commonalities and distinctive features of each case, allowing for comparison while also preserving their individual fidelity (Cohen et al., 2017; Miles et al., 2014). Two main cycles of coding, descriptive and pattern, generated themes and categories (Saldaña, 2009). These categories were then developed into an analytical model based on the concept of “critically artistic dispositions,” an overarching theme related to the purpose of middle school general music that emerged in this study. I define and explore this model further in chapter two.

Throughout my exploration of the data, peer examination in which analysis, transcripts and notes were shared with several “critical friends” helped ensure dialogic validity (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the study, my own continual dialogue, transparency of my own critically

reflective process with participants, and active awareness of the impact of my positionalities in relationship to the research process and outcome helped me engage reflexively (Berger, 2015; Reason, 1994). A more descriptive detail of the methodology is offered in chapter three.

Entangled Subjectivities

As part of this project design, I deliberately placed myself as a participative actor in each classroom context alongside the students and educators. My own subjectivities, positionalities, agenda, and thinking were interwoven and entangled with that of the participants throughout the process (Carter & Little, 2007). The compositions, stories, and dialogues were theirs, but the questions asked, prompts given, and reflections on their thoughts were mine (Collier & Collier, 1986). While I was able to move in and out of roles and vantage points such as participant, observer, collaborator, partner, or facilitator, those vantage points were still my own (Herr & Anderson, 2005). They are seen through my eyes as a white, cis-gendered, middle-class female, realities that place me in the same category as roughly 90% of the faculty at the schools in this study, including both educator participants. My past experiences and ideological orientations undoubtedly shaped the interpretation of this study, though my aim was to instigate opportunities for students to develop their own ideological frameworks, not to impose my own on them. Furthermore, the choices of how the participating educators and I worked together to cultivate contact zones and engage in questioning that asked all participants to “respond responsively and responsibly to otherness and difference in our own, unique ways” did, in part, determine how each participant engaged throughout this study (Biesta, 2006, p. ix).

An ongoing sense of my own location of privilege guided my efforts toward criticality, informing the lenses through which I understood the perspectives and voices of the participants. Ultimately, however, I was unable to evade “the relentless subjectivity of all social observation”

(Behar, 2014, p. 6). Purposeful and explicit examination and interrogation of my own perspectives and struggles was made clear throughout the study by way of researcher memos, analytic processes, and an effort to make my own criticality visible not only to the reader, but also to the participants themselves throughout the study. As they shared their observations and reflections with each other and with me, I also shared mine with them. I aimed to make my own subjectivity in all its complexities and complications explicit throughout the analysis and writing, acknowledging and interrogating the ways in which my own positionality impacted the choices of students and educators, the way in which the project was presented, and how the data were analyzed. I also recognize that, despite by best efforts, there will still be stories left untold and perspectives unseen (Behar, 2014).

Summary

Schools and educators continue to be challenged to find ways to create critical educational environments that connect diverse student realities with classroom curriculum. Music education, particularly at the middle school level, offers a unique context in which to explore multiple ways of knowing, challenge dominant narratives, better understand student positionalities, and connect the classroom with the larger social world.

This study is organized as follows. Chapter one introduced the problem and rationale, stated the purpose of the study, and presented the research questions to be examined. Chapter two presents a literature review on critical and border crossing pedagogies, situates the musical learning project in relevant literature, and outlines the analytical model of critical artistic dispositions. Chapter three includes the methodology for the study, articulating and outlining the hybrid methodological approach utilized, as well as the processes of collecting and analyzing data. Chapter four outlines the research project and presents portions of the data that help situate

the study for the reader. Chapters five, six, and seven present and analyze the findings within the model of critical artistic dispositions. Finally, chapter eight provides the space to explore a vision for middle school general music education as it relates to the purpose and lens of this study as well as conclusions, implications, and avenues of further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter, I consider the theoretical underpinnings of this study. This study explored, through the implementation of a musical learning project, the ways in which interactions between students and educators impact opportunities for critical reflection and fostered the development of a critical artistic disposition in the middle school general music classroom. Inquiry into relationships and positionalities in the classroom starts with an investigation of power relations. Therefore, this chapter begins with critical theory and an examination of structure, agency, and relations of power as they apply to schooling, education, and curriculum development. I then transition into the pedagogical sphere, using critical and border crossing pedagogies to build the overarching frame that informs the learning project and analytical model (as seen in figure 2.1). In particular, I focus on how individuals analyze the complexities of their positionalities and ways of knowing in order to investigate and potentially challenge taken-for-granted norms. In these sections I situate this study in literature that specifically considers the enactment of these pedagogies, rather than solely the theory behind them. I also consider the limitations in using a critical framework. This foundation of criticality guides my own epistemological commitments within this study, as they relate to the purpose(s) of an education in and through music, curriculum development, and educational relationships.

In the second section of this chapter, I concentrate on the learning project used in this study. I explore the literature on project-based learning, critical reflection, positive dissensus, and soundscapes through a critical lens (as seen in figure 2.1). I consider previous scholarship on each of these topics to note gaps and challenges, as well as my purpose and intention behind

using each of these elements in the design of the learning project. In this section, I also consider the limitations and concerns associated with each of these project elements.

In the third section of this chapter, I focus on middle school general music. I consider a cross-section of literature on the purposes and possibilities of this specific context, and I outline the theoretical model that I will be using to analyze the data. This model, labeled *critical artistic dispositions*, is meant to provide a vision of purpose as I see it for middle school general music. In this section, I define critical artistic dispositions and explain how the model was developed from and with the data. I then articulate how I use this model to explore and analyze the data from this study through three interconnected facets: funds of knowledge, critical listening and authorial agency, and self-authorship (see figure 2.1).

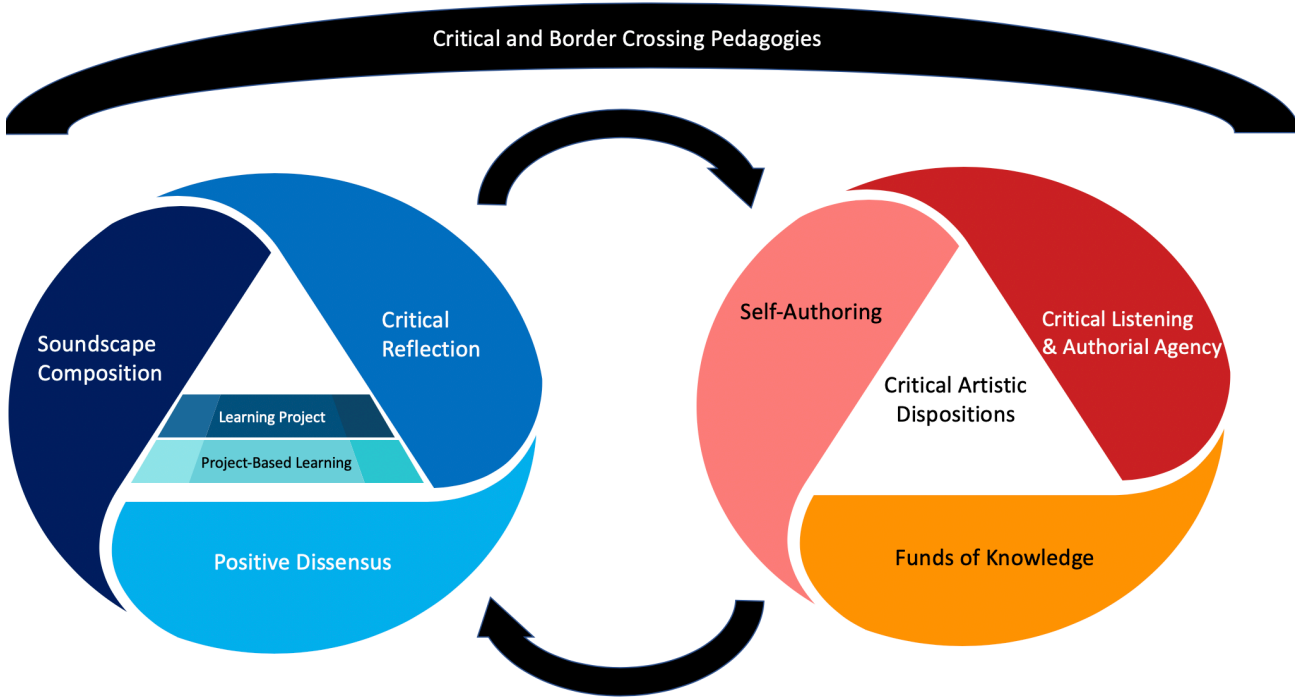


Figure 2.1: Theoretical & Conceptual Frameworks

Critical Approaches

Critical theory is used to help explore power relations, agency, and the construction of knowledge in this study. Critical theorists view reality and the knowledges we construct as

politically, socially, and historically produced, and critical theory can help make sense of how outside forces shape ideologies and reify power relations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2003),

A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system. (p. 436-437)

The forces and elements of identity articulated by Kincheloe and McLaren can shape our positionalities, which, in turn, impact the ways we engage with the world and others through the playing out of power relations.

A neo-Marxist school of thought, critical theory originated with the establishment of the Frankfurt School in 1923 (McLaren, 1984). The founders of the school, including Horkheimer, Adorno, Lowenthal, Marcuse, Pollock, and Fromm, offered considerable theoretical diversity, but underlying commonalities that examine the reproduction of oppressions, the nature of capitalist societies, and possibilities for social transformation unite their work (Giroux, 1983).

Critical theorists recognize that power relations are both personal and structural, suggesting that individuals play a role in supporting or thwarting their own place and the places of others in the social structure (Agger, 2013; Fook, 2015; Regelski, n.d.). Agger (2013) argues that while “structures of domination are reproduced through people’s false consciousness, promoted by ideology (Marx), reification (Georg Lukács), hegemony (Antonio Gramsci), one-dimensional thinking (Marcuse), and the metaphysics of presence (Derrida),” critical theory “pierces this false consciousness by insisting on the power of agency, both personal and collective, to transform society,” (p. 5). While individuals should strive for institutional change, institutions exist and function as individuals act within them. Therefore, personal and collective

actions, and awareness of the multiple ways in which positionalities impact those actions, play a role in how power relations are reified or challenged.

Central to critical theory is the role of praxis. It is not only a lens through which to view the world, but a means to act upon it (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 1984). Praxis is the integration of theory and practice when regarded through a particular framework and for a particular purpose (McLaren, 1984). When viewed through the lens of critical theory, purpose is centered in emancipation, social action, and counter-hegemony. Purpose operates with the desire “to make central the voices and experiences [of those] who have historically existed within the margins of mainstream institutions” (Darder et al., 2003, p. 14). Conceiving of purpose in this way requires not only an awareness of how power relations impact interaction and relationship, but also a desire to reconstruct and shift such relations.

When applied to the classroom, critical theory provides both a philosophical framework and an informed process (praxis) through which to seek social change. Within the confines and purposes of this study, critical theory provides a theoretical foundation for why and how students should investigate their positionalities in the world. It also provides a lens through which educators and researcher should investigate their epistemological positions, and the ways in which those positions are made manifest (or not) in their curricular and pedagogical engagements. When each of these are viewed through the lens of critical theory, space is potentially created to “illuminate radical potentialities in the present” (Giroux, 2003, p. 51).

For myself, as the researcher, power relations impacted my engagements with participants in this study. Bradley-Levine and Carr (2015) argue that researchers who operate through a critical theoretical lens must actively work toward an awareness and reduction of the unequal power relationship that is often present between researchers and participants. In their

own study, Bradley-Levine and Carr entered the research site not seeking to fix supposed problems with a local after-school program, but to use their role as researchers to work alongside family and community members to help design a program that best benefitted the community as a whole through dialectical relationships and transparency. Similarly, I was not seeking to “fix” any supposed problems. Rather, I was interested in how the purpose of an education in and through music might be conceptualized and operationalized through a critical framework. Critical theory provided a way of examining how the questions I asked and my interactions with participants supported or challenged unequal power relations in this study.

For educators, understandings of power may impact how they support or curtail opportunities for critical engagements in the classroom. While existing institutional constraints may regulate the actions of educators in the classroom, their choices and interactions still come from a place of power and embedded within those choices are their own histories and experiences (Benedict, 2006; Horsley, 2015; Niesz, 2006). A desire for critical curricular experiences without examinations of how their own positionalities and power impact student engagement in the classroom can reify inequalities and maintain “the legacy of hegemony” in schools (de los Rios, 2013, p. 60). The ways in which educators make choices that challenge or sustain power relations in the classroom, then, may impact the potential for critical engagement. Therefore, following Giroux (2003), critical theory is also a process of critique in which we engage in constant self-reflection in order to avoid clinging “dogmatically to [our] own doctrinal assumptions” (p. 27). Giroux notes that engaging in continuous self-critique requires educators to examine the impact of pedagogy and engage in critical theory as a practice, not simply as a school of thought.

For students, power relations and positionalities impact the ways in which they construct knowledge in that what occurs outside of the classroom impacts what happens within the classroom. For example, engaging in composition activities in the classroom without theoretical or educator-imposed restraints can be seen as offering a certain amount of “freedom” to students, leading them to “adopt the belief that they are free to create music uninfluenced by mediating forces” (Louth, 2013, p. 145). Despite being “free” from the need for explicit skill sets or requirements, they are not free from the ways in which their own positionalities and experiences determine how they create and construct knowledge. Each student is constrained “by whatever tacit musical conventions [they] have naturalized” (p. 151), as well as their own non-musical experiences. By failing to examine the ways in which their knowledge has been constructed, Louth contends, students can fall prey to unproblematized ideology. I follow Green (2003) here in my understanding of ideology, defining it as “a set of common-sense assumptions which contribute towards making our social relations seem natural and justifiable” (p. 4). Ideology, she argues, is most dangerous when we are ignorant of it; this is the point at which it “helps to perpetuate social relations...through the process of reification and legitimation” (Green, 1988, p. 127). Therefore, deliberate and ongoing reflection on such assumptions, positionalities, and experiences is necessary to avoid ideologies going unproblematized. As such, students also engaged in multiple forms of reflection throughout the learning project, utilizing journaling, small group dialogue, and one-on-one conversations with myself and their teacher to help them think through their own experiences.

In each of these examples, it is important to note that, for critical theorists, simply observing and reflecting upon experiences does not guarantee or incite change, whether “transformational” or momentary. In this study, students’ experiences were used as texts in the

curriculum, but I recognize that this, alone, was not inherently critical. Rather, I sought to reflect upon, consider, and analyze such experiences with students through critical frameworks. Bennett (1980, as cited in Giroux, 2003) notes that the significance of any experience “will not depend on the experience of the subject but on the struggles around the way that experience is interpreted and defined” (p. 38). This constant struggle, evidenced in students, educators, and myself within this study, then, has the *potential* to impact how human experiences are framed, social relationships are understood, and actionable change is pursued.

There have been significant criticisms of critical theory including, though not limited to, its focus on white, male, patriarchal structures; use of exclusive language; and focus on theory over operationalization and movement forward. Despite claims to challenge societal structures of inequity, scholars have argued that critical theory has ignored the female experience, as well as that of marginalized or oppressed cultural perspectives (e.g. Ellsworth, 1989; Lather, 1984; Lorde, 1983, 1984; Minh-Ha, 1989; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). Critical theorists are often criticized for viewing structural inequity through a “myopic and superficial lens,” ignoring arguments of intersectionality, and minimizing the experiences of “those groups that had existed historically at the margins of mainstream life” (Darder et al., 2003, p. 16-17). Critical theory has also been criticized as being elitist. Despite a desire to be “a social philosophy in touch with social reality” (Schirmacher, 2000, p. vii), scholars argue that critical theory’s place in the academy and use of academic language can make it inaccessible to the communities and individuals central to the theory (Darder et al., 2003). Finally, critics argue that there is an overwhelming focus on theory, rather than on enactment and practice in the world, thus offering little guidance on how one might challenge such structures in an operationalized manner (e.g.

Ludovisi, 2017; Martin & Brown, 2013). I expand upon and address these criticisms at the end of the next section.

Critical Pedagogy. Critical pedagogy emerged in the 1970's as a sort of “‘big tent’ for those in education who were invested in doing academic work toward social justice” and as the employment of critical theory in educational and curriculum scholarship (Lather, 1998, p. 488). Led by scholars such as Freire (1970), Apple (1979/2004), Giroux (1981, 1983), and McLaren (1984), critical pedagogy rejects academic neutrality and supports a politically active approach to education.

Early critical pedagogy scholars focused on class-based analyses of schooling in which schools were seen as “social sites with a dual curriculum—one overt and formal, the other hidden and informal” (Giroux, 1983, p. 56). Based on this duality, critical pedagogues often argue that schools enact reproductions of discourses that keep particular social groups in power through the perpetuation of dominant narratives, while oppressing the narratives of the marginalized. The reproductions of “social practices and representations that affirm the central values, interests, and concerns of the social class in control of the material and symbolic wealth of society” separate knowledge that is understood as legitimate from that which is devalued in the school setting (McLaren, 2003, p. 75).

It is important, however, to contrast Critical Pedagogy from critical pedagogies. Critical Pedagogy is a theory of education that seeks to liberate and empower the oppressed, critically analyzing educational practices and theories for the ways they support unequal relationships (Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 2003). Critical Pedagogy, however, must be *enacted* in order for it to have any impact in a classroom setting. One's stated personal philosophy must align with how that philosophy is operationalized through enacted curricular and pedagogical decisions. Critical

pedagogies are the multiple and varied ways in which educators and students might explore democratic possibility through “dialectical engagements with the social and economic obstacles we find standing in our way” (Greene, 2003, p. 111). Critical pedagogies are also the enactment of frameworks that encourage multiple knowledges and ways of knowing and reading the world and connect experiences in school with social realities outside of school. The path toward a more just, democratic society (Pacheco, 2011) and broader civic engagement (Chappell & Chappell, 2016) requires both intellectual skill and a commitment to actionable social change (Martin, 2017).

Curriculum and Agency. While critical pedagogies are not themselves a curriculum, they can be used as a framework through which to problematize and examine how curriculum is both conceptualized and enacted. Kushner (2006) notes the need to begin by viewing curriculum as not “*what* we teach so much as *how* we teach” (p. 20, emphasis mine). Drawing upon Stenhouse (1975), he notes the need to “shift the educational focus from aims and objectives to principles of procedure – to the conditions for mutual, shared reflection on what is educationally worthwhile” (Kushner, 2006, p. 20). In this way, curriculum becomes a conversation, something that takes place between multiple stakeholders, including students. Critical pedagogies can serve as a lens to help students and educators recognize problems, opinions, and knowledges as having many vantage points and histories (McLaren, 2003).

Giroux (2003) notes that critical pedagogies help create spaces in schools for students to develop and draw upon knowledge and modes of inquiry in order to “critically examine the role that society has played in their own self-formation” (p. 52). This is crucial if we see a purpose of schooling as the development of a critical disposition of reflective and active engagement in the world. If students develop an awareness of both the structural forces and agentic possibilities in

their lives as well as the lives of others, they grow in their ability to participate in the civic world and enact social change.

Curriculum that is informed by critical pedagogies needs to help students cultivate the “intellectual and cultural tools” required for students to engage as self-aware, active citizens (Pacheco, 2011, p. 47). Barnett (2010) notes that this necessitates a curriculum that promotes the troubling of societal issues and contemporary events as well as the inclusion of youth who are “traditionally omitted from dominant discourses or silenced by institutional reckonings” (p. 25). Not only are global, national, and historical events foundational to curriculum development, but the experiences of daily living are as well (Greene, 2003). There is great value then in curriculum that is drawn out of the experiences and lives of students and educators, rather than from habitualized, cherished practices (Kushner, 2006).

The work of Brazilian critical educator Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1998) provides a link between the theoretical framework of critical theory and the development of critical pedagogical work in the classroom. Freire challenges the “banking” approach to teaching, that is, an approach in which students are seen as living and learning in a pre-existing world where knowledge is deposited by the educator into the minds of the students. Knowledge is often disconnected from context and students are perceived as having little of value to contribute to the production of it. Freire (1970) offers instead a problem-posing model in which students exist with the world, inventing and reinventing knowledge through an engagement with it. The world is not a static reality to be learned about and processed, but is always in flux and, therefore, able to be negotiated, impacted, and potentially transformed through action.

Freire (1970) offers generative themes as one way to initiate critical pedagogical and curricular engagements in the classroom. A generative theme, understood as an “issue or topic

that catches the interest of students in such a way that discussion, study, and project work can be built around it” (Peterson, 2003, p. 307), can be used to connect learning practice with out-of-school experiences (Abrahams, 2008; Peterson, 2003). Collectively, students and educators examine realities in the world, engage in dialogue, and generate potential responses. This way of thinking in education creates spaces for curricula to be co-created between students and educators, contextualizing it in the realities of everyday life.

In this study, my theoretical and ideological commitments, grounded in critical pedagogies, informed the design and organization of the learning project. Engaging with multiple ways of knowing through critical reflection and spaces for positive dissensus are central elements of the project. These spaces serve as opportunities for students to think through their own positionalities, juxtapose those positionalities with others and analyze societal structures. Through the composition of the soundscapes, I sought to use musical engagement as a catalyst for promoting spaces of border crossing in which students engage with themselves, others, and larger society. By grounding this study in critical pedagogy and using student experience as the content for the soundscapes, I also sought to illuminate the links, gaps, and challenges between learning practice and in-the-world experience as a critical conduit for multiple ways of knowing and being in the music classroom.

“Doing” Critical Pedagogies. At the micro level, critical educators determine how, if, and in what ways critical pedagogical frameworks are enacted in the classroom. Critical pedagogy is not a method, nor a template, but are guidelines or principles that should be reinvented by educators and students alike (Freire & Macedo, 1998). All educators understand pedagogy differently; we are multifaceted, multi-subjective individuals who bring our own assumptions, biases, experiences, and intentions into the classroom. Despite this diversity of

positionalities, Benedict (2012) argues that because “music educators more often than not graduate from school music programs and college music education programs that have essentially looked and functioned the same for generations,” few have experienced critical or transformative pedagogies (p. 156).

Furthermore, accountability demands can reduce educators’ capacities to respond to and encourage engagements with different beliefs, opinions, and ideas in the classroom (Fautley, 2015; Ferm Almqvist et al., 2017; Luke, 2011). Standardization and enactment of prescribed curriculum can ignore the contexts of student realities, often leaving teachers estranged from and unable to respond to and build on student experience (Benedict, 2012; Hayward, 2008; Schmidt, 2012a). Benedict maintains that when we “teacher-proof” curriculum, “care, creativity, mindfulness, and even the expertise of a teacher is thought of as something from which a child needs to be protected” (p. 153). These structural and historical hurdles can cause educators to become engaged in the “business of teaching music,” rather than being present in and aware of the distinct lives and subjectivities of the students in the room (p. 156). This can lead to a consistent reproduction of dominant narratives in North American K-12 music education that remain unresponsive to the majority of students (Allsup, 2008; Kratus, 2007; Rodriguez, 2004; Williams, 2011).

Critical educators certainly do exist, rebutting the argument that critical pedagogy is a largely theoretical concept, and not an enacted practice (Abrahams, 2005; Martin & Brown, 2013; Wink, 1996). There are a variety of approaches that offer possibilities for what it means to actually “do” critical pedagogies in the classroom. For the bounds of this study, I explore two of these strategies, each of which informed the design of the learning project in this study (Duncan-

Andrade & Morell, 2008; hooks, 1994b, 2003, 2010). This is followed by a review of literature that considers the “doing” of critical pedagogies in a variety of music education contexts.

Strategies for Enacting Critical Pedagogies. In their work in urban high schools, Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008) focus on the connection between learning practice and in-the-world experience. They use both popular culture and student lived experience in tandem with more traditional texts as media through which to analyze power, oppression, and social change. They emphasize critical reflection of one’s *own* experiences as primary in order to challenge stereotypes, assumptions, and core narratives. Through these processes, students may empower themselves to disrupt larger dominant ideologies present in their communities, engage in civic action, and participate in social transformation.

Duncan-Andrade and Morell’s (2008) approach was particularly helpful for my study when considering individual and collective experience. In composing their soundscapes during the learning project, students began with critical reflection of their own experience. When these soundscapes were presented and engaged with in the large classroom, they then prompted productive dialogue that offered multiple ways of knowing and connected diverse experiences as participants communally explored how they made meaning. These dialogues then had the potential to prompt further action.

hooks (1994b, 2003, 2010) connects and defines critical pedagogy as an engaged pedagogy of transgression, critical thought, and hope. This engaged pedagogy is firmly grounded in theory, which she argues is central to social change. Within the university classrooms, the setting of hooks’ scholarship, her engaged pedagogy involves the creation of space for an ongoing productive dialogue that is committed to the analysis of personal struggle, experience, and testimony. She argues that everyone “thinks deeply” in various facets of their lives, but what

is missing is often an explicit awareness of how to frame and apply the thinking we are all capable of doing. Within educational spaces, then, she believes there is a need to develop curricular and relational approaches through the use of diverse texts, humor, collaboration, and opportunities for conflict. Communally, educators and students not only recognize, but grapple with multiple ways of knowing, being, and understanding as influential and consequential to the learning environment of the classroom. The diverse experiences of students and educators drives the content and engagement in the room. For hooks, “hope” is not only about naming inequities, but about working toward constructive pathways that move beyond cynicism and toward optimistic, actionable change. Theorizing is then used to “make sense out of what [is] happening...[and to] imagine possible futures” (1994b, p. 61). To “do” engaged pedagogy in the classroom, hooks notes the need for flexibility and “spontaneous shifts in direction” as knowledge is gathered “fully and inclusively” (p. 91). This then creates space in which to “move beyond accepted boundaries,” confront difference, and engage in social action (p. 7).

hooks’ (1994b, 2003, 2010) approach to engaged pedagogy was also useful to my study. By connecting theory and lived experience, there was a push beyond a reflecting and reporting of students’ experiences toward a desire to engage in “a more nuanced understanding of the forces that shape their lives” (Pacheco, 2011, p. 54). With this nuance comes complexities and complications that created spaces of divergent thought in the classroom. Through both musical composition and spaces for productive dialogue, opportunities were created for students to explore experience in the larger socio-cultural-political milieu in which it occurs.

Studies in music education have also explored both the theoretical tenets and practical realities of a musical education enacted through the framework of critical pedagogies (e.g. Hess, 2013, 2015; Kaschub, 2009; Martignetti et al., 2013; Schmidt, 2005; Willox et al., 2011).

Investigations where researchers, educators and students critically interrogate curricula and pedagogy have been explored on both the macro (e.g. policies, standards) (Hayward, 2008) and micro levels (e.g. classroom interactions) (Barnett, 2010; Lewis, 2016), leading to examinations of power relationships in the music classroom. Power relationships have also been explored in musical learning communities beyond the classroom setting, and Martignetti et al. (2013) argue for a prioritization of understanding and dialogue as foundational to a critical education in and through music.

Studies have also considered how composition and improvisation might critically challenge traditional ways of engaging in the music classroom. For instance, Willox et al. (2011) implemented a curriculum based on hands-on percussion improvisation in order to explore both musical skill development and group collaboration. They framed improvisation as a “democratic form of social exchange” (p. 119) and sought to explore the possibilities of improvisation to dismantle classroom hierarchies and cross a multitude of boundaries. Hoffman and Carter (2013a, 2013b) also engaged students in composition and improvisation, and found that creating music with students in ensembles led to stronger connections between the music classroom and home life.

Studies have also investigated the promotion of student agency and dialogue surrounding lived realities and societal concerns that interest and relate to students’ lives through classroom engagement with popular, hip hop, and rap musics (e.g. Abramo, 2009; Au, 2005; Glenn Paul, 2000; Malito, 2014). McLaren (2011) cites Duncan-Andrade and Morrell’s (2008) curriculum inspired by the work of Tupac Shakur as one that uses tenets of critical pedagogy within music to link the outer world’s denial of corporeal needs, such as food, shelter, and even education with the inner world of courage that inspires one to make change. McLoughlin (2009) used the blues

as a pedagogical connection between students lived experiences and the classroom. He asked teachers and students to bring personal experiences into the classroom setting, “interpreting and relating them to the content with which they are working with intent for deeper learning and understanding to occur as these stories are shared” (p. 88).

Hess’ (2019) research into activist education similarly places a focus on experiences, noting that we might reframe the purpose of music education as one in which youth develop across three areas: “fostering connection with Others...honoring and sharing lived experience, and...developing the ability to think critically about the world” (p. 6). This framework “underscore[s] the importance of both action and imagination” (p. 7) as students explore what *is* alongside what *might be*.

Outside of North America, agency and criticality have been explored through the curation of popular music (Kallio, 2017). Student construction of knowledge have been considered through technology (Savage, 2015), creativity (Burnard, 2012b), and informal learning (Karlsen, 2009). Resistance to hegemony has been investigated through assessment (Fautley, 2015) and social inclusion (Marsh, 2015).

While this proposed study is based on typical, rather than exceptional, cases, (Yin, 2014), studies that consider educators deliberately seeking to challenge dominant paradigms and narrative in their classrooms offer insight into the processes and challenges of enacting everyday critical pedagogies (Hayward, 2008; Hess, 2013). In Hess’s narratives, four educators enacted everyday critical pedagogies by “engaging with issues of social justice, studying a broad range of musics, introducing multiple musical epistemologies, creating space for students to own the means of cultural production, contextualizing musics, considering differential privilege, and subverting hegemonic practices” (p. ii). Everyday critical pedagogical choices led to classrooms

where teaching moved beyond music for music's sake to a "pedagogy that focuses on what might be possible to teach *through* music to effect social change" (p. 344, emphasis in original).

Researcher/educator partnerships, as found in Lewis' (2016) study, can also be critical. She engaged in a critical pedagogical project with elementary music students that deliberately sought to create contact zones where students "boldly disagreed with one another and posed pointed questions, rebutting, refusing, and sometimes changing their own opinions" (p. 207). Guided by Lewis who served as researcher/educator, the students and classroom educator in her study explored the intersections of popular music and identity, representation, and social inequity in relation to their own personal and social narratives. Composing and creating music was itself a form of critical inquiry when situated within the contexts of critical listening and dialogue, opening spaces for students to engage with new viewpoints and develop critical literacies.

Missing from this scholarship is how critical pedagogies might be enacted through the medium of a musical learning project that uses student-generated texts (compositions), and how this enactment might shift conceptions of purpose and possibility in general music. This prompts a variety of wonderments including the following: How do students use musical engagement as a reflective medium in itself, not only as a catalyst to further dialogue? How do educators engage with student compositions in various contexts, and how do these interactions impact power relations in the classroom? How does a project such as this change across contexts, with different students, and with different educators? How do projects such as the one in this study impact the ways in which 'purpose' is understood in various contexts?

Educators and "Everyday" Critical Pedagogies. Given the constraints that often lead to prescribed, non-critical approaches to music teaching, how do educators, such as those in the above studies, begin to engage critically in the classroom? If not from their own experiences in

music programs or from the structure and curricula of most schools themselves³ (Barnett, 2010; Benedict, 2012), where does a critical lens originate and how might one sustain an “ongoing construction of critical subjectivity” (Niesz, 2006, p. 341)? Benedict (2006) urges educators to begin with their own positionalities and consider “the notion of *who we are* as teachers” and how that helps shape our epistemologies (p. 3, emphasis in original). Horsley (2015) adds that “teachers can only help to bridge institutional, social, or cultural barriers through the free exchange and cross-fertilization of ideas if they are aware of the ways in which both they and their students have been constrained by historical and current social and political values” (p. 72). Both Benedict and Horsley suggest critical educators begin with a view inward, grappling with their own views of the world and the values inherent therein.

One space in which to engage in such critically reflective practices is in teacher preparation programs. Scholars have often remarked on the need to “do differently” in music teacher education in response to disconnects between tertiary education and teaching and learning in practice (e.g. Asmus, 2000; Brophy, 2002; Kratus, 2007; Lehman, 2000; Williams, 2011). Kaschub (2014) notes that “curricular offerings standard in most music teacher education programs serve to transmit a consensually defined and fixed striation of music content and skills” (p. 125). A focus on decontextualized routines, knowledge, rules, and conventions promotes a view of the educator as a “constituency of one”, cut off from the school, community and larger realities of schooling (Benedict & Schmidt, 2014, p. 91). This focus can encourage borders that signal epistemological, political, cultural and social priorities, whether consciously or not. Overly fixed approaches potentially set up future teachers for failure, not success, as little in the art of teaching is defined, fixed, universal, or predictable.

³ See Greater Lawndale High School for Social Justice in Chicago and New York City Expeditionary Learning School as examples of school environments that deliberately seek to promote critical, social justice oriented spaces.

These spaces can, however, also foster the development of a set of dispositions – those that frame and consider music education experiences as responsive to local contexts and relationships (Allsup, 2016; Benedict & Schmidt, 2014; Kaschub & Smith, 2014; Sarath et al, 2017). A focus on disposition encourages and prepares teachers to “engage in messy pedagogies – those that are able to address complex, everyday conditions” (Kaschub, 2014, p. 141) and are grounded in an understanding and awareness of the “political, curricular, pedagogical, sociological, and cultural demands of schooling” (Benedict & Schmidt, 2014, p. 89)

Niesz (2006) suggests that critical community is also important, citing how “discourses related to conceptualizations of social justice in education appeared to be mobilized through educational networks” in the lives of the teachers with whom she worked (p. 340). Working and thinking with other critical educators and researchers challenged educators to consider their own positionalities, pedagogies, and curricular choices.

Furthermore, Martin & Brown (2013) call for the importance of conceptualizing critical pedagogies on an everyday scale. When scholars do speak of the enactment of critical pedagogies in the classroom, examples are often rhetorical or of isolated, dramatic practices that lead toward grand de-contextualized accomplishments that are unachievable or impractical within the constraints of formal education (Martin & Brown, 2013; Martin & Te Riele, 2011; Pinar, 2009). Everyday critical pedagogies seek not to create dramatic, transformative singular events, but to “decolonize and revitalize processes of learning in ways that make space for knowledge outside of hegemonic norms” through teaching (Martin & Brown, 2013, p. 382). Activism and transformative learning must “emerge from the everyday lived context[s] in which people are embedded” (Martin et al., 2007, p. 80). Within music education, this means engaging in community outreach, composition projects, production activities, generative repertoire, and

other small-scale changes that support space for multiple knowledges (Thibeault, 2010). The challenge is to “recognize that critical pedagogies are *made and remade* through everyday imagined and enacted praxis” (Martin & Brown, 2013, p. 387, emphasis in original).

In order to actively promote critical engagements that seek to support a multiplicity of viewpoints, educators need to make curricular choices that are “both shaped by and respond to the very problems that arise in the in-between spaces/places/contexts that connect classrooms with the experiences of everyday life” (Giroux, 2001, p. 9). Projects that offer opportunities for dialogue and critical reflection may be one way to respond to these problems. A learning project that specifically seeks to explore multiple viewpoints can be thought of in terms of border crossing pedagogies, the subject of the next section.

Recognizing, Interrogating, and Crossing Borders

Borders are paradoxical. They can separate, delineate, and divide, negating and leaving out spaces, perspectives, ideas, and values. Yet, borders also shape the ways in which we think, understand, and view the world, giving meaning to our own spaces, perspectives, ideas, and values (Bolt, 2001). When borders remain static, however, one viewpoint, narrative, or experience is privileged and validated. We cannot escape borders, but we can disrupt them, causing shifts that embrace borders as permeable and flexible (Elenes, 2003).

Theories surrounding the concepts of borders and border crossing have permeated critical theory (Giroux, 2005), cultural theory (Anzaldúa, 1990), and sociology (Lamont & Molnár, 2002), among others (e.g. Becker, 1994; Kellner, 1995; West, 1990). Central to each of these theories is that “humanity is made up of social groups that are differentiated by practices, beliefs, and institutions” (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 1). Borders and boundaries help us make sense of these differences and play a role in determining how we interact with the world. Borders can be

symbolic, determining how we understand practices and beliefs. They can be social and geographical, determining how we engage with and have access to diverse opportunities, resources and ideas. They can also be political, as they inscribe and reinforce certain core narratives that “freeze” social struggles and inequalities. In a dynamic world of economic isolation, fear of difference and increasing social conflict, there is a continued need to “understand how we create borders and...the social consequences of such actions” (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 1). Following my commitment to a critical pedagogical approach to this study, I argue that if we hope to engage students in reflexivity and civic action, we also need to explore how we might make borders more porous, more flexible, and potentially crossable. Border crossing pedagogies embrace ambiguities and deliberately and critically explore different narratives, challenging static, unmoving borders (Anzaldúa, 1990).

Border crossing pedagogies seek to explore learning experiences that unveil and negotiate the perpetuation of social stratification caused by dominant narratives in the classroom (Anzaldúa, 1987; Giroux, 2005; Weiler, 1988, 1991). These narratives can “tempt us to believe that the way things are is inevitable, or the best that can be in an imperfect world” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2417). Through border crossing, boundaries between varying ways of knowing and living are challenged, negotiated, and interrogated, opening up possibilities and alternatives to core narratives. A study conducted by de los Rios (2013) found that border crossing pedagogies helped students “debunk myths” and critically reflect on “the ongoing transformation of their social, political, and ethnic identities” (p. 58), and Cook’s (2000) study found that students engaged more readily and intensely in classes where border crossing pedagogies were the primary approach. Furthermore, de los Rios (2013) found that through border crossing and critical dialogue, “students analyze their own hybrid identities, acknowledge the complex

identities of their classmates and teacher, and examine the socially constructed identities of their communities” (p. 62).

Hayes and Cuban (1996) define border crossing pedagogies as maintaining the following characteristics:

1. Educators work to help students grow awareness and criticality of inequitable power relationships, and how these relationships are reproduced in educational institutions and school curricula.
2. Students’ own voices and experiences become central to a process of creating new forms of knowledge (rather than supplemental to learning formal “theory” in course content).
3. Students and teachers grow in criticality of their own beliefs and knowledge.
4. Students are provided conditions (both space and prompting) to question and learn about different perspectives, and to identify similarities and differences across these issues.
5. Educators model critical awareness of their own knowledge and experiences, helping to create a supportive environment for students to critically assess the ideologies present in their own experiences and perspectives. (p. 9)

This framework can be used to make curricular and pedagogical choices through which “transformations in social relations are concretely actualized” rather than discussed in abstract, generic, prescriptive terminology (hooks, 1992, p. 13).

Border crossing pedagogy is itself a critical pedagogy and connects to larger structural issues related to the purpose of schooling. Giroux (2005) notes that border crossing pedagogy is not only an “acknowledgement of the shifting borders that both undermine and reterritorialize different configurations of culture, power, and knowledge,” but it also “links notions of schooling and the broader category of education to a more substantive struggle for a radical democratic society” (p. 20). Border crossing pedagogies, then, are grounded not only in theory and awareness, but also toward potential productive action. One form of such action is the creation of and participation in contact zones.

Contact Zones. The concept of the contact zone is often interwoven with border crossing pedagogies. As described in the introduction, a “contact zone” is a “social space where disparate

cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). Hailey (2002) explored the compatibility of border crossing and contact zones in her study of students in a university writing course. She found environments that promote contact zones also often encourage border crossing when paired with critical reflection. In contact zones, educators create spaces where students deliberately come into contact with a multiplicity of ways of knowing and being. They are spaces of convergence where the “uneven and politically contested space of the classroom” is opened up to “‘other’ subjectivities, knowledge systems and practices” (Martin, 2017, p. 9) and are sites of critical reflection, negotiation, experimentation, and possibility (Giroux, 2005). As students critically reflect on their own experiences, they may engage in alternative ways of knowing and being, encountering perspectives drawn from the social and economic realities of classmates. Contradictions that promote divergent thinking may arise and students may need to grapple with these contradictions in order to encounter difference (Anzaldúa, 1990; Hayes & Cuban, 1996). The creation of contact zones, however, can also be risky, as “asking students to reflect honestly and critically on their way of life has the potential to disrupt all things familiar, comfortable and safe” (Pierce, 2008, p. 65). A process of ongoing critical reflection is an essential element of contact zones and can help alleviate some of this potential risk (Pierce, 2008).

The Role of Educators in Border Crossing. The practice of border crossing pedagogies entails a prioritization of multiple perspectives when engaging with texts. Texts, in this case, are understood in the postmodern sense as being cultural forms upon and through which we construct meaning. In this study, students’ soundscape compositions served as texts to be grappled with and problematized. Giroux (2005) notes that within border pedagogy texts must be addressed as social and historical constructions that are analyzed for *both* their presences and

their absences, seeking not only to pay attention to what has been included, but also what has been excluded. Furthermore, these texts must “both affirm and interrogate the complexity of [students’] own histories” (p. 22). He also notes the need for opportunities “to read texts dialogically through a configuration of many voices, some of which offer resistance, some of which provide support” (p. 108). Voices and texts must be more than an opportunity to speak and share an opinion. They should serve as an opportunity to critically interrogate “the ideology and substance of speech, writing and other forms of cultural production” (p. 109). It is then that students can develop multiple counter and hybridized discourses and recognize the inherent partiality of their understanding. Opportunities must also exist for students to create their own texts. In this way, “not only are borders being challenged, crossed, and refigured, but borderlands are being created in which the very production and acquisitions of knowledge is being used by students to rewrite their own histories, identities and learning possibilities” (p. 22).

Engaging in border crossing pedagogies does not require educators to “suppress or abandon what and how they know” (Giroux, 2005, p. 179). Rather, the recognition of the partiality and limits of one’s own understanding applied to the teachers and myself in this study, as well as the students. We were challenged to develop opportunities and enact curricula in which “a single discourse [did] not become the locus of certainty and certification” (p. 179). Multiple narratives, both student and teacher generated, “legitimate difference as a basic condition for understanding” within the classroom. Critical engagement with and on these multiple narratives can then be joined together create a” borderland where multiple subjectivities and identities exist as a part of a pedagogical practice that provides the potential to expand the politics of democratic community and solidarity” (p. 146).

Several studies have documented the ways in which educators enacted and reflected upon border crossing pedagogies (Cook, 2000; Kerr & Andreotti, 2017; Layne & Lipponen, 2016; Ramirez et al., 2016; Romo & Chavez, 2006). Scholars argue that willingness to engage and critically reflect on one's own positionalities is critical to the creation of an environment where contact zones and border crossing are possible (Cook, 2000; Layne & Lipponen, 2016; Ramirez et al., 2016). Though theoretical in nature, Gaztambide-Fernández (2008) conceptualizes young artists as border crossers, encouraging them to not only recognize, but to challenge the bordered spaces of their lives through artistic renderings. Kerr and Andreotti (2017) argue that border crossing "dispositions" need to be cultivated beyond the theoretical in order to attend to the gap between "discourses of equity, diversity and inclusion" and the "actual educational practices that would affirm those beliefs" (p. 2). In their study with teacher candidates, they found that engagement with the Other through educational scenarios in a teacher preparation program actually increased teachers' deficit perspective of students. Despite a "stated desire to effect change in inequitable systems," teachers showed "greater avoidance of engaging equitably as educators" (p. 15). This, and other studies, suggest that rather than learning *about* border crossing and contact zones, educators should *experience* and engage in these spaces alongside their students (Cook, 2000; Ramirez et al., 2016).

Choosing to enact border crossing pedagogies will not look the same in every context and every student will respond differently. While underlying tenets are foundation to these pedagogies, the possibilities of "interaction between text, teacher, and student" are reliant upon the specifics of each context (Giroux, 2005, p. 128). In this study, practices in border crossing pedagogy varied between schools, and students within each class responded differently to these practices. Students had "multiple strategies for engaging the discomfort" that often exists with

border crossing pedagogies (Martin & Brown, 2013, p. 386). While many responded and engaged within the context of the classroom, others may have done so outside of the classroom, beyond the confines of this project, or perhaps not at all. If educators do hope to disrupt dominant discourses, interrogate assumptions, and “create agendas of possibility in their classrooms” (McLaren, 2003, p. 93) spaces for border crossing, encountering, and engaging through difference must be a possibility.

Concrete descriptions of border crossing pedagogies and curricula are limited, but Hayes & Cuban (1996) have drawn together writings of critical pedagogues (e.g. Giroux, 2005; Freire, 1970; Shor, 2012) and feminist educators (e.g. hooks, 1992; Lather, 1991; Weiler, 1991) to develop a model of what enacted border crossing pedagogies and curricula might look like in a study on service learning. Additional studies have further built upon this model, exploring how border crossing impacts conceptions of hierarchy (Doerr, 2017), places student experience at the center of the curriculum (Mitchell, 2008), and creates opportunities for students to learn about diversity and difference without romanticizing these concepts (McDevitt, 2018).

Limitations of Critical and Border Crossing Pedagogies

While many scholars have found critical and border crossing pedagogies empowering, others have cast doubt on the prospect that critical pedagogies can open possibilities for a multiplicity of viewpoints. Some argue that these pedagogies can even be positivist, attempting to box students into a particular way of thinking that may be assumed to reflect empowerment. Ellsworth (1989) argues that the language used in critical pedagogies “namely, ‘empowerment,’ ‘student voice,’ ‘dialogue,’ and even the term ‘critical’ – are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination” (p. 300). She states that attempts to put this language into practice in the classroom context “exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against, including

Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, classism, and ‘banking education’” (p. 300). As former dominant narratives were replaced with new ones, little to no room was left for student viewpoints and the authoritarian power relationship between student and teacher was not only left intact but was strengthened. Student empowerment, she claims, is a broad generalization that does not actually challenge or refute social or political paradigms. Similarly, scholars argue that critical pedagogies can implement a “sweeping narrative” that is not open to the presentation of dissenting opinions (Perrine, 2017, p. 22) and can turn into political indoctrination if students are forced into critical frameworks, rather than having the opportunity to co-construct their own (Klein & Stern, 2009; Martin & Brown, 2013; Perrine, 2017).

Pinar (2009) likewise questions, “does resistance when positioned as outside power devolve into a form of deferred obedience” (p. 193)? What is to say that power relations are not equally embedded in the resistance against an authoritarian power relationship? Jansen (as cited in Pinar, 2009) warns against dividing the world into “rival camps – the oppressor and the oppressed,” suggesting that this creates a “self-righteous stance that absolves the teacher/liberator or critical theorist from critically engaging their own place in the state of oppression” (p. 193).

Similar critiques of border crossing pedagogies also exist. Elenes (2003) argues that, while border crossing may be a new concept for students of the dominant culture, it may not be new for students of marginalized cultures. Operationalizing border crossing as a “new” framework can have the opposite intended impact, devaluing experiences of students who border cross regularly, both consciously and subconsciously, as they attempt to rectify the split between their home and school experiences. This can result in a further strengthening of power relations if border crossing is only deemed legitimate when introduced by the educator or researcher.

There are no easy responses to these critiques, but careful and collaborative construction of work that takes them seriously, embedding them into the fabric of investigative attempts is possible. Epistemologically, I understand the knowledge in this study as being co-created between myself and the participants and I recognize that my own positions are “inextricably imprinted on [the project and study] from beginning to end,” which necessitates my own ongoing, transparent critical reflection (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1319). Throughout this project, I followed Stoudt (2007), closely observing the notion that researchers’ deliberate sharing of their own experiences, regularly making clear their own values, demonstrating participants influence on their understanding, and clearly incorporating their ideas into the trajectories of the work can help promote critical spaces.

Scholars have also considered both the challenges and strengths of researcher/participant relationships in critical and co-constructed research studies, due to the complex dynamics and power relations present in this work (Ahlstrom et al., 2007; Schenkels & Jacobs, 2018; Westhaus et al., 2008). Consequently, as students engaged in critically reflective practices, I, too, engaged in them. Rather than seeing them as an end, or even as a means to an end, I sought to model critically reflected practices that were entangled in and with intersubjective engagements and musical processes (Kushner, 2006). While power relations will always exist in some form, in making my own reflections and observations transparent to students and educators in class, focus groups, and interviews, my process became as much a part of the data as their own. This transparency may have helped “de-emphasize my role as ‘knower’ and enhance[d] theirs” (Stoudt, 2007, p. 287). Furthermore, my transparency and participation may have helped create “spaces where students fe[lt] informed, valued, and confident enough in their own expertise to

say ‘that’s not how I see it’” which can in turn countered the researcher’s own biases and values (p. 285-286).

Martin & Brown (2013) contend that one of the most significant concerns with critical pedagogies is that arguments for critical pedagogical practices are often theoretical, rarely offering concrete, everyday possibilities for K-12 classrooms. Many scholars, rather than consider strategies and options for implementing critical pedagogy, preference “institutionalized theory, simplistic injunctions and dichotomous dead-ends” (Martin, 2017, p. 2). Pinar (2009) suggests that theoretical approaches to critical pedagogies suffer from “delusions of grandeur” (p. 193). Despite years of scholarship, he argues, “the ‘insight’ remains essentially the same: schools reproduce reality” (p. 194). Martin & Brown (2013) suggest that a desire to “avoid blueprints” and prescriptive pedagogical and curricular choices leads to a notable disjuncture between talking *about* and actual, everyday *doing*. Practical tools and advice for how to both enact and sustain critical pedagogies in contextualized environments is often lacking.

The tension between “talking about” and “everyday doing” is one that I sought to address through the learning project in this study. While it might seem odd to propose a study framed in critical pedagogies that presents a curricular project, my intention was and is not to offer a step-by-step blueprint to follow. Rather, I am interested in exploring how a flexible project might be imagined, enacted, and re-imagined in various contexts, as well as how this project, and the everyday critical pedagogical engagements it sought to promote, were a consequential part of the development and fostering of critical artistic dispositions.

The Learning Project

This section situates the learning project developed for this study. The learning project involved a constructed space within the music classroom where students begin with a question:

How do I hear my world? This open-ended question then served as a path to a project-based exploration and interrogation of individual positionalities through an examination of conceptions of lived experience. I begin this section with an exploration of project-based learning as well as limitations and concerns with this pedagogical approach. To address these concerns, I move into three central facets that are foundational to this learning project: critical reflection, productive dialogue, and soundscapes.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) is often defined as a curricular approach that is grounded in “student-centered” explorations of “real-world” questions, ideas, or provocations that results in a culminating project or product (Parsons et al., 2010). PBL is flexible and can take many forms that are dependent upon students, educators, and school contexts, but Thomas (2000) defines PBL as:

Complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time; and culminate in...products or presentations. (p. 1)

Larmer and Mergedoller (2010) note that there are seven characteristics that are consistent with most definitions of PBL: (1) a desire to know; (2) an open-ended driving question, problem or purpose to be addressed; (3) student choice or flexibility; (4) an opportunity to foster skills such as collaboration, communication and critical thinking; (5) innovation and creation, rather than only replication; (6) opportunities for revision and ongoing feedback; and (7) a publicly presented product or finding. These characteristics suggest the need to balance the tension between openness and space in the project and defined parameters that help students focus on a particular idea or problem (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Kokotsaki et al., 2016). PBL can also create spaces for students to engage in subject-specific skills (in this case, music

composition and digital mixing), while also explicitly and deliberately drawing upon knowledges from one's own experiences and world (Al-Balushi & Al-Aamri, 2014).

The Deweyan Roots of Project-Based Learning. Many of the tenets of PBL, particularly when implemented in a critical, reflective manner, can be traced back to John Dewey. Dewey's (1938) theory on the impact of *experience* on a child's education is foundational to the formation of project-based learning. Harris (2014) goes as far as to argue that PBL is a "practical expression of Dewey's philosophy" wherein students work alongside educators to design their own educational endeavors. I find it important to point out here, and I detail this further in this section, that not *all* project-based learning follows a Deweyan philosophical framework. Haphazard, unstructured experiences, or conversely over-defined, stringent ones can be "miseducative" (Dewey, 1938, p. 10). Dewey argues that for experience to be educative, it should be well planned and thought through by educators. It should strive to be continual, that is experiences should push toward a "permanent disposition of action toward the world" (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 175). It should also be interactive, that is educators and students must work alongside one-another. Finally, it should be reflective. Doing an experience without thinking through the purpose and impact of one's words and work, he argues, can be fruitless.

Dewey began writing and implementing these ideas in the early twentieth century. In response to public schools where students were "socialized to comply with the rules and demands of the new, rapidly industrializing society" (Maida, 2011, p. 760), Dewey (1916/2009) sought to redefine education as a space wherein the reconstruction and reflection upon experiences would lead to and direct the course of future experience. This first required an educational space that was an open "community of inquiries," that is a setting wherein students

could individually and collectively reflect upon experience, explore differences in experience, and thus consider possibilities for change moving forward.

Dewey's educational ideas went on to influence public school policy in the early twentieth century. Educational tides have since ebbed and flowed as perspectives on pedagogical best practices are reoriented with changing times. Current models of "top-down educational reform, with its standards-based approach to educational achievement and a reliance on testing for graduation and promotion," however, seem a far stretch from Dewey's community of inquiry (Maida, 2011, p. 763). Curricular ideas, such as project-based learning, have sought to challenge some of the above trajectories through the implementation of experiential, student-directed learning, building on Dewey's work from a century ago.

In what follows, I locate project-based learning in both theoretical and empirical literature as I am using it in this study. This means considering PBL as a critical innovation that deliberately seeks to create space for students to work with issues of social justice, personal identity, and civic engagement. I connect this to PBL in music education as I sketch out how students explored these issues with and through artistic and musical compositions. Finally, I explore the limitations that arose in working with PBL in this study.

Locating Project-Based Learning for this Study. Projects can span all disciplines and levels of education and can manifest in many ways. However, Tobias, Campbell, & Greco (2015) state that, "at its core, project-based learning [PBL] is based on the idea that real-life problems capture student interest, provoke critical thinking, and develop skills as [students] engage in and complete complex undertakings" (p. 39). They place the project and the relational engagement as central to learning and argue that they can create opportunities for criticality and multiple outcomes.

Projects are not intended to necessarily encompass the entire curriculum. They can, however, provide momentary possibilities for “situating learning in substantive disciplinary and students’ real-life contexts,” and can lead to further critical engagements (Tobias et al., 2015, p. 42). That being said, the project is central, not peripheral in PBL. Projects are an opportunity to present what has been learned, while also serving as spaces of sustained inquiry related to a “real-world” question or problem. They involve investigation related to one’s own self or the world in which one lives, with the aim of generating new knowledge or ideas that might be represented through a variety of media. PBL is also cyclical in that there is not a finite or predictable endpoint to the inquiry or dialogue generated from the project (Thomas, 2000).

PBL has been labelled by Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2008) as a “disruptive innovation” to the traditional model schooling because there is not an exact or “correct” outcome, though there may be loose bounds placed on an aim or goal. Instead the focus is on a topic or an open-ended or provocative question that guides multiple possible pathways and processes for student inquiry. These questions might also lead to or become generative themes (Freire, 1970), thus allowing for multiple ways of knowing and creating knowledge in the music classroom. In PBL, students are acknowledged as the producers, rather than receivers, of knowledge. This is important because projects will never be identically replicated, nor are they meant to be. New inquirers mean new inquiries. This is of particular importance to my study because, while the outline and overall trajectory of the project was planned in advance, the details of the project were co-constructed with students and educators at each school. This resulted in two distinct engagements with the learning project.

Projects can also be opportunities for criticality (Behizadeh, 2014; Grant, 2011; Hanney & Savin-Baden, 2013; Niesz, 2006). When implemented in ways that situate learning within

larger sociopolitical, sociomusical, and sociocultural contexts and structures, PBL can be a critical pedagogy. In critical PBL, students engage in ongoing exploration and interrogation of their positionalities, assumptions, and biases (Maida, 2011), particularly if space is created for students to personalize and grapple with their own experiences related to social justice (Cash, 2017). Issues are explored from various perspectives and there are “multiple trajectories of participation and meaning-making” in the music classroom (Tobias et al., 2015, p. 44). Not only experiencing, but also deliberately engaging with these multiple trajectories is essential for students to learn how to manage change, diverse opinions, and conflicts.

Finally, inquiry in PBL is student-directed, but teacher facilitated (Behizadeh, 2014). As students engage in projects, the teacher does not take a passive role. Rather, the teacher’s engagement is consequential to the student’s processes and the relationship between student and educator helps to guide learning. In PBL, “learning encounters between students and their teachers can be conceived of as dialogues, and a distinctive feature of project-based learning is that the teacher-student relationship is constructed and negotiated through such encounters” (Maida, 2011, p. 764). Similarly, PBL can promote collaborative spaces in the classroom, as well, even when projects are independent. Dialoguing with classmates during PBL can offer an additional space for reflection wherein they might contribute feedback, questions, or their own unique knowledge. Again, this ability to meaningfully work with and engage with diverse others is important to the development of critical dispositions.

Project-Based Learning in Music Education. Project-based learning is not a new concept in music education. While “doing a project has been a long-standing tradition in American music education,” few music education scholars offer frameworks for projects that promote inquiry and engage students in critical inquiry and dialogue (Tobias et al., 2015, p. 40).

PBL has been thoroughly explored in educational literature as a whole, as a brief search offers thousands of dissertations that consider project-based learning in the classroom. Elements of PBL can be seen in Reggio Emilia approaches to primary music education (Falter, 2018), and both scholarly and practitioner journals are filled with project-based frameworks (e.g. Heckel, 2016; Hoffman & Carter, 2013a, 2013b; Ruthmann, 2007; Tobias et al, 2015; Townsend, 2010). Those labeled as ‘critical’ approaches to project-based learning also numbers in the thousands, though far fewer define criticality as a socially just project approach that creates spaces for students to connect their school experiences with larger sociopolitical structures. When the search parameters for critical PBL are limited to music, only four dissertations are offered (Brown, 2005; Curran, 2016; Howard, 2014; Stark, 2011). Two of these studies focus on bringing community musicians into the classroom (Brown, 2005; Stark, 2011), one considers the role PBL might play in connecting students with special needs with “mainstream learners” (Curran, 2016), and Howard (2014) explores how PBL might help elementary students build “multicultural sensitivity.” Several others explore researcher or researcher/educator implementation of critical curricular approaches over a longer period, though each still takes place in a constructed space, similar to that of PBL (Barnett, 2010; Buchan, 2016; Lewis, 2016).

Limitations of Project-Based Learning. There can be significant challenges to implementing project-based learning in the music classroom. The current educational climate that pushes for “data-driven instruction, scripted lessons, and top-down decision making” can make it difficult to find openings for instructional creativity. A focus on effects, process, and “the fragmentation of knowledge and skills into discrete behaviors for ‘objective’ accountability purposes” can thwart attempts at creating projects that focus on process, interdisciplinary connections, and spaces to develop critical dispositions (Tobias et al, 2015, p. 40).

Further, PBL concepts are not always applied in ways that keep with tenets described above or with the original underlying foundation of Dewey's philosophy of experiential, engaged, civic education (Strevy, 2014). PBL is often confounded with the completion of assigned "projects" that bear little resemblance to the aims of developing intellectual curiosity, multiple ways of knowing, and student inquiry that are central to PBL (Strevy, 2014). Instead, there may be a focus on a singular topic that permeates a unit with little opportunity for inquiry from students, and/or activities that lack substance (Bender, 2012; Strevy, 2014). Bender (2012) further notes that as teachers revert to traditional projects in the classroom, critical frameworks, opportunities for feedback, and cyclical processes of revision are often left behind. In other situations, teachers may focus on the product or attempt to "duplicate previous successful teaching instead of allow[ing] the work to unfold in a new manner" (Falter, 2018, p. 34). Projects may be conceptualized with an eye on "career-readiness" or future "real-world problem-solving" (America Achieves, 2018). While projects may help students gain skills or dispositions that contribute to their participation in future careers, I follow Strevy (2014) in arguing that PBL can and should be more focused on curiosity, exploration, and engaging with the world in the moment of the interaction.

When I first began conceptualizing this study, I was apprehensive about implementing a design that used project-based learning. My own experiences were fraught with the concerns listed above. As a middle school general music teacher, however, PBL was central to my own curricular approach. Projects would change and morph each term with new students, and I adapted as I went. Some projects were more engaging than others and, as the students and I explored, we experimented and learned how to ask more open questions.

A few years into our project-based learning focus, the district where I was teaching brought in an outside educational development firm to “teach” the middle school faculty how to implement PBL. Despite good intentions, the sessions regularly pulled educators out of their classrooms, were unclear and unresponsive to the needs of this particular school community, and focused much more on bulky paperwork and deliverables than on relationships, engagement, and care. This resulted in projects that were frustrating for students and teachers, misunderstandings about student inquiry, and a focus on year-to-year replicability.

One of my aims in conceiving of this project with teachers and students was to revisit the potential of PBL as a space for multiple ways of knowing, student-developed themes, and going beyond intellectual curiosity. It was this aim that led me to pursue the methodological structure that was used in this study. My goal was not, and is not, to offer a standard set of lesson plans or a soundscape project that can be replicated in every middle school music classroom. Rather, I sought to develop a project that explored the possibilities for music education as the development of something that could reach beyond the confines of the music classroom. This may include guidelines or an outline that helps educators develop their own curricula in a way that is responsive to their context. I am interested in how we might help students cultivate capacities and dispositions that contribute to the school community in meaningful, critical ways through the creation of space for reflective action, socially conscious practices that require us to reflect on our own positionalities and those of others, and critical questioning. Specifically, I wanted to explore how an education in and through *music* and the development of an *artistic* disposition might help us achieve such aims. As such, this learning project focuses on three facets of one particular project: critical reflection, productive dialogue, and soundscape composition.

Engaging with Positionalities through Deliberate Critical Reflection

As noted earlier, reflection is central to both critical pedagogical engagements (Freire, 1970) and project-based learning (Maida, 2011). The learning project in this study used critical reflection to explore how existing patterns of thought related to the self, experience, and others, can be called into question, thus opening spaces for multiple ways of knowing and being in the music classroom. Therefore, this section situates this study within scholarship on critical approaches to reflection and reflexivity in relation to positionalities.

Positionalities are the ways in which aspects of our identity mark our relational positions in a given context (Alcoff, 1988). Informed by our own experiences, relationships, lived histories, and social constructions, positionalities establish how we see the world, and ourselves in it; if only temporarily and in relation to context. McIntosh (1989) argues that, from a critical pedagogical perspective, examining positionality is about unpacking an individual backpack of privilege that allows individuals to see the values and beliefs that inform the lens through which they see the world. This can help individuals locate themselves in relation to dominant narratives and knowledges. Similarly, Takacs (2002) argues,

Few things are more difficult than to see outside the bounds of our own perspective – to be able to identify assumptions that we take as universal truths, but that instead have been crafted by our own unique identity and experiences in the world. We live much of our lives in our own heads, in a reconfirming dialogue with ourselves. Even when we discuss crucial issues with others, much of the dialogue is not dialogue: it is monologue where we work to convince others to understand us or to adopt our view. Simply acknowledging that one's knowledge claims are not universal truths – that one's positionality can bias one's epistemology – is itself a leap for many people. (p. 169)

Within border crossing, as positionalities are juxtaposed against alternative ways of seeing the world, students are asked to question how their positionality leads to conscious and unconscious exclusions and assumptions (Hayes & Cuban, 1996).

Connecting positionality to epistemology can be both an empowering and disempowering experience (Takacs, 2002). As students come to realize that they are the only individual with their own unique makeup of experiences, relationships, and histories, they may feel empowered by their own constructions of knowledge. Conversely, students may also come to realize that they cannot assume or ever fully understand the experiences of others. Our relationship with the world is incomplete. Both of these realizations occurred for students and educators in this study. Dialogue that creates realizations about how narrow our own perspectives are can be disheartening, but it can also help us challenge social, political, and racial biases and assumptions. Studies argue that as we gain self-awareness of our positionalities, we come to realize how they are contradictory, fluid, and competing, shifting as we continually examine and analyze lived experiences and relationships (Niesz, 2006; Warren & Davis, 2009).

Coming to an understanding of positionalities, however, is not only about examining one's lived experience, but also how we are positioned in relation to others – “as dominant/subordinate, marginal/center, empowered/powerless” (Takacs, 2002, p. 169). Studies (Hafen, 2009; Martin & Dagostino-Kalinz, 2015; Martin & Van Gunten, 2002) have found that classroom dialogue that focuses on student engagement with the “particularities of the students in a given classroom” and embraces dissent and multiplicity can help students and educators critically reflect on “cultural norms...institutional practices...and positionalities” (Hafen, 2009, p. 67).

It is important to note that the terms reflection, reflective practice, and critical reflection/reflexivity are often used interchangeably, but are not the same (Fook & Askeland, 2009). Reflection is a broad term often stemming from Dewey (1933) and involves an examination of one's thinking in order to reveal underlying foundations and implications.

Reflective practice emanates from the work of Schön (1983) and focuses on the gaps that often exist between thinking and actual practice. While reflective practice itself may not be central to this study, Schön's (1983) understandings of reflection-in-practice and reflection-on-practice helped differentiate between the reflection process that took place in the moment during the learning projects, and the meta-reflection that occurred in focus groups and journaling. It is important to recognize that reflection is not something that simply appears because it becomes academicized in the classroom. Human beings engage in reflection as a daily part of their lived lives. Within this project, reflection was not viewed in such a broad sense, however. Rather, it was viewed as a deliberate and critical action. Fook and Askeland (2009) note that reflection becomes critical when it is connected to "an analysis of power relations and how the individual experience is unavoidably connected with the preservation of social structures of domination" (p. 290). Reflection then "emerges as a form of action, and embraces contexts, purposes, and alternative realities" (Kushner, 2006, p. 20).

Schools can become "decontextualized site[s] free from social, political, and racial tensions" when they do not prompt students to critically examine their own positionalities (Giroux, 1991, p. 226). Furthermore, not only can schooling become decontextualized, but Fine (1987) argues that schools can be actively employed as "fortresses" against marginalized communities, keeping dominant narratives alive while devaluing the experiences of students from outside the dominant community (p. 244).

Devaluing experience, however, does not mean it ceases to exist. Students have vast, complex, and rich lives outside of schools. Their perspectives and voices exist outside of the classroom in their daily, lived experiences at home and in their communities. Greene (1995) advocates for starting small when bringing lived experience into the classroom, using one's own

community as a starting point for imagining possibilities and alternatives. Curricula then becomes public, moving outside the confines of the classroom. Critically reflective practices can also be seen as a form of political action when they illuminate “otherwise concealed contingencies and determinants to collective thought and action in a context of political constraint” (Kushner, 2006, p. 14). Through critical reflection on lived experiences, we can go beyond the taken-for-granted to new possibilities, to “pose questions to the world,” which may lead to challenged understandings of how knowledge is constructed and understood (Greene, 1988, p. 21). When the subjective nature of knowledge is interrogated in the classroom, and critically reflective practice is seen as intersubjective and mutual, students may come to understand that knowledge “does not arrive unmediated from the world; rather, knowledge is constructed by interaction between the questioner and the world” (Takacs, 2002, p. 173).

Limitations of Critical Reflection. Scholars argue that compulsory reflection can also raise pedagogic concerns (Finlay, 2008; Hobbs, 2007). Reflection can be “superficial, strategic, and guarded” when implemented in classroom settings, as students seek to write “what the teacher wants,” rather than engage in “actual” reflection (Finlay, 2008, p. 14). The educator remains in power and student viewpoints go unexplored. This is the opposite intended effect of critical reflection, which seeks to help students explore power relations, not to reify them. Further, Kushner (2006) cautions against reflection becoming habitualized as an “instrument in the technology of school improvement,” noting that when “reflection becomes an end in itself, rather than a means, or is reduced to a private or solitary pursuit, we lose the capacity to subject our purposes to scrutiny” (p. 13-14).

Within this project, I faced many of these challenges. Students were often resistant to the word “reflection,” associating it with “something you have to do so you don’t mess up the same

way next time” (Forest Glen Student Journal Entry). In an attempt to encourage students to engage in reflection that was not superficial or punitive, I re-examined how I spoke of and engaged with students in reflection. We spoke openly about the purposes of reflection and how this critical work may differ from preconceived notions of reflection. I frequently modeled my own reflective practices in class, focus groups, and one-on-one conversations with students. I aimed to ask questions that prompted further engagement. We altered modes of reflection, creating more opportunities for conversations, messaging through Google Classroom, and small group sessions and relying less on journal entries. Despite these shifts, limitations still existed, and not every student engaged in critical reflection in an explicit manner. We did, however, make progress in encouraging students, educators, and myself as researcher to critically examine how and for what purpose we reflect.

Engaging in Productive Dialogue

Freire (1970) is credited as being among the first to apply the principles of critical theory to teaching and learning through “dialogical problem-posing” (p. 86); an approach to education that seeks to “create possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (Freire, 1998, p. 30). He argued that through problem posing, students develop “their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire, 1970, p. 83). For Freire, the process of learning and critically exploring one’s world should be privileged over the collection of facts and concepts. Dialogical problem-posing

provides both context and meaning to the otherwise individualized, tacit, ignored, or suppressed experiences, knowledges, and literacies of students who are emboldened to articulate how they feel, what they know, and what they want to know or do from their own unique subject positioning. (Martin & Brown, 2013, p. 384)

Students generate themes from their own experiences and positionings, those themes are then (re)presented and problematized. Dialogue is imbued within this process; it is dynamic and constant (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010). Space can then be created for curriculum to become a “permeable and contested construct” that is produced through diverse knowledges that may manifest (Biesta, 2014, p. ix).

Dialogue Beyond Freire. Dialogue is important to the process of encountering and engaging with a multiplicity of viewpoints, but dialogic practices can have many aims. Scholars have noted that there are multiple ways to conceptualize dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981; Burbules, 2000; Schmidt, 2012a, 2012b). Dialogue can be narrow-mindedly focused on goals of consensus and amicability without leaving space for dissensus, debate, and disagreement. This type of dialogue can produce banal conversations that can worsen silencing and reinforce core narratives. Consensus building often focuses on coercion, exclusion, and a strengthening of unequal power relations (Gould, 2008). Dialogue that has a prescribed end goal can result in teaching that is “hectoring, manipulative, and tacitly authoritarian” even when intentions are otherwise (Burbules, 2006, p. 108).

Dialogue, however, can also be used to challenge and confront, promoting positive dissensus and a multitude of ideas, knowledges, and understandings (Young, 2001), as demonstrated in the work of Barnett (2010) and Lewis (2016) with K-12 music students. As complex ideas are considered, competing views, multiple explanations and differing opinions should not only be appreciated, but also engaged, potentially creating contact zones. Not only do educators have the task of asking difficult questions and creating curricular experiences that encourage response and dialogue, they also must actively challenge students to respond to these questions (Biesta, 2014).

Positive dissensus can be achieved when students not only appreciate diverse perspectives, but also consider and engage with competing views, multiple explanations and differing opinions. When students explore and challenge their own positionalities through dialogue they may be led away from “anodyne conversations” and “see real dialogue and possible conflict as a constructive, engaged, and politically charged practice” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 167). While consensus may lead toward acceptance, positive conflict can lead toward an, “ethic that goes beyond tolerance” (Schmidt, 2012b, p. 16). In Warren and Davis’s (2009) exploration of positionalities in the classroom, they suggest “situating the self in relation to another” and recognizing that “it is a position of listening, of being with another and trying to really understand their experience” to be of key importance (p. 317). They argue that it is a tension of action and reflection. For critical educators, then, dialogue should aim to engage with difference, rather than seek a resolution for it. The point is not to reconcile. It is to listen, both to oneself and to others.

To choose to engage in dialogue that challenges rather than reconciles is a decision, not a timeless truth, and expresses values and assumptions that are not held by all (Burbules, 2004). Martin and Brown (2013) argue that critical pedagogies “must be continually self-reflexive and self-critical of [their] own assumptions, expectations, and disciplinary effects” (p. 386). Critical educators must always ask who is benefitting from critical dialogue and reflection, the purpose and motivation behind creating spaces for encountering and engaging with difference, and be sensitive to the multiple, conflicting, and occasionally unintended effects of choosing to engage in curricular choices that seek to challenge and grapple with the complexities of positionalities.

Composition as a Path to Critical Engagements

The words “composition” and “composing” have a complex history in the field of music education. Since the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967 (Choate, 1968), music educators and scholars in North America have called for an expansion on the traditional Western paradigm so heavily present in music education curricula, including the fusion of composition and creative projects (e.g. Bolden, 2009; Burnard, 2012a; Crow, 2008; Hickey, 1995, 2012; Hoffman & Carter, 2013a, 2013b; McGillen, 2004; Odam, 2000; Regelski, 2002). Despite the presence of composition and music creation in the United States National Core Arts Standards (NCCAS, 2014) and its commonality in other parts of the world, however, it is one of the elements of school music teaching that is often passed over in North America (Bolden, 2009; Crow, 2008; McGillen, 2004; Muhonen, 2016; Odam, 2000; Regelski, 2002). While the role of composition has continued to grow in school music classrooms (Hickey, 2012; Kerchner & Strand, 2016; Stauffer, 2002; Uptis, 2019; Wilson & Wales, 1995), the performance-based structure in the United States has often left composition as an addendum, rather than a structural part of the ensemble curriculum (Burnard, 2012a; Hess, 2015), perhaps because “creating...is risky business, and one has to be prepared for a lot of noise, dissent, resistance, and a general disturbance of the peace if one is of a mind to engage in [it]” (Biesta, 2013, p. 15).

Often when composition is brought into the classroom, it is saved for students labeled as advanced or gifted, reinforcing a belief that composition is for the select few, those with high levels of musicianship, playing into the “mythical idea of the lone genius composer” (Viig, 2015, p. 235). Crow (2008) agrees, arguing that composition in the classroom is often separated from “real” creativity, leaving students to view composition as a “school activity” rather than an opportunity to create and explore in and through music. Such pre-defined and specific

conceptions may potentially thwart spaces of border crossing, revealing a dominant narrative of who and how one can engage in composition.

Music education scholarship, however, demonstrates that critical engagement with composition can occur at many levels. For example, Kaschub (2009)'s "Critical Pedagogy for Creative Artists" course with secondary general music students offers an example of students in a music appreciation course who (re)constructed their class through the lens of critical pedagogy. Together with Kaschub as researcher/educator, they spent a term listening to and composing socially conscious music about child abuse, immigration, violence, and war. Through the process, they grappled with both social and musical challenges as they sought to create an artistic response to multifaceted social realities. In this example, as in this study, the act of *creating* music is in itself a social response. While the students in Kaschub's study used a variety of compositional techniques to develop their artistic statements, scholars note that the use of soundscapes may be one type of compositional process that might help students link social commentary, personal narrative, and musical exploration (Cumberland, 2001; Freeman et al., 2011, 2012; Hall et al., 2008; Imada, 2001; Lashua, 2006; Lum, 2016; Regelski, 2002; Savage & Challis, 2001; Schafer, 1992).

Soundscape Compositions. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Canadian composer, educator, and soundscape pioneer R. Murray Schafer (1975, 1977, 1986, 1992) began asking: Why is school music education disconnected from student lives and experiences? How can musical endeavors help us listen critically to the world around us, and, perhaps more importantly, to each other? While Schafer's (1992) main intentions in developing an approach to music-making that seeks to honor listening and creating with and among the world, articulating a

need for the status quo and dominant narrative of music education to change, he also believed in the importance of interrogating assumptions, power structures, inequities and stereotypes.

Schafer began his exploration of soundscapes in the late 1960's during a wave of international activity surrounding creativity in the classroom. The Manhattanville Music Project was being explored as a response to declining participation in school music programs in the United States and composers such as Paynter, Davies, and Self were working in classrooms in the United Kingdom (Regelski, 2002). As Schafer began to work in North American classrooms, he sensed a lack of creativity, an unresponsiveness to community, and a disconnect from students' lives in the curriculum (Schafer, 2012). In the 1970's, he felt that a revolution in music education might be around the corner, but instead it appeared to him that North America took a step backward, reverting to music education that was about reproduction and one singular, dominant narrative, rather than discovery and a multiplicity of ways to understand and explore the world (Schafer, 2012).

As a response, Schafer wrote and disseminated an approach to music education that sought to honor listening and creating within and among the world as a primary approach to music-making (Schafer, 1975, 1977, 1986, 1992). One key element of his curriculum was the use of soundscape composition as a way to connect school and community. Schafer (1992) defines soundscapes as "the total field of sounds wherever we are" (p. 8) and suggests that they urge us to listen to the world with "greater critical attention" (p. 11). He leaves the choice of how to interpret soundscape composition in the classroom open to the educator and students, providing guiding frameworks, but not prescriptive, functional directions.

Schafer (1977) saw soundscapes as primarily the development of listening, not only to the environment, but also to the ideas, understandings and perceptions of others. He (2012)

suggests that people hear differently based on their age, gender, and culture, and contends that our positionality/location are key to understanding what we hear around us. He believed that, similarly to borders, sounds are “polysemous, always changing, always rendering new meanings” (p. 17) as we change and consider alternative ways of knowing and understanding.

Soundscapes have been defined and redefined by a multitude of artists, composers, textbooks, sound engineers, and audiologists, among others. American composer and experimental music pioneer Pauline Oliveros (2005) defines soundscapes as “all of the waveforms faithfully transmitted to our cortex by the ear and its mechanisms” (p. 18). Music composer and educator Barry Truax’s (2001) definition of soundscape is “how the environment is understood by those living within it” (p. 11). Expanding upon this idea, educational researchers Hall, Lashua, & Coffey (2008) note that soundscapes are not only audible sounds, but the ways in which we use the amalgamation of those sounds to tell stories, make meaning and help us reflect on what and how we hear. Lashua (2006) calls soundscapes “narrative compositions,” and states that they “are part of a dialogical process of speaking and listening, being and becoming – that is, as we make soundscapes, they in turn also partially construct who we are” (p. 407). The composition itself, then, is only part of the story.

Soundscapes have been used in empirical studies, as well as in practitioner curricular design. Cumberland (2001) uses soundscape compositions and deep listening activities (those designed to engage students in actively listening to their environment) to promote intersubjective listening in his rural, Canadian, middle school classroom. He argues that the listening skills students learn during compositional activities disrupts the dominant narrative of forced listening in the classroom, wherein one individual’s interpretation (often the educator) is understood as correct. His compositional projects are centered in dialogue where different students understand

and represent similar spaces differently based on their own personal context and history. Not only do students learn to listen to each other, but they also learn that their voices, knowledges, and understandings matter both in and out of the classroom. Students in Cumberland's classes have taken dialogue about inequities to the local town council and engaged in municipal politics and active change through their work, crossing borders to unite school and community.

Scholars have written about curricular projects that have explored soundscapes and the development of critical literacy through and across cultural and political contexts (Imada, 2001); across social, economic and racial borders between Year 10 students and incarcerated youth (Savage & Challis, 2001); and in social and economically diverse communities (Freeman et al, 2011, 2012). Brownell and Wargo (2017) used soundscapes in their #HearMyHome project to develop critical awareness and literacies not only in students, but in pre-service English teachers, many of whom were entering teaching environments that were racially, economically, and culturally different from their prior experiences. Their goal was to engage pre-service teachers in sonic composition that would help them "listen for and reflect on difference" in order to help them think through the lived experiences of their students (p. 2). They found that some pre-service teachers used the soundscapes to "build connections to local communities," while others "create[d] boundaries," suggesting that the act of creating and composing was not enough and that further critical dialogue was needed (p. 7).

While the above studies illustrate how soundscape compositional activities have been used both in classrooms and community spaces to develop critical literacy and examine cultural, economic, social, and racial distinctions, scholars have not yet considered the possibilities of soundscapes as part of a learning project that seeks to productively disrupt and create spaces for border crossing in the music classroom. In this study, I saw soundscapes as serving multiple,

intertwined purposes. On one hand, they were musical explorations that helped students attune to the sounds of their world; explore musical elements such as form and pulse as they shaped sounds into musical compositions; and also develop skills related to mixing through digital audio workspaces. On the other hand, there was also a narrative element in soundscape composition as students used soundscapes to “explore serious issues through music and...as a ‘way in’ to address vital social...concerns” (Hess, 2019, p. 9).

The Fostering of Critical Artistic Dispositions

Thus far, I offered a review of literature that frames the study and my epistemological commitments to critical and border crossing pedagogies. I then situated the learning project around which this study is based. This final section narrows the scope more fully, focusing specifically on the purposes and possibilities of the middle-level general music classroom. In what follows, I offer a brief outline of previous literature exploring this context. I then articulate the concept of “critical artistic dispositions,” which I am using as an analytical pathway to think through the data collected in this study.

The Identity Crisis of Middle School General Music

As outlined in the introduction, middle school general music in the United States has often suffered an identity crisis. Scholars have questioned the merits and possibilities of middle-level general music for the past century, often writing about general music through a deficit perspective (e.g. Gehrkins, 1935; Ramsey, 1966; Rummler, 1973). Throughout these and other practitioner articles, scholars and educators grapple with a lack of “clearly identified purpose” (Menard, 2013, p. 64), inconsistency and variance (Cooper & Kuersteiner, 1965; Davis, 2011; Giebelhausen, 2015; Weigand, 1950), lack of legitimacy (Bawel, 1992), and “apathy and seeming indifference on the part of the music teachers themselves” (Rodgers, 1926, p. 21).

Reimer (1966) responded to many early articles with a call for curricular reform. Aiming to speak directly to practitioners, he argued,

It is precisely because no position has been taken about the fundamental nature of music, that too much of [middle school] general music teaching is an inconsequential, irrelevant hodgepodge of mindless activities, carried on in an atmosphere of desperate puzzlement about why nothing seems to work satisfactorily. One's dissatisfaction with traditional general music stems from one's conviction that it *can* be significant. (p. 43, emphasis in original)

Reimer notes that we must start by asking “what is the purpose” of the space of general music in the middle school context and until we grapple with that question, it will be “impossible to develop a program which is consistent or important” (p. 43). Though he does not offer a specified purpose himself, he calls upon educators to explore larger, overarching broad questions related to the purposes and possibilities of an education in and through music. This project stems, in part, from my own grappling with the purposes and possibilities of general music at this level. In seeking to explore an “identity” for the space of middle-level general music, this project seeks to outline a purpose that is both artistic *and* critical.

Empirical literature specifically on middle-level general music is fairly limited. When narrowed to a focus on curricular, pedagogical, and purpose-oriented studies, scholarship thins further. The majority of these studies focus on curricular content and student experience, specifically considering popular music (Bylica et al., 2019; Gardner, 2015; Teitsma, 2010), guitar (Fensmire, 2006), composition (Ward, 2009), or “world” music (Ryan, 2011). Gardner's (2015) study held a purpose of cultural relevance at its center. Desiring to connect learning practice with out-of-school experience, Gardner developed a hip-hop curriculum for middle school general music students, though the study stopped short of actual implementation of the curriculum. Similarly, Ward (2009) developed a composition and technology curriculum in their study. While the study explores student engagement and intersubjective communication, the

focus is on pedagogical strategies for student engagement. Overarching purpose is not addressed. Through the development of the learning project in my study, I sought to explore curricular possibilities in middle-level general music, but, in the analysis, I also sought to consider how that project might contribute to the development of a larger purpose for middle-level general music. This larger question of purpose arose as I grappled with the challenges and limitations of project-based learning and engaging in the learning project.

One of the oft cited challenges in working through and with project-based learning in the classroom is that projects are not intended to be identically replicated (Falter, 2018; Strevy, 2014). Questions and interests of students vary by class and community, and, as such, it is difficult to name or label a tangible, consistent deliverable or skill in the traditional sense of the terms. And yet, we (the two educators and I) were frequently asked by administrators, “So what will students be able to *do* when this research is over? What skill will they have gained? What can we see as the result? Will you leave the lesson plans for other teachers to use?” While these questions were important, I often felt like they missed the point. I was less interested in creating a replicable project that helped students practice and demonstrate a discrete skill. I was much more interested in how this project might provide an operationalized possibility for exploring multiple ways of knowing in the music classroom. Furthermore, as the study progressed, I became interested in using it to potentially develop guidelines and outlines for practice that might help educators and students construct their own curricula. Skills were important, and within this project students developed musical skills related to technology, compositional layering, foregrounding important thematic elements, revising compositions, and developing a musical storyboard. On a much larger level, though, it became clear that I was also investigating the possibilities of individual and collective framing capacities that might be developed in and

through music education (Treacy & Westerlund, 2019; Westerlund, 2017; Westerlund et al., 2017). Through this project, I came to label these framing capacities as “critical artistic dispositions,” though the label itself came from Ms. Green, one of the educator participants in the study.

Outlining Critically Artistic Dispositions

I believe the development of critically artistic dispositions should be a central purpose of music education and, in particular, middle-level general music. I define a critical artistic disposition as a frame-of-mind in which one seeks to imagine, creatively generate, and artistically actualize ideas that interrogate and engage with cultural, civic/political, social, economic, racial, and interpersonal structures in the world. This might include expanding, challenging and recreating known contexts, generating new or hybridized thoughts or ideas, consciously engaging in care-filled and socially inclusive practices and relationships with others, and developing a reflexive mentality. Music educators, then, would seek to foster this frame-of-mind through musical activities and curricula, such as this project, encouraging students to critically question and engage with their experiences, others, and their world. I find it important here to point out that I am not implying that students do not already possess a critical artistic disposition. I follow hooks (1994b) in believing that individuals often do critically engage in and with their world. Rather, I am interested in ways an education in and through music might help students make explicit such dispositions, fostering and developing them through their experiences in school.

To define critical artistic dispositions, I drew from several critical and artistic sources. Foundationally, these dispositions are grounded in border crossing in that they are frames-of-

mind whereby one is continuously juxtaposing one's views and assumptions with those of others.

While engaging in border crossing pedagogy,

students cross over into realms of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations that organize them become destabilized and reshaped. Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps. The terrain of learning becomes inextricably linked to the shifting parameters of place, identity, history, and power. (Giroux, 2005, p. 22)

Individuals who work toward a critical artistic disposition, then, are engaging in this decentering and remapping as a continuous way of reflection upon and acting with the world. Within this constant motion, they potentially develop epistemological agility, which can help them adapt as learners and participants in and beyond the space of music education (McWilliam, 2009).

I also drew upon hooks' (1994a) counter-narrative artistic space. hooks notes that individuals who engage in counter-narrative artistic endeavors ask their audiences to re-imagine the center by repositioning marginalized perspectives, questioning assumptions, and deliberately engaging with voices that are often ignored. hooks suggests that encounters within this counter-narrative space help one engage in a "conscious gesture of solidarity with the world" (p. 57) and, in the process, build more inclusive narratives through artistic practice. Similarly, I follow Chappell and Chappell's (2016) foundation of critical arts-based inquiry in which creativity and artistic engagement serve as integrated ways of examining the "nexuses of personal struggle with historical and material conditions" (p. 305). They note that through artistic endeavors, students deliberately take on particular perspectives in order to engage affective domains in artist and audience, create space for problem-solving and interpretation, and encourage meaning-making from/through multiple experiences, positionalities and literacies. The aim is not on discrete skills, but on how such skills can be contextualized to help students develop artistic renderings that speak to particular ideas. As students artistically participate in the world independently or

communally, they are encouraged to demonstrate hybridity and creatively reimagine possibilities.

In order to foster critical artistic dispositions, educators must also “act as we are asking our students to act” (Benedict & Schmidt, 2014, p. 94). From a curricular perspective, this may mean expanding or challenging the “known” context of general music and fostering a view of curriculum as a living practice that is enacted, engaged with, and co-constructed, creating space for students to “experience curriculum from the inside” (Chappell & Chappell, 2016, p. 296). Curriculum then becomes a commitment to “supporting students’ examination of the social, political and historical contexts that impact their developing identities, roles and responsibilities as citizens, artists, and/or teachers” (p. 292).

One must also begin with critical reflection on one’s own positionalities and experiences, juxtapose and explore those positionalities with those of others, and think critically about their world. Therefore, within this dissertation, I am choosing to explore manifestations of border crossing and the development of critically artistic dispositions in three interconnected lenses that emerged during this study: dark and politicized funds of knowledge, critical listening and authorial agency, and self-authorship. Each of these lenses is briefly explicated below, and a further, detailed examination is provided alongside data analysis in chapters five, six, and seven.

Dark and Politicized Funds of Knowledge. A critical artistic disposition requires a willingness to engage with our experiences and explore the ways in which they connect with cultural, civic/political, social, economic, racial, and interpersonal structures in the world. Therefore, in chapter five, I draw upon funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and, more specifically, dark and politicized funds of knowledge (Gallo & Link, 2015; Zipin, 2009) as a

framework through which to examine the experiences and content students utilized in their compositions and dialogues.

Funds of knowledge are the “historically accumulated and culturally developed” experiences, resources, and skills that students amass in contexts typically outside of school (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). While the conceptual basis of the funds of knowledge framework is anthropological (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992), the educational model was originally intended to “develop innovations in teaching that draw upon the knowledge and skills found in local households” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 132). The goal was to challenge deficit and reductionist views, particularly of bilingual students, by demonstrating the broad and diverse spheres of knowledge present in such communities, and to find ways to use such knowledges as the basis for curriculum development (Amanti, 2005; González et al., 2005). In the process, students’ diversities are seen not as deficits, but as “pedagogical assets” (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997, p. 89).

This framework has since been expanded and applied in a variety of educational contexts, though most frequently in underserved communities and with Latinx and African American youth. It has been utilized in empirical studies across subject areas that suggest that this approach supports teachers’ use of community resources for pedagogical purposes (e.g. Andrews & Yee, 2006; Hedges et al., 2011; Kinney, 2012) and can help students connect learning practice with in-the-world experience in a variety of settings (e.g. Boullion & Gomez, 2001; Dworin, 2011; Marshall & Toohey, 2010). When linked with critical pedagogy, scholars argue that this framework can also help students develop sociopolitical awareness and challenge institutional limitations (Garcia, 2017). In addition, practitioner articles suggest that utilizing funds of knowledge can help educators avoid essentializing students’ musical traditions (Liu, 2020) and

develop students' awareness of multiple forms of meaning-making through the arts (Varga-Dobai, 2018).

Scholars have critiqued the funds of knowledge approach, noting that, like all forms of critical pedagogies, practitioners who follow this approach need to engage in ongoing reflexivity so as not to impose their own "well-intentioned, cultural arbitraries" on learners (Oughton, 2010, p. 63). This critique became important in this study, as the educators' and my own well-intentioned practices led to a series of assumptions regarding the funds of knowledge held by students at both schools, an issue I explore in chapter five.

Scholars also argue that too often funds of knowledge projects or curricular strategies tend to focus on "light" (positive) funds of knowledge rather than "dark" or "politicized" funds of knowledge, thus limiting and potentially devaluing students' experiences with knowledges deemed "too controversial" for school (Gallo & Link, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2014; Zipin, 2009). As a response, scholars suggest a need for the implementation of curricular practices that both acknowledge and help students activate "dark" (Zipin, 2009) or "politicized" lifeworld knowledges. Though they derive from different scholars, both these terms refer to "the real-world experiences, knowledges, and skills young people deploy and develop across contexts of learning that are often positioned as taboo or unsafe to incorporate into classroom[s]," (Gallo & Link, 2015, p. 361). This includes, among others, knowledges related to inequity, violence and oppression.

Embedding opportunities to both engage with and problematize dark funds of knowledge can be challenging. Educators may feel uncertain of where and how to enter and navigate such conversations (Robinson, 2017), citing differences in experience and a lack of preparation in their pre-service programs. Furthermore, these knowledges tend to be dispositional rather than

content-oriented, meaning that incorporating them into the classroom is often more complex (Zipin, 2009). As a result, both educators and students can police themselves out of opportunities to engage with darker funds of knowledge, causing a fortification of boundary lines between learning practice and in-the-world experience, an issue that arose several times in this project (Zipin, 2009).

Scholars (Gallo & Link, 2015; Zipin, 2009) argue, however, that engaging with dark and politicized funds of knowledge can “offer fuller self-recognition” for students and are a “vital matter of social-educational justice” (Zipin, 2009, p. 330). Zipin’s (2009) work on a project in Australia that deliberately sought to help educators redesign their curriculum to embrace dark funds of knowledge found that educators often “backed off quickly” from such projects as soon as students seemed uninterested, concluding that they were not yet mature enough for such engagements and reverting to curricular strategies that “only thinly connect[ed] to lives beyond school” (p. 328). Zipin notes that because curricula based on dark funds of knowledge often challenge institutional norms and students’ expectations of schooling, repeated and ongoing projects and units that welcome and engage such knowledges over time, along with educator reflexivity and pedagogic dialogue with students are necessary.

Whereas Zipin (2009) focuses on the perspectives and engagements of educators who are incorporating dark funds of knowledge into the classroom, Gallo and Link (2015) consider the students’ points of view. In their work with Latinx students who were recent immigrants to the United States, they explored the hesitancy of some students to explore dark and politicized experiences in the classroom. They note the importance of generating opportunities for students to project their experiences through a creative medium as a way to help them explore and problematize from a distance. Projects that include storytelling, music-making, and art can help

students navigate these issues in communal classroom spaces without feeling as though they are being “forced” to “divulge personal information” (p. 379).

While scholarship has not explicitly examined the connection between the concepts of dark and politicized funds of knowledge and music education, scholars have considered the ways in which students’ sociopolitical experiences can be central as they produce media (e.g. Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011; Kaschub, 2009; Kinney, 2012; Lashua, 2006; Lewis, 2016; Mantie, 2008). In these contexts, engaging with experience through composition helped students grapple with social realities, make sense of difficult experiences, build connections between learning practice and in-the-world experience, and “make an artistic statement in sound” (Kaschub, 2009, p. 281). Bringing diverse knowledges into the music classroom can also help students reflect on their own experiences and find ways to listen, hear, and honor the knowledges of others.

In this study, I analyze how students and educators engaged with dark and politicized funds of knowledge through their soundscapes and dialogues, as well as the ways in which those engagements impacted educator and student conceptions of their experiences. In using dark and politicized funds of knowledge as a part of my analytical framework, I hope to offer insight into how a project such as this might help support middle-school educators who seek to include such knowledges and dispositions in their curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Critical Listening and Authorial Agency. A critical artistic disposition also requires an awareness of how we listen to and engage with the world around us. Therefore, in my analysis I draw upon notions of critical and mis-listening, that is the ways in which we actively question and problematize the things we hear, not to evaluate or pass judgement on them, but to help us explore the world from multiple viewpoints (Lipari, 2014; Schmidt, 2012b).

Developing a critical artistic disposition is not only about reflection and awareness on that which we hear, but also the creative generation and artistic actualization of ideas that may generate from engaging with multiple viewpoints. Thus, I pair critical listening with authorial agency (Matusov et al., 2016). In this section, I situate both critical listening and authorial agency in relevant literature, and then draw them together to articulate the ways in which I used these concepts during analysis.

Critical Listening. I define critical listening primarily through the work of Lipari (2014). Drawing from the work of scholars such as Bakhtin (1981), Buber (1958), Freire (1970), Levinas (1989), and Merleau-Ponty (1973), Lipari makes a case for listening as more than the transfer of information. She argues that it “is not merely an instrument to accomplish goals...it is a process, not an object or a tool” (p. 113). For listening to be critical, she notes that we must build upon a micro-level transfer of information in order to consider how what we are hearing interacts with a macro-level narrative of cultural, civic/political, social, economic, racial, and interpersonal structures. It is this dual awareness that helps us unpack the complexities of texts, both musical and dialogical.

Lipari (2014) notes that listening is a “form of speaking that resonates with echoes of everything we have ever heard, thought, seen, touched, said, and read throughout our lives” (p. 9). These cultural, social, and personal experiences make up our listening habitus and inform the ways in which we make meaning from what we hear. To listen critically, she argues, we must “begin with the understanding that listening requires an awareness of our habitual categories and a willingness to go beyond them” (p. 99). The awareness Lipari articulates here requires a listening practice in which we question, problematize, and reframe all that we hear. In this study,

students and educators enacted this practice in the ways in which they listened to sounds, media, and texts, as well as in the ways in which they listened to one another.

Alongside Lipari (2014), I also use Schmidt's (2012b) conception of mis-listening. To mis-listen, he states, is "to understand that any interpretation, any practice, any text, any musical interaction produces a surplus and ramifications of meaning and sound, a multiplicity of on-looks and outlooks upon which one can and should enter, contribute, and extend" (p. 13-14).

Throughout the project, these surpluses, that is "all that is generated by actions, interactions, or texts, but is nevertheless absent from their 'central points'" (p. 9), offered opportunities for students to engage in authorial agency as both composers listening to the world and as listeners listening to compositions and others. Mis-listening, then, was not oppositional to listening, but an extension of it. Instead of aiming for a singular goal, there was space to enter a text in multiple ways, thus leading toward various possible ends.

Education scholars have utilized Lipari's (2014) framework of listening in relationship to intercultural education (Schellhammer, 2018) and ethical teacher practice (Bullough, 2019). Siegel (2015) used these ideas to examine elementary teachers' conceptions of listening across various types of dialogical engagements. He analyzed listening in terms of its depth, noting that un-critical, or thin listening, is widely practiced in education. Critical or "thick" listening is less prominent, though it was in these moments that educators engaged in democratic, relational pedagogies. He argues that in order to promote civic engagement, uncritical (or "thin") listening should be problematized in classrooms, and opportunities for critical (or "thick") listening more prevalent.

In music education, scholars argue that practices in critical listening are often absent or undervalued in the classroom, passed over or left untaught despite the prevalence of musical

listening in society (Reimer, 2004; Rinsema, 2016). The focus in classrooms is often on a functional sense of listening that prioritizes “concept development” and recognition of musical characteristics (Kratus, 2017). In recent years, however, scholars have begun to explore how critical listening might help students consider musical texts through multiple lenses and reflect on how their own positionalities impact the ways in which they hear and understand (Abramo, 2015; Lewis, 2016).

Authorial agency. Whereas a model of critical listening helped me to analyze the ways in which students questioned and problematized what they were hearing in their world, I also needed a framework to explore how they responded, artistically and dialogically, to what they were hearing. Therefore, I pair critical listening with agency in this section.

The place of agency in education, and more narrowly in music education, has been explored and defined in various ways (e.g. DeNora, 2000; Elliott, 1995; Green, 2008; Karlsen, 2011; Matusov et al., 2016; Osberg & Biesta, 2010; Reimer, 2003; Small, 1998; Westerlund, 2002), but Karlsen (2011) notes that, at its core, agency is related to one’s “*capacity for action*” (p. 110, emphasis in original). Though myriad conceptions of agency exist, I follow Matusov et al.’s (2016) concept of *authorial agency* in this study, as it derives from a process of critical listening and focuses on engaging with multiple lenses and understandings.

Authorial agency centers on one’s capacity to act in a way that might be perceived as unexpected or outside the norm of a particular context. In practicing authorial agency, Matusov et al (2016) note that one considers “the given(s)” of a text, problem, or engagement, and then works to produce a form of culture that transcends, expands upon, or challenges those givens” (p. 439). It is an active choice to engage with surpluses, building upon that which already exists, in order to create a cultural artifact.

In the context of this project, authorial agency manifested most clearly through issues of intention and interpretation. Students manifested authorial agency through compositional intention as they resituated or manipulated sounds and media in order to challenge dominant readings. They also manifested authorial agency as they interpreted the soundscapes of their peers during listening sessions and produced a dialogue that challenged or expanded upon the composer's intention.

When these multiple interpretations and intentions are explored and layered, divergent practices of authorial agency can emerge. Educators can be placed in a tenuous role in these situations. Scholars argue that it is both the role and responsibility of the educator to offer ongoing feedback to student composers in a manner that supports their intention and helps them develop their own compositional voice (Ruthmann, 2008; Stauffer, 2003). Ruthmann (2008) and Bizub (2007) both note that students often respond to feedback when their agency and intent are both honored and valued by their teacher and peers. This can be particularly important when students are drawing upon complex or justice-oriented topics (Kaschub, 2009).

This sense of encouraging and honoring a student composer's voice must also be balanced with the creation of space for multiple interpretations of a text, such as a composition, to be offered and problematized. Within pedagogical practices of border crossing, all texts, including those developed by students, are recognized for their partiality. Listeners are encouraged to interpret the text through various lenses, thus engaging in their own form of authorial agency. Rather than see these practices as a challenge to the agency of the composer, they can help encourage reflection and honor the presence of multiple, simultaneous interpretations.

Scholars (Schultz, 2003, 2010; Valenzuela, 2017) argue that space for multiple lenses and multiple voices are particularly crucial if we hope to “confront current socio-political climates, economic conditions, and environmental degradations” (Valenzuela, 2017, p. 49). Further, from a musical perspective, scholars note that these processes can also help students see the cyclical nature of the creative process, wherein compositions are never complete, but constantly made and remade over time (Lashua, 2006; Webster, 2011).

Finding Intersections. While critical listening and agency have been explored separately, I believe there is space in the literature for these two concepts to be drawn together, particularly if we hope to envision a music education curriculum that supports critical engagement with multiple viewpoints and ways of knowing. Music education and music educators, I argue, are in a unique position to consider these connections, as practices of listening and creating should be central to both curriculum and practice. In using critical listening and authorial agency as part of my analytical model of critical artistic dispositions, I hope to offer insight for how educators might support student engagement in these practices at the middle-school level

Self-Authorship. A critical artistic disposition also requires reflection on who we understand ourselves to be in the world. This includes an examination of our epistemological commitments, internal struggles, and external interactions. Initially articulated by Kegan (1994) and further developed by Baxter Magolda (2004a, 2008), self-authorship is a model of understanding one’s own epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal ways of being. It is thus a way to think through one’s sense of self.

While the concept of self-authorship has appeared since the 1960’s, Kegan (1982, 1994) most often receives attribution for the definition and initial operationalization of self-authorship. Kegan began with a constructivist-developmental perspective, generating and naming multiple

“orders of mind” in a five-stage model. Kegan’s model, which traverses early childhood through adulthood, suggests a linear movement from external validation to an internal authoring of self-identity. We move, he argues, from uncritical reliance on external authority to self-authorship. Kegan defines self-authorship as the “highest order of mind” during which we differentiate between internal and external motivators and expectations, and then move to define, or author, our identities internally. It is through such definitions, he contends, that we can come to develop interpersonal and interdependent relationships with diverse others. He argues that not every adult develops a full sense of self-authorship, but that a focus on self-authorship development is necessary in order to help individuals meet modern demands of rapid change and the ability to operate in diverse relational contexts.

Kegan’s conceptual theory was advanced and applied primarily through the work of Baxter Magolda (1998, 2001, 2008, 2009, 2010; Baxter Magolda & King, 1996, 2007). She expanded upon Kegan’s definition to consider self-authorship as a more dynamic, complex, and holistic process of internal and external meaning making. She does not see a linear trajectory toward self-authorship, but a fluid back-and-forth that operates on three levels: epistemological (how do I know?), intrapersonal (who am I?), and interpersonal (how do I form relationships?). Each of these levels combines to lead toward “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations” (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269).

The epistemological dimension of self-authorship considers how individuals understand the certainty of their own knowledge. As individuals move further toward a self-authored sense of self, they begin to question and consider taken-for-granted norms (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994). The intrapersonal dimension considers the ways in which individuals use their knowledge to construct a personal identity (Baxter Magolda, 2001). As individuals engage in

self-authorship, they sort through and question how values and assumptions shape their sense of self. The interpersonal dimension considers the ways in which relationships are developed and nurtured. As individuals move toward a sense of self-authorship, they move away from dependency and toward mutual respect (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

According to Baxter Magolda's (2008, 2009) theory, there are three main stages of development toward self-authorship. In the first stage, meaning is made externally. Borders surrounding the ways we see the world are inflexible and we live in a state of certainty about the world. The second phase, the one that is most important for this study, is one of crossroads. This is the stage of fluidity and increasingly complex meaning making that begins in adolescence and continues through adulthood. This "crossroads" is a space of questioning where internal and external meaning making collide with one another. It is a transitional stage that can last for many years. Baxter Magolda (2009) maintains that there is a need for the deliberate creation of these spaces in schools and institutions or students will be more likely to struggle through, and less likely to ever arrive at, the third stage: internal foundations. In the third stage of the theory, individuals build and live out a personal philosophy. This philosophy is not finite, but it is a space of contextual knowing wherein one is confident in the ability to navigate one's assumptions and ways of knowing alongside multiple other perspectives (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 2008).

There are clear linkages between self-authorship and border crossing. Baxter Magolda (2009) notes that individuals go through a "crossroads experience" as they move toward self-authorship, which is characterized by discomfort as personal world view clashes with lived experience. Such experiences were central to this study. These crossroads are most often felt during or as a result of engaging in contact zones, productive dialogue, and positive dissensus

(Lu, 1994; Pratt, 1991; Schmidt, 2012a), wherein individuals are asked to reflect both honestly and critically on taken-for-granted norms, including their own (Pierce, 2008). While Baxter Magolda (2009) argues that crossroads are a developmental phase, I see them more as an ongoing negotiation. If we consider engagement in self-authorship as part of a disposition, then we can consider self-authorship not as a series of plotted points, but as a continuum that is perpetually in flux. As we participate in various contexts and with diverse others, we negotiate layers and elements of self-authorship differently, thus entering borderlands that shift and fluctuate through our reflection on our own histories and beliefs, the ways in which we engage with others, and how we see the world. Self-authorship, then, could be understood as an ongoing manifestation of border crossing toward a more critical, active engagement in society.

In the classroom, operationalization of a curriculum that helps students move toward self-authorship has several tenets. Educational practices should validate learners' capacity to know (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Curriculum must be situated in learners' self-chosen, personal experiences, such as those in the soundscapes within this study (Baxter-Magolda & King, 2007). Finally, meaning should be mutually constructed in and with all classroom participants, including educators (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

More recent studies suggest that purposeful spaces for the cultivation of self-authorship within educational experiences is even more crucial among diverse populations (Letizia, 2016; Pizzolato, 2005; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Pizzolato (2005) noted that students who experience culturally diverse settings often feel a sense of disequilibrium, articulating that educational structures and support for grappling with such disequilibrium is crucial. Torres and Hernandez (2007) point out that the crossroads period, beginning in middle school, is often one where racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism and other power structures begin to be

recognized. When these structures go unproblematized, they are often reinforced. Letizia (2016) notes that self-authorship should not only encourage a grounded internal philosophy, but should also encourage critical reflection that speaks to the structural inequities present in the world. In this way, self-authoring is not only focused on developing an “inner voice,” but on fostering civic awareness and action. These views of self-authorship as a critical practice are important to my study, as they help differentiate between “finding voice” and engaging in a deeper, reflexive practice of critically interrogating and engaging with one’s taken-for-granted norms.

The concept of self-authorship is often associated with post-secondary student development (Baxter Magolda, 2004a, 2008, 2009, 2014; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Bekken & Marie, 2007; Letizia, 2016), and one criticism of self-authorship scholarship is that it is often performed with white, upper middle class, heterosexual university students (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). There have been studies, however, that have explored this concept with diverse populations, such as those in this study, in both writing (Letizia, 2016) and arts-based settings (Mantie, 2008). Further, self-authorship has been criticized for often having a heavy emphasis on developmental psychology at the expense of considering emotional, relational, and philosophical upheaval present in these often uncomfortable and challenging encounters (Dugas et al., 2019), an issue scholars have challenged through relational work (Letizia, 2016; Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

I believe that there is a significant gap in this literature. If the crossroads stage begins in early adolescence, then scholarship that considers these early possibilities for self-authorship in the curriculum are necessary. Furthermore, middle school is oft cited as a space of social changes, wherein students begin to grapple with change, conflict, and a need to meaningfully engage with diverse others (Hill, 1980; Lipsitz, 2019). In using self-authorship as a part of my

analytical model of critical artistic dispositions, I hope to offer insight into the possibilities of engaging in these practices through artistic practices at the middle school level.

Summary

The goal of this review of literature was to illuminate the existing need within the field of music education to broaden understandings about the possibilities of a critically oriented education in and through music at the middle-school level. Therefore, this chapter provided background on the theoretical underpinnings through three sections. The overarching framework of critical and border crossing pedagogies was presented to clarify my own epistemological commitments and philosophical grounding in this study. The foundations of the project design were presented in four parts: project-based learning, soundscape composition, critical reflection, positive dissensus. Literature was offered to help clarify and connect the development of this project to the critical and border crossing framework. Finally, the theoretical model of critical artistic dispositions was presented, outlining how I analyze the data in upcoming chapters. This study intended to build upon and expand the literature presented here, in order to unearth new inquiries and build a critically artistic vision for middle-level general music.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore, through the implementation of a musical learning project, the ways in which interactions between students and educators impacted opportunities for critical reflection and fostered the development of critical artistic dispositions in the middle school general music classroom. During the study, I developed and utilized a curricular project whose purpose was to serve as a catalyst to disrupt bordered spaces and bring about opportunities for students to investigate and grapple with their own positionalities in the music classroom. I explored how the project impacted pedagogical interactions, creative engagements, linkages between learning practice and in-the-world experience, and opportunities for critical reflection. Finally, I used the findings from this study and the project therein to develop implications for future curriculum development in middle-level general music education.

My methodological aim was not to “simply describe the world as it is,” but “to challenge it” and “point to possibilities beyond our current conditions” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 26). Thus, my chosen methodological paradigm needed to align with my theoretical framework and facilitate possibilities for observing, listening to, interpreting, and analyzing the perspectives and experiences of the study’s participants and their interactions. It also needed to allow for spaces of intervention within “the normative rationalities that have such a hold on our contemporary moment” (p. 116). Therefore, I grounded this study in the critical, qualitative paradigm. Specifically, I combined and adapted three frameworks: Design-Based Research, Case Study, and Critical Educational Action Research for this study.

Though this chapter focuses on my methodological considerations, I arrive at those by tracing and situating my own path of inquiry. I begin by exploring my desire for a collaborative, co-constructed critical action-based project that deliberately intervened in multiple contexts. I then trace how my aims informed and led to my methodological frameworks, each of which I explicate and connect to the project settings and my inquiry. I also describe the project sites, the project itself, data collection, and analytical processes. I find it important to note here that these sections are presented to offer the reader a picture of project design and context, but the complexities, dissonances, musicality, and “human-ness” that were very present throughout this study are absent here. My hope is that through the chapters that follow, the people, spaces, and ideas presented will be animated and represented in their complexities.

Situating the Inquiry

In educational research, the problems we pursue, the questions we ask, and the conclusions we draw are all based on our experiences as teachers and learners and are “*epistemological expressions of what we believe is true or justifiable*” (Allsup, 2014, p. 71, emphasis in original). When I first began planning this study, I wrestled at length with design. I struggled with how to articulate what I wanted to explore within what I perceived to be methodological restraints. In addition to observing, I wanted to disrupt and intervene in musical and relational contexts, recognizing and believing that “methodological work should be invested enough in social change so as to take a stand on the world as it is and as it might be” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 33). Given this, my own perspectives and biases not only needed to be acknowledged but unpacked and accounted for as I made meaning in and from this study.

Further, I recognize that epistemologies are not static. As we engage in processes of inquiry, our ideas and understandings about how we come to know and what we *think* we know

may change and shift (Kuntz, 2015). Therefore, I sought a paradigmatic context and research design that not only aligned with my epistemological lens, but also one that would allow for and promote flexibility, and a reflexive openness to new ideas and perspectives.

Paradigmatic Context

Research paradigms are “not simply methodologies; they are ways of looking at the world, different assumptions about what the world is like” and provide ways through which we might attempt to understand the world (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 8). Qualitative research takes up the position that “knowledge is constructed and reconstructed in public with others, [and] that *reality is an interpreted experience and not objectively verifiable*” (Allsup, 2014, p. 69, emphasis in original). In qualitative research, knowledge is “perspectival and multiple” and humans are “active constructors of meaning” (Matsonobu & Bresler, 2014, p. 23). My focus, therefore, as a researcher operating within the qualitative paradigm is on meanings and interpreted understanding of the participants’ social world. Through this study, I sought to explore how they make sense of their circumstances, experiences, perspectives, and histories through observation and interaction (Ritchie et al., 2013).

While the use of the qualitative paradigm helped me to explore perceptions and understandings in ways that illuminated “the textured experiences and analyses of participants,” critical research helped me to address issues of power and exclusion (Weis & Fine, 2000, p. 93). The critical researcher asks questions such as: Whose voice matters? Whose knowledge is considered legitimate? How do power relations impact the lives of individuals and groups? (Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Steinberg & Cannella, 2012). Beyond seeking to understand a social phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved, critical qualitative research seeks to contextualize issues in the “particular socio-cultural-political milieu” of participants’ realities

(Glesne, 2006, p. 4). Carspecken and Apple (1992) contend, “rather than seeing cultural phenomena as isolated entities, we must situate them back into the social relations that give them meaning” (p. 508). They argue, however, that to stop there nullifies the “relationship between such social constructions and the ability of some groups to enhance their own authority, to regulate others, and to control the social space for their own benefit” (p. 508). Therefore, critical qualitative research strives to help the researcher unpack the “indissoluble couplet” of power and culture in daily life (p. 508).

Critical researchers tie context to structure, as they understand schools as part of a larger political economy (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). Overarching structures of class, race, and gender dynamics can both limit and constrain possibilities in schools. In addition to structural constraints, individuals have agency. Carspecken and Apple note that human beings “are not simply objects at the mercy of structural determinations, but also agents of change, of social forces they continually create beyond themselves” (p. 510). They argue that it is the dual awareness of structure and agency that is so important to critical work.

Critical work impacts the questions that are asked, the methods employed, and a focus both on experience and possibilities for change “in ways that resist injustice” (Denzin, 2017, p. 9). Rather than orient solely to “justice-as-is,” research aligned to these commitments is motivated toward “the very question of justice-to-come” (Barad as cited in Kuntz, 2015, p. 140). Critical studies seek to bring about a “more just, egalitarian society in which individual and collective freedoms are practiced” by focusing on the interests at work in particular situations, and the extent to which those interests are “legitimate in their service of equality and democracy” (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 52). Within educational research, this means analyzing and interrogating how, why, and for whom curricula and knowledge are constructed, whose interests are served in

the classroom, and the ways in which inequalities are reproduced through schooling (Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Cohen et al., 2017).

Combining Frameworks: How the Inquiry Drove Methodological Decision-Making

The desire to not only observe, but also to deliberately intervene in multiple contexts through a co-constructed musical learning project necessitated a design that offered flexibility, criticality, and responsiveness. Researchers often bring open, fluid endeavors to fieldwork, assembling a bricolage of various designs to respond to the constraints and possibilities of the field and the nature of inquiry (Matsonobu & Bresler, 2014). This study was designed as a hybrid framework, one that crossed borders, drawing from three difference methodological structures to “operate among uncertain and shifting material relations” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 13). This hybrid design is articulated in Figure 3.1.

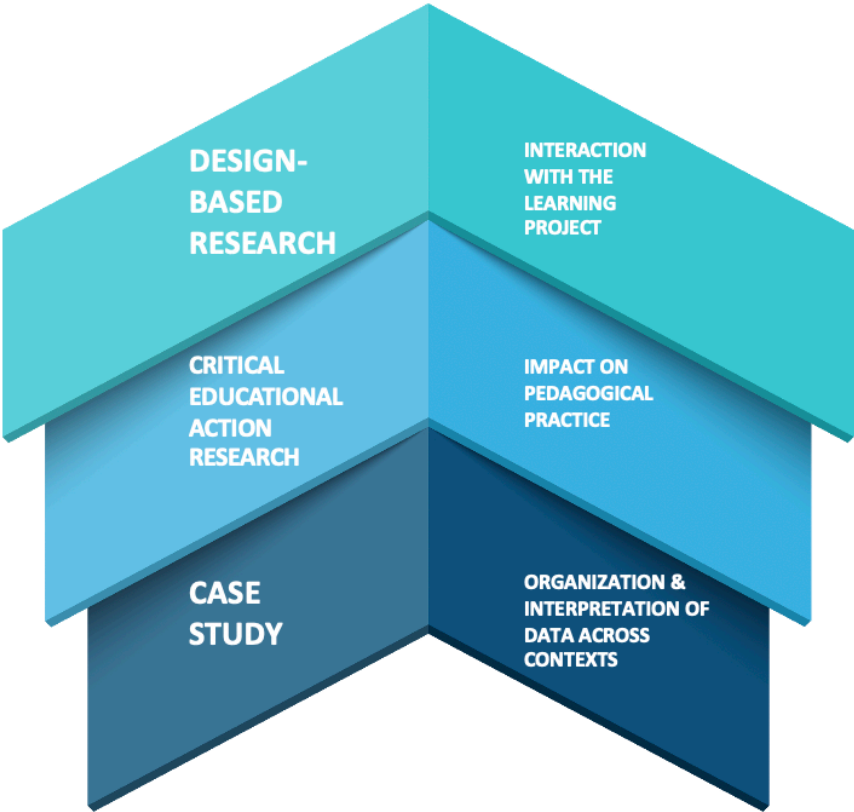


Figure 3.1: Methodological Structure

Design-based research (DBR) served as the guiding design for this study. Through DBR, I co-constructed an intervention in the form of a learning project that helped me explore how students and educators related the music curriculum to larger social contexts through conceptions of positionality and bordered spaces (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In order to complement limitations of DBR, I employed a multiple-case structure of three general music classes within two music programs. Cross-case analysis helped me explore distinct contexts individually and examine meaningful connections and discrepancies between cases (Miles et al., 2014). Lastly, elements of action research helped me consider interactions between the educators, the learning project, and myself. It also helped illuminate spaces for change in practice for both myself and the participating educators (Kemmis, 2010). In what follows, I sketch out how I interpreted, used, and connected each of these designs.

Design-Based Research

Design-based research is an iterative research design that focuses on the study of educational interventions. Within DBR, interventions are informed by theory. They are then conducted and explored in the context of complex classroom environments (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). They are designed to support learning and learning processes by interrupting or challenging current practice. Kuntz (2015) notes that intervention is central to critical methodology, in that there should be an impetus toward “necessary change” as well as “a refusal to recreate what is to be as what has always been done” (p. 138). Interventions can take multiple forms, including products, processes, programs, policies, and projects (Barab, 2014; McKenney et al., 2006; McKenney & Reeves, 2012). Kuntz (2015) adds that interventions must be conceived of as productive. In this way, interventions “point to an openness, an extension of actions and states that might otherwise continue on in a closed-loop fashion” (p. 68). An

intervention can thus create “new spaces” of inquiry, learning, and problematization (Kuntz, 2015, p. 69).

This study unpacked the ways in which the intervention of a learning project impacted opportunities for critical reflection and fostered the development of critical artistic dispositions in the middle school general music classroom. Thus, for the purposes of this study, I will refer to the intervention as the learning project.

The Design-Based Research Process. There are a multitude of Design-based research models. Some are precise and prescriptive, while others lend themselves to researcher customization and creativity. All have a focus on interaction with practice, collaboration, and contextual responsiveness (Barab, 2014; McKenney et al., 2006; McKenney & Reeves, 2012; Reinking & Bradley, 2008). Most address possibilities for exploring pedagogies and curriculum through curricular and/or policy engagements and emphasize the connectedness of interventions as catalysts for pedagogical engagements within contextual environments to a larger, living ecology of educational practice. (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). Some interventions are large-scale curricular interventions. For example, Cutrara (2012) developed an intervention in the form of a history curriculum. This curriculum sought to connect students’ lives outside of school with those in school through the use of post-structural historical narratives in history class. Other interventions work on a micro-level within existing curricula. For example, Morrison (2015) developed a technology-based wiki space that sought to encourage collaborative reflection between secondary school music students. Interventions can also focus on teacher professional development, such as in Raval’s (2010) study, wherein they explored a reflective practice model for para-teachers in an NGO in India.

I used DBR with a critical lens. Therefore, I needed a model that was not overly prescriptive in terms of process and lent itself to customization and flexibility. This helped me ensure that my design was responsive to the needs of each context. I also needed a model that focused on continual interaction between theory and design. This helped me continually return to my epistemological stance, grounding my design in theory. Finally, I also sought a model that offered a picture of what the overall enterprise looked like, rather than focusing on specific elements. This helped me situate the design within each social context. Barab’s (2014) model (seen below in Figure 3.2) helped me conceptualize this ‘critical DBR’ process.

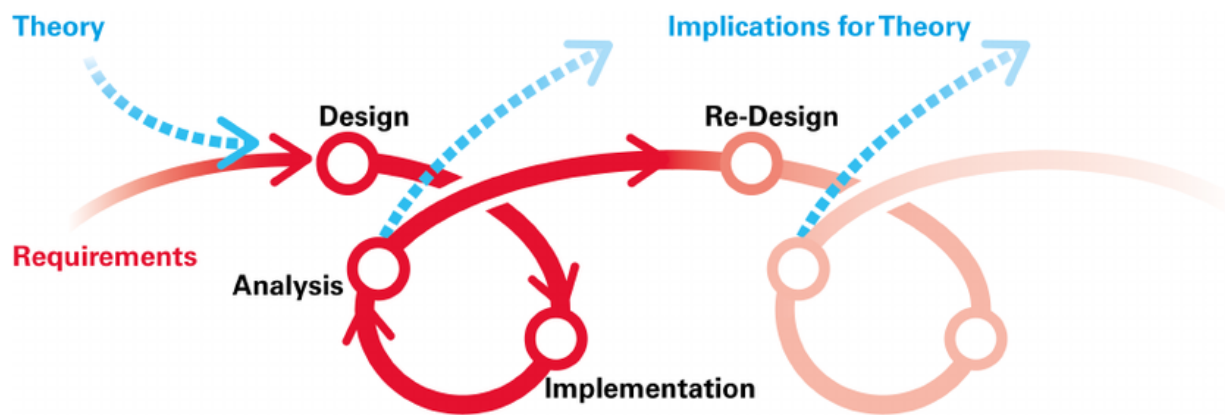


Figure 3.2: Process of Design-Based Research (Barab, 2014)

Barab’s (2014) model has five main stages: requirements, design, implementation, analysis, and re-design. Throughout the process, the researcher continually returns to theory to inform the (re)design and analysis stages. This model can also be expanded to cyclically move through re-design, implementation, and analysis stages. These cycles can take place on a micro-level within a single iteration of the project or on a macro-level over multiple interactions of the project.

In this model, DBR begins with an opening stage where the problem or idea is investigated in terms of both current knowledge (“theory” in Figure 3.2) and current practice

(“requirements” in Figure 3.2). In this stage, I began by asking, “what is the pedagogical goal to be investigated, why is that goal valued and important, and what theory and previous empirical work speak to accomplishing that goal instructionally” (Reinking & Bradley, 2008, p. 74)? For a critical DBR methodologist, these questions pointed to issues of representation, inclusion, and action. During this stage, I also developed an initial literature review, framed the problem I sought to address, and chose the contexts in which I sought to complete the study.

The next stage was design (see Figure 3.2). In this stage, I outlined, but did not finalize the design of the learning project. I focused more on creating a vision and aims that were adaptable and flexible, leaving space to co-create the specifics of the project in collaboration with educators and students.

The third stage was implementation (see Figure 3.2), where the educators and I collaboratively actualized the learning project with students. Most data collection occurred during this stage in the form of video and audio recorded interviews, journaling, focus groups, and participant observation. This helped me understand how student and educator perspectives were impacted, illuminated, or altered through participation in the learning project.

Analysis (see Figure 3.2) was the next step in the process. The collected data were analyzed in accordance with my theoretical framework. I then reflected upon these analyses before moving into the final stage: re-design (see Figure 3.2). Re-design occurred on multiple levels. On a macro level, the project was re-designed for each case to respond to the needs of each new context. For example, the participants at Forest Glen and Edgewood came from different socio-cultural backgrounds. At Edgewood, elements of the design were deliberately tailored to productively discuss issues related to race and economics. At Forest Glen, elements of the design were tailored more toward cultural and multilingual issues. On a micro level, the

process of re-design occurred continuously throughout the study. Each day, as I read and worked with and through engagements with students and my own memos, I re-designed and re-planned elements of the project with the educators. At Edgewood, when students were not keen on reflecting through journaling, we re-designed that element of the project to allow for open conversations with me or messaging through Google Classroom. Throughout the re-design process, we continually returned both to literature and conversations with colleagues to help us think through next steps. This allowed for flexibility in design while also maintaining a focus on criticality.

Limitations. The DBR model was well suited to my research purpose, but also has limitations. Those limitations are usually sorted into three main categories: methodological limitations (diSessa & Cobb, 2004; Shavelson et al., 2003), agency (Engeström, 2011; Ormel et al., 2012), and transferability and scalability (Barab & Luehmann, 2003; Bielaczyk, 2013; Fishman & Krajcik, 2003).

The DBR approach is often mis-associated with positivist design and teaching experiments that seek to objectively measure growth through traditional experimental methods (Shavelson et al., 2003). In fact, Shavelson et al. (2003) warn that policymakers who seek to define “high-quality science in terms of traditional cause-and-effect methods” (p. 25) can, and often do, appropriate DBR. DBR, however, is a product of the interpretive turn. It focuses on narrative accounts and subjectivities to develop a mutual construction of meaning (Shavelson et al., 2003). When made critical, DBR challenges causal explanations and extractive methodology that removes and decontextualizes knowledge. As a critical DBR researcher, I did this through attention toward material contexts and multiple viewpoints, as well as by embracing conflicting and contradictory discourses and ways of making meaning (Kuntz, 2015; Shavelson et al., 2003).

Thus, in forthcoming chapters, the data is not presented as finite or knowable, but as interconnected, complex, responsive, and shaped by my own “non-neutral...gendered, racial, and political lifeworld” (Allsup, 2014, p. 60).

DBR is unique in that the researcher plays multiple roles. In addition to being an observer and participant in the process in this study, I also designed the learning project. My connection to the learning project potentially caused me to operate with blinders, unable to view the phenomena occurring with openness and curiosity (Engeström, 2011). This had the potential to limit participant agency. In response, I sought to engage as a reflexive researcher. Schön (1983) argues that a reflexive researcher

allows himself [*sic*] to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on prior understandings which have been implicit in his [designing] behavior. He carries out [research] that...serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. (p. 68)

While the overarching framework of the learning project was designed by me as the researcher, the implementation was modified collaboratively with the practitioners and involved real-world classroom contexts with active participants, each of whom brought perspectives that challenged, surprised, puzzled and confused me. Openness and curiosity on my part was therefore required in order to help guard against a defensive protection of the learning project. This is in line with Ormel et al.’s (2012) analysis of 19 DBR studies, in which they note that close collaboration between researchers and practitioners was central to the implementation of the study.

Transferability is also cited as a concern in DBR, particularly when the intervention involves the development of a curricular intervention, as it does in this study (Bielaczyk, 2013; Fishman & Krajcik, 2003). In particular, the concern is that the lesson, unit, and curricular guidelines developed during a DBR project for a particular context or contexts will be lifted and

implemented in a new context without careful consideration of purpose. In these cases, DBR curricular interventions can be adopted as “plug-and-play” curricula (Obenchain et al., 2019). In the process, educators are pushed into the margins of curricular development, as their expertise is thwarted and replaced with scripted instruction (Benedict, 2012). This is antithetical to the very purpose of DBR, which is framed around building frameworks that help educators design purposeful, creative, and critical curricula within their unique classroom contexts (McKenney et al., 2006).

My aim in this study was not to develop a learning project that was to be continuously reproduced in multiple contexts and in successive terms. Rather, I was and am interested in how this project may contribute to the development of a vision of purpose for middle school music education wherein the cultivation of critical artistic dispositions becomes an overarching intention. This might lead to guidelines, reference points, or criterion that go on to inform future curriculum development, but not a “teacher-proof curriculum” that “under-respects the role of the teacher and context” (Barab & Luehmann, 2003, p. 460). Therefore, my goal was to engage in a collaboration that contributed to ongoing, reflexive paths of border crossing for both the educators and researcher, replete with tensions and interruptions, and supported educators in developing their own curriculum.

Fishman and Krajcik (2003) note that in order for the frameworks developed in projects such as this to impact future educator-driven curricular development, researchers should work alongside educators and administrators to influence and enact policy changes. At the school level, changes to how curriculum is both written and enacted might aid in sustainability and scalability. In higher education, findings from a DBR study can result in changes in teacher

preparation programs. These changes might impact how educators operationalize policy in the classroom, thus increasing the potential for sustainability and scalability.

Sustainability and scalability were addressed differently in both schools in this study. One of the educators, Ms. Smith, left music education at the end of the 2018-2019 school year to pursue a career in a related field. Therefore, there was no further dialogue related to the impact of this project beyond the confines of the project. Sustainability in that school was not achieved. In the second school, Ms. Green and I are continuing to dialogue about and present on the experience of the project. Thus far, these presentations included a professional development conference for music educators, as well as school-wide professional development for Ms. Green's colleagues. These engagements will, ideally, help to sustain and build on a vision of criticality beyond this study.

Action Research

Action research and design-based research are closely aligned. Both are systematic processes of studying a context in order to understand and improve practice. Both are concerned with exploring theories through practice rather than as separate entities. Both are cyclical, in that planning, acting, observing, and reflecting are repeated in the research process (Elliot, 1991; Johnson, 2002; McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

Robbins (2014) notes that action research studies often “grow out of curiosity” and “puzzlement” from teaching experience. For example, Parker (2010) was curious about why some students felt a significant sense of belonging in her secondary school choral program. She sought out students who had previously articulated these notions and used their experiences to generate five themes of social belonging within ensemble settings. These themes then went on to inform her future teaching. In other studies, music educators use action research to explore

curricular or epistemological shifts in the way they teach music. Hayward (2008) investigated the New Brunswick music curriculum from a social justice lens. Together with their students, they challenged gendered, racialized, and capitalistic discourses to rewrite elements of the curriculum through a lens of inclusivity and social action. Music teachers can also shift from a role as primary, independent educator to co-collaborator in action research studies. For example, Hookey (1994/1995) explored collaborative lesson planning between a music specialist and generalist teachers. Their report was particularly informative in terms of collaborative action research in music education. Though designed differently, each of these studies was grounded in an educator's inquiry of teaching experience.

Action research also adds to the foundation of criticality to this project. Critical reflection on power structures, dominant discourses, empowerment, emancipatory education, and participatory democracy have all been important parts of the history and practice of action research (Kemmis et al., 2013). Scholars have employed action research in collaborative projects that have sought to raise awareness of inequities, social injustices, and oppression (Miskovic & Hoop, 2006). In music education, for example, Buchan (2016) used action research to explore how participation in an Australian music and movement festival restricted agency in herself and her students. She argues that students who would benefit from inclusive music programs were denied opportunities due to a curriculum that centered around festival preparation.

According to Somekh (2006), action research should 1) involve a high level of reflexivity and sensitivity to the role of self; 2) involve exploratory engagement with a wide range of existing knowledge; 3) engender powerful learning for participants; 4) locate the inquiry in an understanding of broader historical, political, and ideological contexts; and 5) form a vision of

social transformation and aspirations of greater social justice for all. Each of these principles aligns with the critical framework used in my study.

Educational action research, however, has been criticized as often straying from the aims above in order to promote questions of “teaching technique, lesson planning, and administering learning...toward enhanced participation in the economic life of societies” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 24). Within music education, Cain (2008) suggests that most action research studies have limited impact on music education practice as a whole. Some action research studies, arguably, have detrimental effects on an emancipatory approach to education. They may further reinforce dominant narratives and prescriptive, functional curriculum. He suggests that this could be due to a lack of iteration, a missing focus on social, historical and ideological contexts, and/or little focus on educator reflexivity.

Critical Educational Action Research. Considering the critiques articulated above, my design was informed more specifically through critical educational action research (CEAR). As a researcher engaging in CEAR, I sought to remain focused on the defining characteristics of action research articulated by Somekh (2006) above, as well as those articulated by Kemmis (2006). Kemmis argues that *critical* action research must focus on “the tensions and contradictions between education and schooling as they emerge at particular times and in particular places, in order to contribute new, evolving and historically appropriate answers to the question ‘education for what?’” (p. 467). To do so, the focus should not be on what or how teachers teach, but on why and for whom. This involves the critical probing and possible transformation of praxis in light of fluid, changing social and political contexts (Kemmis, 2006; Kemmis et al., 2013).

Praxis can be defined as the actions generated by our thoughts, ideas, perspectives and beliefs (Freire, 1970). A change in praxis requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher and educators involved in the study, each of whom seek to critically examine their own embedded beliefs and how those beliefs manifest in pedagogical and curricular choices (Kemmis, 2010). While I may have been able to actively reflect on and examine my own embedded beliefs, the educators in the study were invested in different ways, each interested in how their beliefs impacted enacted curriculum within broader social and political contexts, but with different goals.

Critical educational action research focuses not only on what is happening inside schools, but also on the communities in which schools are located. CEAR projects “cross the boundaries between the school and the world beyond it to explore themes and ideas of interest both inside and outside of school” (Kemmis, 2006, p. 471). Esposito and Evans-Winters (2007) argue that this focus on school and community relationships is particularly important when working in spaces of high diversity. Focusing on specific “politically contested” environments may limit the study’s replicability, but Esposito and Evans-Winters argue that this is necessary if CEAR researchers hope to connect and enact change in the “social, political, economic and historical conditions” of particular contexts (p. 221).

Case Study

Case studies are frequently used in qualitative studies. Barrett (2014) cites many factors for this, including “the adaptability of...design and process, compatibility with educational research, transparency for readers, and pedagogical utility in research education” (p. 113). Definitions of case studies abound, but it is the definition offered by Simons (2009) that I find most comprehensive. She states,

Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real-life context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate an in-depth understanding of a specific topic, programme, policy, institution, or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action. (p. 21)

Barrett (2014) adds that there are several hallmarks of case study that are particularly critical to music education: (1) Case study is contextual, thereby lending “itself well to educational settings, in which there is likely to be considerable entanglement of phenomenon and context” (p. 114). (2) Case study is flexible. The process affords “flexibility of focus in broadly defining the phenomenon of interest; as researchers subsequently draw boundaries more closely, the scope of the case comes into sharp view” (p. 114). (3) Case study allows for balance of the particular and the complex, which is important because “aspects of the lived experience of music teaching and learning are often too nuanced, contextualized, and interdependent to be reduced to discrete variables” (p 114). (4) Case study offers multiplicity, both in possibilities for synergy with other frameworks and designs, as well as in possibilities for data collection. (5) Case study often offer broad readership, in that they “generally pose fewer barriers to reading and interpretation” than other forms of inquiry (p. 114).

Case study was used to help me understand the perspectives of students and educators in each individual school and class through multiple-case study design, as well as in comparison through cross-case analysis. Each case was bound by time, place, and context (Stake, 1995). Bounding was reviewed regularly (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011), and narrowed or widened as themes and questions emerged from the data.

Cross-Case Analysis. Cross-case analysis was utilized to help analyze the data across contexts (Miles et al., 2014). Cross-case analysis requires an examination of the consonances and dissonances that arise between multiple cases. What is similar? What is different? Where do

patterns emerge and diverge? The case-oriented approach to cross-case analysis considers each case individually, looking at “configurations, associations, causes, and effects *within* the case” first (Miles et al., 2014, p. 102, emphasis in original), and then the underlying similarities and differences of the cases are analyzed through comparison. Within a case-oriented cross-case analysis, a variety of strategies can be used to compare cases. I used a replication strategy (Yin, 2014), wherein my conceptual framework was used to study the first case. Subsequent cases were then examined individually, as well as in comparison to the original case.

Cross-case study analysis can increase internal validity of the study (Yin, 2014). The exploration of similarities between cases does not necessarily lead to generalization, but it can demonstrate a greater, more robust understanding of the phenomena in question (Stake, 1995). The ability to recognize the similarities between contexts only provides a portion of the story, however. Similarity also requires dissimilarity. In order to reveal similarities, I first sought out distinctions. Coding and analysis, therefore, began with an exploration of the particulars of student and educator engagement with and in response to the learning project. Through these details, distinctions between the similar and dissimilar led to a deeper understanding of how students understood and interrogated their own positionalities, how educators approached critical curricular and pedagogical choices, and the role of the learning project as a tool to explore music education within a larger social context. Each of these themes then led to a larger vision and understanding toward how curricular and pedagogical engagements in music education might contribute to the development of critical artistic dispositions.

The Project Sites

The aim of this project was to explore the ways in which interactions between students and educators impacted opportunities for critical reflection and fostered the development of

critical artistic dispositions in the middle school general music classroom. This required middle schools that offered general music as a core part of their arts curriculum. As articulated above, I wanted to work alongside and with educators on this project. Therefore, I sought out educators who were interested and willing to explore critical engagements and composition in their classroom. Further, I hoped to explore border crossing with a cross section of students from across the school, rather than a small group of “music students.” Thus, I also pursued schools that offered general music to the school population as a whole, rather than as an auditioned or selected elective.

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014) was employed to select two middle schools with similar profiles: Edgewood and Forest Glen. Each school and educator were chosen as typical cases, illustrating what is “normal or average,” rather than as unique or extreme cases (Patton, 2015, p. 183). While I did not seek schools that specifically employed compositional experiences, project based learning, or critical approaches to education, I did use criterion selection (Patton, 2015) to intentionally choose middle schools that offered general music. Further, the two schools in this study were also chosen as they speak to unique spaces of economic, social, and racial diversity (ISBE, 2018) in an urban area where school and neighborhood segregation remains a key concern (see Frankenberg et al., 2019; Gerasole, 2019; Jankov & Caref, 2017; Poole, 2013; Rose, 2007). I did this because I was, and remain, interested in how students and educators grapple with distinct and divergent ways of knowing that are not only personal, but are also marked by experiences related to racial, cultural, and social identities. The terms “general music” and “diverse” are both complicated, and each can be replete with deficit viewpoints and coded understandings. In forthcoming chapters, I explore the complexities

of these words, their importance, and how they related to the people and engagements in this study in more depth.

Edgewood Middle School⁴

Edgewood Middle School is located approximately 7 miles West of the Chicago city limits. It is equidistant from the largely Black and Latinx underserved and lower-income West Side neighborhoods of Chicago and the wealthy, predominantly White, suburbs. Many Black and Latinx students and their families move to Edgewood from the West Side when the students are in upper elementary or middle school grades, resulting in a demographic shift at those grade levels. Thus, Edgewood serves as a middle ground, a multi-layered space where students and families of varying socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds meet.

At the time of the study, 374 students were enrolled in grades 6-8 (ages 11-14). According to publicly available data, 34% of students identify as Hispanic, 32% as Black, 29% as White, 2% as Asian and 3% as mixed race. Approximately half of the students at Edgewood qualify as low-income, while the other half lives in relative financial security, and the school serves a small population of students for whom housing is unstable or inadequate (ISBE, 2018).

Ms. Felicity Smith identifies as a white, middle-class, cis-gendered female in her twenties. She has been the music teacher at Edgewood since 2016, and she was in her third year of teaching there when this study took place. At Edgewood, she taught three general music courses, three curricular choirs, two extra-curricular choirs, and directs the school's annual musical. Originally from Hillwood, one of the wealthy suburban neighborhoods near Edgewood, Ms. Smith had recently returned to the United States from the United Kingdom where she

⁴ As noted in chapter one, all school and participant names are pseudonyms. I chose the pseudonyms for the schools and educators, but the students chose their own. In addition, gender pronouns were selected by participants. When pronouns were not selected, they/them/theirs is used.

completed her post-secondary schooling. Her position at Edgewood was her second music teaching position. The year following this study, Ms. Smith left music education to pursue a degree in entertainment law.

One class of Grade 7 students participated in the study. There were 32 students in the original class, but during the study one student was removed from music class to be placed in an English Language Support Class and another was moved to an alternative arts course due to physical confrontations with a classmate. The breakdown of the class in this study was similar to that of the school as a whole.

General music at Edgewood is a required course for students who do not elect to take chorus or an advanced instrumental course for select band students. Ensemble band is held outside of the school day. Depending upon scheduling, students may have general music for one year, two years, or all three years. While students do not get to choose to take the class, the principal does consider student requests if a student takes the initiative to approach him. The class was one trimester (approx. 12 weeks) in length and we met each day from 8:00-8:44am. During this study, I spent approximately five weeks with the students every day.

I have a close relationship with Edgewood, having served as its music teacher from 2012-2016. It was my experiences at Edgewood that spurred the idea for this study, and I developed much of the school's general music and choral curricula with a focus on inclusivity and socially just creative engagements during my time there. None of the students in this study were at the school during my tenure there and, therefore, I did not have any of them as students.

Forest Glen Junior High School

Forest Glen Junior High School is located approximately 9 miles Northwest of the Chicago city limits. The school serves a large population of students who are newly arrived to

the United States, mainly from Eastern Europe, Mexico, and Latin America, and the community of Forest Glen is in close proximity to cultural enclaves that offer language schools, cultural restaurants, and heritage centers important to families who have recently immigrated. As such, it is typical to hear Spanish, Polish, Ukrainian, and Serbian in the hallways, in addition to English. At the time of the study, 324 students were enrolled in grades 6-8 (ages 11-14). According to publicly available data, 48% of students identify as Hispanic, 42% as White, 4% as Asian, 3% as Black, and 3% as mixed race. Approximately half of the students at Forest Glen qualify as low-income (ISBE, 2018).

Ms. Andrea Green identifies as a white, middle-class, cis-gendered female in her thirties. She was in her eleventh year as the music teacher at Forest Glen at the time of this study. At Forest Glen, she teaches several general music courses, as well as multiple extra-curricular choral ensembles and directs the school's annual musical. Ms. Green holds both a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in music education. Her position at Forest Glen was her first full-time music teaching position and she is still in that position at the time of writing.

Two classes of Grade 6 students participated in the study. There were 14 students in the first class and 17 students in the second class. The breakdown of the class in question was similar to that of the school as a whole. We met each day during first (8:40-9:29am) and second (9:32-10:21am) periods for five weeks. General music is a required course for all students at Forest Glen, regardless of participation in ensemble music. The class is one quarter (approx. 10 weeks) in length.

The Project Outline

The purpose of this learning project was to develop a space of inquiry wherein students created musical compositions that could serve as catalysts to disrupt bordered spaces and bring

about opportunities for them to explore, and critically challenge, their own positionalities. In what follows, I offer a brief outline of the project. I describe the project in greater detail in chapter four.

I began by developing a framework for the project that drew from my knowledges of each context, my own experiences, and literature. I then met separately with Ms. Smith and Ms. Green for a pre-planning session prior to the study, in order to formulate the details of the study to align with the contexts of Edgewood and Forest Glen, respectively. I set a timeline for the project to take place over approximately five weeks at each school, where I saw students for 40-50 minutes per day. I met with students five days per week and, aside from snow days and holidays, these days were consecutive. The learning project itself had four sections, outlined below:

- 1) Introductory Engagements (5 days) – Students engaged in a series of musical and relational activities that centered around ideas of listening and creating. In addition, the educators and I led conversations about stereotypes, assumptions, and biases. The purpose here was to help students frame the project as a whole.
- 2) Composing Soundscapes (9 days) – Students collected and used recorded and sampled sounds to mix their own soundscapes on digital audio workspaces. These soundscapes responded to the prompt “How do I hear my world?”
- 3) Musical and Dialogical Encounters (9 days) – Students shared their compositions across multiple forums and engaged in dialogue with myself, the educators, and each other.

- 4) Closing Conversations (2 days) – Students returned to some of the opening activities, and we expanded our conversations to discuss how our reflections might lead to further action.

In design-based research, it is common to have multiple iterations of the same project with details altered based on the context and previous iterations (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

Therefore, the project followed the above framework at both schools, but the activities, examples, and engagements changed to suit each context. These changes are articulated in chapter four.

Data Collection

The use of multiple evidence sources is a key feature in all qualitative research (McKenney & Reeves, 2012; Yin, 2014). In this study, direct and participant observations, individual interviews, focus group interviews, and journaling were utilized in each context. All classes, focus groups and interviews were video and audio recorded, so that I was able to place my full attention on the interaction (Wilkinson, 2011). Approval for this study and all forms of data collection was acquired from Western University's non-medical Research Ethics Board, as well as the school boards and administration from both schools in which this study took place. Written consent was received from educator participants and student guardians and assent was received from all student participants in the study. Additionally, ongoing verbal consent allowed participants to remove themselves from the study at any time during data collection and analysis processes. All students participating in the study were assured that participation in no way impacted their music class grade. Furthermore, any student who declined participation in the study was still able to participate in the music class without any impact to his/her classroom grade.

Instruments for each of these methods were designed based on the literature review and study goals (see Appendices A-C), so that they aligned with “specific aspects of the problem, the context, and/or participant needs and wishes” (McKenney & Reeves, 2012, p. 100). These instruments were adapted and modified as the study progressed in collaboration with the educators. An overview and rationale for each of the data collection tools used is offered below.

Interviews

Interviews (and focus groups as a variant) were particularly important in my research. This is because the development of a discourse and social relation in interviews mirrored the development of discourse and social relation that the learning project aimed to promote. Particular care and attention were taken in analyzing the ways in which these two structures complemented or challenged each other. For instance, during my interview with Ms. Green midway through the project, we spent time sharing our thoughts on students’ soundscapes and creative processes explored thus far. In the process, we found that we had interpreted several student soundscapes differently. Rather than view our understandings through an either/or dichotomy, we chose to consider a both/and understanding. In exploring both of our understandings as being legitimate, we created space for dialogue that was productive and expanded both of our conceptions of the soundscape.

As approached here, interviews functioned as “specific form[s] of human interaction in which knowledge evolve[d] through a use of dialogue” (Kvale, 1996, p. 125). Therefore, they required the researcher to build space for dialogues that allowed for descriptions of aspects of experiences of people in the lifeworld (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). They were also utilized to deliberately seek firsthand viewpoints of a particular phenomenon in a given context.

Bourdieu (1996) argues that because an interview is inherently a social relation, the symbolic world created during an interview is co-constructed during the interview itself, taking into account both the researcher and respondent, as well as the social structure within which the encounter is taking place. Kvale (1996) articulates a similar concept, stating that “the interview is a stage upon which knowledge is constructed through the interaction of interviewer and interviewee roles” (p. 127). Seidman (2006) agrees that interviews take place in a “social context” and that the relation created during the interview is a “reflection of the personalities of the participant and interviewer,” and their interaction and must be “nurtured, sustained, and ended gracefully” (p. 97). Despite the complexities of social structure that are inherent in any relational encounter, interviews are, at their heart, a way of being with and listening and responding to an other. In this way, I sought to co-construct the interviews in a way that honored the respondents as individuals with thoughts, ideas, and interpretations to be respected and heard. I operated under the belief that interviews have the potential to create the conditions for an “extra-ordinary discourse which might never have been realized, but which was already there, merely awaiting the conditions for its actualization” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 24).

Throughout this study, interviews were enmeshed in the everyday relations of the educational milieu of this project. Aside from the initial and final interview with each educator, no interview took place at a set-aside time in a pre-determined location. More often than not, with both educators and students, they were moments of reflection embedded within the messiness of the school day, held over lunch or planning periods.

For this study, I developed semi-structured interview and focus group guides (see Appendices H-K), which offered opportunities for broad, open-ended questions that allowed the respondents opportunities to explore and express their point of view (Creswell, 2013). A semi-

structured design also helped me to manage the questioning process and ensure connections back to the original research questions (Bevan, 2014). Seidman (2006) cautions against an overdependence on interview guides, suggesting that the key is to choose questions that follow and respond to what the participant is saying. He argues that interviews have the goal of reconstructing experiences and exploring meaning. Each interview, therefore, was steered by the interview guide, but paths of conversations varied.

Interviews with Educators. The first interview with each educator took place prior to the implementation of the learning project. The purpose of the first interview was to a) develop a rapport between researcher and educator, b) explore the educator's initial thoughts about the role of critical pedagogies and student experience in school curriculum, c) explore the educator's considerations of positionality and construction of knowledge in the classroom, and d) plan the implementation of the learning project. The second interview took place approximately halfway through the implementation of the learning project. This interview focused on the educator's perception of if, how, in what ways, and for whom the project was creating spaces to challenge assumptions about distinct realities and ways of understanding the world. Discussions of individual students and larger, overarching themes also took place during this interview. The final interview took place following the implementation of the curricular project to discuss a) the educator's overall understanding of the implementation and critical engagements, b) suggestions for ways in which this project might be altered for future iterations, and c) how the implementation of this project might have an impact on the educator's future curricular and/or pedagogical choices. In both schools, we also spent the final interview delving into lengthy conversations about the purpose and possibilities of middle school general music classes. Formal interview length ranged from 45-90 minutes.

In addition to formal interviews, the spaces most rich with data were planning sessions between the researcher and educator participants that occurred at the end of each class period. Lasting only 5-15 minutes, these sessions were informal opportunities for us to speak as educators about curricular and pedagogical decisions, moments we found intriguing, and potential challenges. Occasionally, these informal sessions were also spaces of dissensus when we did not agree on next steps or understood a student's engagement differently. Thus, they also served as spaces of reflexivity as we sought to co-construct this curriculum as it took place, conceiving of curriculum not as an agenda or lesson plan, but as a living, enacted practice.

When speaking with practitioner-collaborators, reflexivity was critical. Having been an insider, a member of this community of educators, it might seem as though I was uniquely positioned to be able to develop rapport and generate in-depth dialogue through a shared lexicon (Best, 2003). There were certainly moments this was true, but there was a reflective criticality that needed to accompany this position. Being an insider can carry potential pitfalls as I, at times, struggled to create the analytical distance necessary to contextualize the perspectives of research participants (Olive & Thorpe, 2011). My own assumptions and epistemologies influenced my researcher lens, my pedagogical engagements, and my dialogue and relationships with participants. Wearing my educator hat helped me gain rapport and share a language in some contexts, as I possessed a certain linguistic capital that other critical music educators recognized. Further, both educators noted how wearing my researcher hat added a certain legitimacy to the work we were doing, ultimately leading to more administrative attention, support, and flexibility. Both of these roles, however, also served as roadblocks in some situations, as I potentially misjudged assumptions or comments by mentally imposing my own teaching experiences and contexts over others in the room.

Interviews and Focus Groups with Students. Student interviews were intertwined with the project itself. Students met with me one time during the study for an interview that lasted between 10-30 minutes. All students were asked to describe their composition from a musical and creative point of view, as well as from a reflexive, purpose-oriented point of view. Follow-up questions varied, as I sought to engage in a conversation and dialogue, deliberately asking questions that encouraged students to think critically about their compositional choices. This made them both a commentary on the “action” of the project as well as a fully embedded and elemental part of the project. In addition, students engaged in many informal conversations with me throughout the project in my role as researcher/educator. These engagements are further articulated in chapter four.

Focus groups were utilized to generate dialogue and meta-analysis related to the reflective processes that took place during the learning project. Kitzinger (1995) argues that focus groups can create opportunities for participants to become an active part of the research process, making them a common choice for research that seeks opinions and input from participants, such as this study. Focus groups can also produce more critical comments as individual participants may be more likely to see and explore communal and structural concerns, rather than focus on individual experience (Kitzinger, 1995).

In this study, focus groups were small group engagements that served a variety of purposes. Focus groups operated as group interviews, contact zones (Pratt, 1991), opportunities to share words and ideas that may have felt uncomfortable in class, spaces in which we listened and responded to student soundscapes, places of humor, confrontation, openness, and dialogue. Focus groups were by far the most fruitful place for student commentary during this study.

Focus groups occurred twice and were held during lunch and study hall periods. They consisted of anywhere from four to eight students as well as the researcher. The first set of focus groups took place at the beginning of the project, with the aim of prompting student reflections on current curricular experiences and a meta-reflection on students' initial explorations of positionalities. These focus groups helped me gain an understanding of student perception of the learning environment at the school prior to the learning project. The second set of focus groups occurred in the second half of the project. In these groups, we listened to and experienced soundscapes from students in the class. Students often chose the soundscapes for our group, frequently wanting to hear one again because they wanted to discuss it more deeply than class time allowed. This often resulted in disagreements, debate, and the creation of contact zones. Analysis of consent, dissent, silence, and humor offered a window into understanding norms and values of individuals, as well as the group as a whole (Kitzinger, 1995). In addition, we also used this second focus group as a space for meta-analysis of the creative and reflective processes, though students were often more interested in discussing these issues in individual interviews.

Groups of students were brought together for various reasons. In some situations, I recognized that it would be "advantageous to bring together a diverse group...to maximize exploration of different perspectives within a group setting" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 3). In other situations, students wanted to participate in more homogenous groups, giving me the opportunity to "capitalise on...shared experiences" (p. 3). In still other cases, opportunity and scheduling determined who was able to move lunch periods, miss study hall, or step out of their music class to participate in a focus group. In the end, the focus groups were varied and offered a complex sampling and cross-section of students, as well as an array of relational encounters and engagements.

Relationships of Power. I was aware that the multiple roles I played could create a dynamic of conflict and disproportionate power in interview and focus group sessions. I was invested in the learning project and the study, thus leading participants to view me as both non-neutral and biased, potentially prompting “desirable” responses (Patton, 2015). In many ways, I looked, dressed, and acted like a classroom educator, often leading to a perceived imbalance of power for students (Eder & Fingerson, 2002). During focus groups, I moved in and among multiple roles, sometimes actively participating as a contributor in the group, sometimes taking a stance of listener, and other times serving as a questioner, deliberately provoking and asking questions to generate discussion. Throughout, I sought to maintain a co-created, transparent space wherein participants felt able and willing to engage in debate and dialogue.

I acknowledge and am fully aware that there was still an asymmetry of power within the interview context. As the interviewer, I defined and, in essence, controlled the interview. Bourdieu (1996) compares the power dynamic of an interview to a game, wherein the researcher is the one who both sets the rules and determines when to begin and end. This is significant in that the researcher must be attentive to the relationship between interviewer and participant in order to not overlook dynamics of power. When the relationship is treated with care and the researcher is aware of the power dynamics and structures present in the interview, a collaborative process can be enacted whereby the interaction between researcher and respondent produces rich data as each draw from their own worlds to co-construct a social relation that reflects the respondent’s feelings and experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2007). A focus on listening more than speaking and prompts that asked participants to reconstruct rather than remember helped me to manage the power dynamics in the interviews and honor the stories and opinions participants wished to share. Furthermore, open-ended questions that maintained focus on the subject of the

interview, but generally sought to explore rather than probe, were developed and used throughout the interviews and focus groups (Seidman, 2006).

Observations

Observations allowed me first-hand opportunities to observe the given context (Zieman, 2012). I used participant observation because I was a member of the study, participating alongside students and educators in daily classes (Cohen et al., 2017). Each class was video-recorded, and I generated field notes as I watched these recordings following each class. I triangulated those observations with the educators during informal interviews and with the students during focus groups. This process was invaluable, as it helped to illuminate my own biases and drew my attention toward interactions I had not noticed.

While I played a significant role in the development of the learning project, my role ranged from participant-as-observer to observer-as-participant in each context. At Edgewood, Ms. Smith often deferred to me in class, actively co-constructing the project in pre-class planning sessions, but frequently choosing to observe and assist during the class. As such, I was a constant participant during my time at Edgewood. At Forest Glen, Ms. Green and I had a more complementary relationship, with each of us taking the lead or stepping back at various points during the study, working off-of and with one another. My observational protocol was approved by ethics and can be found in Appendix G.

Field Notes & Researcher Memos. All observations were documented through field notes and researcher memos. Due to my role as a participative actor in this study, it was not possible for me to take extensive field notes during classes. Therefore, I allotted time immediately following each class to jot down my reflections of events, curiosities, frustrations, questions, and ideas as memos. Memos were then also a part of the data analysis process, as my

reflections served as a way for me to be in continuous dialogue with the data, reflecting on what transpired in the class, on my own reflections through meta-analysis, and on the dialogue and reflections from the participants themselves (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007). The use of researcher memos separated my own thoughts from those of the participants and provided space for me to continuously think through my own biases, positionalities, and interactions throughout the study (Glesne, 2006). I also used memos to help make my own process transparent. Portions of these memos were shared in focus groups with students, in planning conversations with educators, and, in a general sense, in my own processes of analysis with selected colleagues. In this way, they helped me work toward “productive disequilibrium through self-reflection, collegial dialogues, and critique” (Lord, 1994, p. 192).

Field notes are often considered to be an essential component of rigorous qualitative research in that they enhance data and provide rich context for analysis (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Field notes served to document my thinking in the form of “ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem[ed] to be emerging” (Glesne, 2006, p. 45), also known as subjective notes. Additionally, they served as a record of actions, events, activities, conversations, and participants, also known as objective notes.

Glaser (1998) argues that ideas should be allowed to emerge through memos and field notes without imposing larger categories. My field notes and memos were, however, filtered through my own critical lens and informed by my experiences, biases, and expectations. They were also shaped within the study’s framework. Furthermore, in both memos and field notes, I sought to include (1) reflections of the descriptions and analyses, (2) reflection on the methods used, (3) ethical issues, tensions, problems and dilemmas, (4) observer reactions to what was

being observed, (5) points of clarification that had been or still needed to be made, and (6) possible lines of further inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 122).

Journaling

Journaling can be used for a variety of reasons in data collection, including the use of writing (or other media) as a way for participants to share thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences (Hayman et al., 2012). Cook (2000) notes the “compatibility” of journaling and border crossing pedagogy, as it offers space away from the contact zone to reflect on experiences and positionalities in retrospect (p. 19). In this study, journaling was beneficial as a method to help participants reflect on experiences and provided opportunities for participants to express thinking that they may have been hesitant to share during interviews or focus groups. Additionally, journals were used to support and enrich findings from observations, interviews, focus groups, and other methods of data collection, which aided in data triangulation.

In the context of this study, journaling was originally meant as a data generative tool for students to share their individual thoughts about the music curriculum, the learning project, positionality, and the possibilities of the curricular soundscape project to offer space for critical reflexivity and borderless spaces. I had planned to use four journaling prompts throughout the study, each as a space for reflection on (1) their experiences in music class, (2) their composition experience, (3) classroom dialogue, and (4) the project as a whole (see appendix D).

Despite the benefits of using journaling as a method of data collection, it also comes with accompanying challenges, including poor participation, feelings of exposure, or lack of direction, many of which I faced (Hayman et al., 2012). In my first attempts at working with journaling at Edgewood, I had little participation or “buy-in” from students. They were eager to get back to musicking and did not want to take time away to answer questions. After speaking with a few

students, it became clear that this form of journaling, offered as it was through Google Classroom, reminded them of “journaling” in other classes, which was often a code word for essay and extended response writing. The students noted that they assumed I was “looking for something specific” and did not want to “get the answer wrong,” (Student Informal Conversations) so, as a result, few students participated. I offered space for students to record their responses, rather than write, but participation was again low, likely due to classroom space restraints for a private recording area and/or lack of access outside of school. I still wanted to engage students in critical reflection, not only for data generation, but also because critical reflection was, I believed, foundational to students grappling with their own positionalities and processing contact zones and multiple ways of knowing.

Thus, I decided to redesign the journal prompts as open dialogues. As in my plan, I used the four prompts above, but in addition to writing or recording, students could also open a dialogue with me. Instead of answering a prompt through a journal, we used Google Classroom as a messaging platform. Students offered a brief response, similar to a text message, which I then answered, usually with another question. In some cases, our conversations were short-lived, but these exchanges occasionally went on for longer periods of time. Students would respond both in and after class, as would I, depending upon time and scheduling. Other students sought an in-person conversation instead of writing. These students sought me out during compositional work time when I was floating around the classroom, working with students individually. In reframing journaling this way, students engaged more deeply in a dialogue, often sharing responses and reflection that they chose not to share in groupwork. I would argue that it also reframed, in some cases, the way they viewed the researcher/teacher-student relationship as one

more interested in relationality and care, rather than “correct” answers and word counts, potentially leading to a stronger relationship of trust and engagement.

Artifacts

Digital recordings of student soundscapes were also collected as a source of data. While I did not specifically analyze the soundscapes themselves outside of the confines of the classroom, collection of them allowed me to return to any compositional moments that prompted particular interactions and/or reflections. This “material evidence” offered opportunity for further reflection on the “social interaction” that took place in class, focus groups, or interviews (Hodder, 2000, p. 706) and further grounded data in, rather than extracted it from, material culture (Kuntz, 2015).

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data are “multi-layered and open to a variety of interpretations” (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 642). Therefore, researchers must engage in a systematic process of organizing and analyzing data. Scholars agree that there is no one simple formula for analyzing qualitative data. Rather, the researcher should choose a process that best fits with the purpose of the study, while allowing them to consider multiple perspectives and multiple interpretations of a phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2017; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015).

Data analysis in this study did not occur solely upon completion of data collection. Rather, codes were mapped and used to inform and drive ongoing data collection throughout the research process (Miles et al., 2014). Ongoing coding created an iterative process wherein I was able to continually connect the “live” fieldwork to theory. This not only helped to promote “early and continuing analysis” (p. 93), but also informed lesson planning, and curricular enactment. Once data collection was complete, a more formal coding process was used, as described below.

Preparing and organizing the data was the first step in data analysis. Data were transcribed from over 50 hours of audio and video recording. Combined with researcher memoing and journals, this resulted in transcriptions and physical data that were then organized and (re)organized in several fashions (case, participant, research question, possible early themes) in order to help me consider the data from multiple angles and perspectives (Cohen et al., 2017; Patton, 2015). Organization and re-reading of data took place over a period of several months. Throughout this process, I also kept track of video footage and student compositions in order to continually remind myself to ground the data in the material and contextual culture of the study, not as extracted, decontextualized slices (Kuntz, 2015).

Organization by case was necessary, as I used case-oriented cross-case analysis in this study (Miles et al., 2014). Data from each case were organized and analyzed individually, followed by an analysis that drew together commonalities and distinctions between cases. This allowed for an analysis that considered the cases in comparison to one another while also preserving the fidelity of each case (Cohen et al., 2017; Miles et al., 2014). Throughout this process, I kept an ongoing and fluid MindMap of themes generated from each of the cases.

Coding

It is important to acknowledge that qualitative data analysis is interpretive. That is, it is “less a completely accurate representation and more of a reflexive, reactive interaction between researcher and data” (Cohen et al., p. 665). In looking to make sense of the data, my perspective was imbued with my own “preconceptions, interests, biases, preferences, biography, background, and agenda” (p. 665). While I did not seek to remove my own bias and agenda from the study, as I entered the field with a desire to engage in inquiry that sought critical intervention and possible social change, I did seek to be mindful as to how those biases were impacting my engagements

and meaning making. To this end, I kept memos documenting the evolution of my perspectives and ideas, the trajectories of my engagements, and my own complex, fluid and occasionally contradictory, epistemological stances in order to help me engage reflexively (Glesne, 2006; Matsonobu & Bresler, 2014). Further, I debated and discussed the evolution of these stances with select colleagues and professors who challenged, contested, and helped me think through these complexities.

Once data were organized, I used coding to help me understand and interpret the data. I did not create a priori codes, but I did continually move between data and my theoretical framework in a cyclical pattern (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). This helped me maintain focus on the purpose of the study, while still allowing themes to emerge from the data. While coding was a constant back and forth process that began even as I was thinking through and transcribing the data initially (Cohen et al., 2017), I used two main cycles of coding: open and pattern coding (Saldaña, 2009). This back-and-forth approach was important because I did not want to simply label the data, but I wanted to continuously link data to ideas, concepts, material culture, and other data (Saldaña, 2009).

The first cycle was open, descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2009). In this cycle, I highlighted portions of the data deemed important and began jotting tentative emergent codes in the margins. This helped to index and categorize the large variety of data sources in this study. Subcodes were then generated from emergent codes in order to further explain and delineate content (Miles et al., 2014). Open coding and the development of subcodes helped create a categorized inventory of the data which then laid the groundwork for the second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2009).

The second cycle consisted of pattern coding, wherein the first cycle codes were grouped into categories, themes, and constructs. These codes related back to the conceptual framework

and research questions and helped me identify patterns and relationships in the data (Miles et al., 2014). Pattern codes also helped me develop the “meta-code” which moved coding beyond organization to attribution of meaning to the data (Saldaña, 2009, p. 150). Pattern codes were then used to develop a “major theme, a pattern of action, a network of inter-relationships, or a theoretical construct from the data” (p. 154). In this case, they developed into the elements of critical artistic disposition presented in forthcoming chapters.

Each case was analyzed and coded in accordance with the process above. The cases were then compared, using the codes generated from the analysis, and visually mapped in order to help articulate patterns, similarities, and differences through cross-case analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

Establishing Validity

Matsonobu & Bresler (2014) argue that validity in qualitative research “has less to do with the replicability of research than the plausibility of interpretation” (p. 28). Generalizations are not about a population, but about issues and concepts that have been explored in particular contexts. When observing cases, Barone and Eisner (2006) call this examining how “the particular resides in the general” and locating “what is general in what is particular” (p. 101). Research that seeks to critically impact and intervene in practice, such as this study, offers additional complexities. My goals in this work were to consider the complex interrelated dimensions and relations that can take place in a middle school general music classroom, to interrogate ways in which such places might be open to multiple ways of knowing and understanding, and to develop a vision for general music classrooms that is grounded in an enacted curriculum of socially just musical engagements with an aim of fostering critical artistic dispositions. Validity, then, was a complex and integrated topic.

Herr and Anderson (2005) list the most common goals of critical, action-oriented research as (1) the generation of new knowledge, (2) the pursuit of action-oriented outcomes, (3) potential for changes in practice for both researcher and participants, (4) results that are relevant to the local setting, and (5) sound and appropriate methodology. Therefore, I used Herr and Anderson's five validity criteria (outcome, process, democratic, catalytic, and dialogic) for my study.

Outcome validity is not the resolution of the problem that led to the study. Rather, it is an ongoing reframing of the problem that leads to new questions. Outcome validity can be measured in the ways the researcher draws conclusions from the data. While the conclusions offered here generate knowledge, they are neither finite nor definitive. Rather, they illuminate new questions about the purpose(s), possibilities, and ways of framing middle school general music that can lead to further research.

Process validity considers the procedures of gathering, organizing, and analyzing the data. Triangulation, the use of multiple angles or points of data to "validate and cross-check findings" (Patton, 2015, p. 306), is the most common source of process validity. The use of several data sources in this study provided the means for data triangulation. Not only an effort to converge data from multiple sources, but also to look at a phenomenon from multiple, sometimes conflicting, angles, triangulation also assisted me in bringing to light the contradictions, challenges, and complexities present in this study (Matsonobu & Bresler, 2014).

Democratic validity focuses on the inclusion of multiple voices in the research process and considers the extent to which research is done in collaboration with all individuals involved in the study. Included in democratic validity is the use of member checks. In addition to participating in multiple interviews, I reviewed summaries of transcripts with each educator, and

offered them opportunities to make changes and adaptations as they felt appropriate, but neither did so. It was ongoing member checking through transparency in dialogue, co-planning, and my role as an active participant in the study that was most beneficial. It was in these moments that clarifications were made, ensuring that intensions were well represented (Creswell, 2013).

The final two steps of validity criterion – Catalytic and Dialogical – are interwoven and were particularly integral to my study. Catalytic validity (Lather, 1986) is “the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it” (p. 272). Not only the participants, but also the researcher must be open to reorienting their view of reality throughout and as a result of the study (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Catalytic validity was documented during both the fieldwork and analysis stages through researcher memos and journals. These memos and journals became an integral part of the analysis process as my understandings and orientations of social realities, as well as my own epistemological and ontological lenses shifted and deepened, informing how I made meaning throughout the study. Furthermore, the educators in the study explored their own reorientations of how they understood and viewed their purpose and the purpose of general music education contexts. This was documented in both formal and informal interview settings.

Dialogic validity is monitored in the form of peer review. While this can include submission to academic journals, it also includes peer examination, which was foundational to my study. Peer examination is when, throughout the process of analysis, transcripts and notes are shared with several knowledgeable others (Creswell, 2013). More important than material review, however, was the engagement in an ongoing dialogical relationship throughout the fieldwork and analysis settings. Multiple individuals played a role in this process, including the educators with whom I was working, two graduate school colleagues who had experience

teaching in middle school settings in the United States, and my doctoral supervisor. My ongoing interactions with these individuals challenged my own thinking, asked me to confront my own taken-for-granted norms, offered new perspectives, and helped me clarify themes through critical collegiality (Kuntz, 2015; Lord, 1994).

In addition to Herr and Anderson's five validity criteria, I also believe that reflexivity is essential in establishing validity (Reason, 1994). Berger (2015) states that scholars commonly view reflexivity as "the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome" (p. 220). Most important in Berger's definition is the use of *continual* dialogue, suggesting that reflexivity is not momentary, but ongoing. Reflexivity was not solely a reflection period that occurred after the collection of data, but throughout the project design, fieldwork, analysis, and dissemination (Berger, 2005). In choosing to engage in reflexivity throughout the research process, I was constantly grappling with what it meant to have my "subjectivity [become] entangled in the lives of others" (Denzin, 1997, p. 27).

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the methodological choices, project sites and participants, data collection methods, analytical processes, and validity measures. In the forthcoming chapters, I present both the data and my analysis of it in an intertwined manner, replete with complexities and contradictions. I begin with a chapter that explains and explores the learning project in this study. I then move on to three presentation and analysis chapters, each of which is tied to a vision of enacted curriculum policy that seeks to explore purposes and possibilities of middle

school general music. Finally, I close with a chapter on conclusions and implications for further research.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEARNING PROJECT

Introduction

This study explored, through the implementation of a learning project, the ways in which interactions between students and educators impacted opportunities for critical reflection and fostered the development of a critical artistic disposition. In this chapter, I focus specifically on the details of the learning project, and present data to demonstrate what implementation of the project looked like in middle school general music classes at Edgewood Middle School and Forest Glen Junior High School.

Design-based research (DBR) is centered on the implementation of an intervention that seeks to disrupt the status quo of an educational environment (Kuntz, 2015; McKenney & Reeves, 2012). Interventions can manifest in a variety of ways, and one of the most common is the development and implementation of a curricular framework, project, or lesson (Barab, 2014). A learning project was chosen as the medium of the intervention because, as articulated in chapter two, a project-Based Learning (PBL) framework can create opportunities for students to engage in sustained inquiry about real-world problems (Tobias et al., 2015). Projects also create opportunities for multiple ways of knowing and understanding in the classroom because there is not a predictable or finite endpoint to the inquiry or dialogue generated from the project (Christiensen et al., 2008; Thomas, 2000). Finally, projects can create space for critical artistic engagements when they are situated within larger sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts and structures (Maida, 2011).

I begin this chapter with an overview of the project as a whole. I explain how the framework was developed, drawing from my experiences in a pilot study, as well my aims and

goals for this project. I then offer an outline of the project and its structure in timeline form (see Table 4.1), followed by an in-depth description of each of the project sections.

In the second part of this chapter, I trace the distinctive implementations of the project in each context separately. Working collaboratively with each of the educators to develop a project that was responsive to the students in each context and the overall curricular goals of the music program meant that enactment looked different at each school. In addition, because DBR is an iterative process wherein changes and adaptations are made with each new enactment based on data generated from previous implementations (Barab, 2014), the project at Forest Glen (the second case) was informed by the project at Edgewood (the first case). Therefore, in the second part of this chapter, I offer a presentation of selected data that helps situate and describe what the enactment looked like in each context⁵. These and other data are then analyzed in chapters five, six, and seven.

The Learning Project

A five-week learning project served as the intervention in this study. While I developed the framework, it was important to me that the details of the project itself be designed in and for each context with the educator participants in the study. This learning project centered on students' development of compositional soundscapes that responded to the prompt: *How do I hear my world?* The purpose of this learning project was to develop a space of inquiry wherein student participants created musical compositions that sought to serve as catalysts to disrupt bordered spaces (between their lives and experiences, their communities and schools) and bring about opportunities for them to explore, and critically interrogate, their own positionalities. In what follows, I begin by articulating how I developed the overarching framework of the project

⁵ Tables that detail how the project was implemented at each school can be found in appendices K & L.

prior to collaborating with the educators. I then describe the project, presenting it in four sections: (1) introductory engagements; (2) composing soundscapes; (3) musical and dialogical encounters; and (4) closing conversations.

Development of a Framework

I began developing the framework for this project by drawing on my own experience and knowledge of each context, data from a pilot study (Bylica, 2018), and literature and theory. I created a plan that aimed to connect learning practice with in-the-world experience and involved space for students to critically consider how they hear their world. Soundscape compositions were deliberately chosen as the central creative engagement for the projects, as they opened spaces for students to listen to the sounds of their world and develop “an artistic statement in sound” (Kaschub, 2009, p. 281). My hope was that this compositional engagement would create spaces for borders to be made permeable and border crossing more common.

Based on my pilot study (see chapter one), I knew it would be important to design opportunities for students to practice critical listening and dialogue with one another throughout the project to help them critically reflect on how they listen to others and to the world. Listening is a skill, one we constantly develop, and one that is often assumed, rather than taught (Lipari, 2014). Listening was central to this project and to the soundscapes at its center, because we sought to challenge spaces of functional or “forced listening,” wherein individuals listen to respond and react, rather than to listen in a critical, ongoing manner (Cumberland, 2001). Listening appears throughout this project in an iterative and critical fashion, both in musical and dialogical settings.

The first section of the project framed the purpose of our time together and introduced ideas and practices related to critical listening, while also serving as a space to help me build

trust with the students. During the second section of the project, “soundscape composing,” students engaged in the composition of soundscapes using audio files, recordings, and digital audio workstations. The guidelines for these projects invited students to critically examine their lives within and outside school and develop a musical artifact that represented and responded to their experiences. The third section of the project, “musical and dialogical encounters,” was a deliberately designed sharing space wherein students could present their compositions anonymously and the class could engage in critical discussions about each soundscape. Finally, as I hoped students would use this project to draw connections to other projects in their music class, other classes outside of music, their lives outside of school, and larger sociopolitical issues, I developed a final phase of the project. This phase, “closing conversations,” helped bring closure to the project, offered space for students and educators to reflect on the musical and dialogical engagements, and aimed to further connect learning practice with in-the-world experience.

Project Design

The four main elements of the project can be visualized in Table 4.1⁶. In what follows, I describe each of these sections in greater depth.

⁶ A breakdown of how data collection tools (focus groups, interview, journal entries, and observation) fit into the overall project plan is available in Appendix D.

DAYS	PROJECT SECTION	OUTLINE
Days 1-5	Part 1 – Introductory Activities	<p>Purpose: To introduce myself to the students and begin to build trust; to help students practice and explore critical musical and dialogical listening.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions 2. Soundscape and “non-traditional” musical listening 3. Practice in small group and one-on-one dialogue
Days 6-14	Part 2 – Soundscape Composing	<p>Purpose: To develop a compositional soundscape that creates an artistic response to the question “How do I hear my world?”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students developed and/or curated audio files to be used in their soundscape 2. Students uploaded sounds and worked with DAWs to develop a soundscape from their audio files 3. Students met with their classmates, their teacher and researcher to discuss their compositional and creative processes.
Days 14-23	Part 3 – Musical & Dialogical Encounters	<p>Purpose: To share and discuss students’ compositions, relating them to personal experiences and larger social issues and themes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students’ completed soundscapes were uploaded to a Google drive folder where they were anonymized to all but researcher and educator 2. Students developed their own class guidelines for listening and discussing in accordance with previous conversations related to critical engagements 3. Soundscapes were shared (most anonymously) with the class in a variety of forums: large class, small group, listening walk 4. Discussion and dialogue about the soundscapes, interpretations, and connections to in-the-world experience
Days 24-25	Part 4 – Closing Conversations	<p>Purpose: To help students draw connections between their soundscape compositions, personal experiences, and larger social structures in an action-oriented manner; to help bring closure to the project.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students engaged in various wrap-up conversations, independent reflections, and group conversations

Table 4.1: Project Framework

Part 1: Introductory Activities. The first portion of the project presented a series of introductory activities, which lasted approximately five class periods at each school. The purpose of the introductory activities was threefold. First, this space was used to help me introduce myself to the students and begin to build trust together. I was introduced to the students as a

researcher and music teacher who would be teaching alongside Ms. Smith or Ms. Green for several weeks. I explained the project to students, shared my inquiries with them, and focused efforts in creating a space for students to connect with the project and ask questions. During this time, I also distributed the LOIC (see appendices B & C) and fielded any phone calls or emails from parents or guardians.

The second purpose of these activities was to begin our engagements in critical musical listening. At each school, we listened to playlists that included both soundscape examples and “non-traditional” musical pieces⁷. As we listened, the educators and I asked questions designed to prompt multiple interpretations and help students ask critical questions of each piece. In particular, questions such as “what do you wonder about what you are hearing?” “what might that say about you and your experiences?” “as you hear this, what else are you thinking about?” and “how might someone else hear this differently?” were utilized. The aim was to help students practice critically listening to sounds and media in preparation for the development of their soundscapes and for the sharing sessions that would come later in the project.

The third purpose of these activities was to engage students in critical dialogical listening. Here the aim was to help students practice listening critically to the ideas and experiences offered by their classmates. To do this, we split students into small groups, asking them to practice asking questions of one another in order to help each other think through the topics, musical pieces, and issues we were discussing. Also, in this section we engaged in conversations regarding assumptions and biases, and students participated in a variety of activities designed to connect the musical pieces we were hearing and discussing to larger social issues. Through these activities, we hoped to help students begin to recognize and reflect on their assumptions, practice

⁷ A playlist of these pieces can be found at <https://bit.ly/3bWujBf>

critically dialoguing with one another in preparation for their discussions to come in part three, and draw connections between musical engagements and larger social issues.

Part 2: Soundscape Composing. After the first week of introductory activities, students began composing their soundscapes. This portion of the project lasted approximately 9 class periods. In what follows, I clarify how soundscapes were understood in this study and then describe the processes by which students developed their individual soundscapes⁸.

I situate soundscapes in the review of literature, but I find it important here to further articulate how I defined and understood them for the purposes of this project. The word “soundscape” can have multiple meanings. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to them in a variety of ways: as musical compositions, artistic engagements or artifacts, and cultural products. I do this because I believe these soundscapes fit each one of these characterizations and because there were all descriptors used by myself or the participants in this study.

Guzy (2017) notes that soundscapes can be “consciously designed” or a “byproduct of historical, political, and cultural circumstances” (p. 1). When they are a byproduct, they often take the form of an unmanipulated field recording. When they are consciously designed, they are manifested as musical compositions. For this project, it is important to note that I understood soundscapes as the latter, as consciously designed musical compositions. Therefore, one can explore them similarly to how one would a musical composition. To be clear, I did not analyze students’ compositions against a rubric or standard of perceived musicality, nor did I did not seek to impose western classical practice parameters on them. I did, however, utilize terms such as beat, pulse, tension/release, and form in conversations with students. Following extant literature, I used these words more loosely as concepts to help students articulate and express what was

⁸ Audio files from selected student soundscapes can be found at <https://bit.ly/3aw11sQ>

happening in their compositions (Hickey, 2012; Uptis, 2019). I also use them throughout this dissertation to help describe the soundscapes to the reader.

At each school, students began by collecting and recording a variety of sounds and media excerpts. These sounds were either recorded by students directly or pulled from a creative commons audio clip website⁹. The sound clips were then uploaded to a folder in Google Classroom, a platform used extensively by both schools, to which all students had access. In this way, students were able to curate a repository of sounds that could be shared and utilized among classmates. The recorded sounds and audio clips were then uploaded to digital audio workspaces (DAWs).

At Edgewood, students used WeVideo as their compositional platform. WeVideo is a subscription-based online media editor. It offers both video and audio manipulation tools, although we only used the audio tools for this project. While the audio tools are fairly basic, the program does allow for multi-track editing, sound file upload, looping, ducking, and fading. Audio files can then be exported as mp3 files for listening and sharing. WeVideo has an education subscription package that is tailored to schools. Edgewood already had a school subscription at the time of this project that we were able to use. Access was offered through a traveling Chromebook lab that was placed in the music classroom for the duration of the project. Students were not able to take the Chromebooks home, however access to Chromebooks was provided during lunch periods and after school in the computer lab. Several students also chose to use alternative software and apps on cell phones and home computers to augment their soundscapes.

⁹ e.g. www.freesound.org

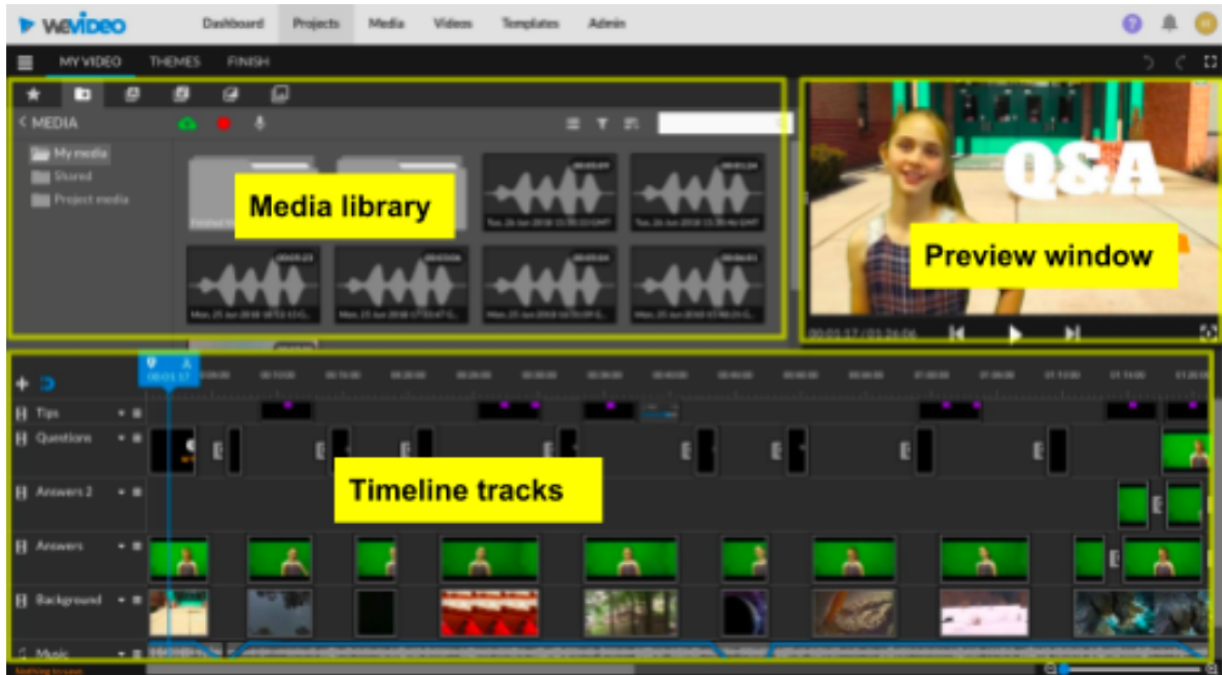


Figure 2.1: WeVideo Platform¹⁰

At Forest Glen, students used Soundtrap as their compositional platform. Soundtrap is also a subscription-based online media editor, though the focus is on audio only. The platform is more robust than WeVideo, though most students relied primarily on the basic functions of Soundtrap, such as looping, ducking, multi-track editing, and sound filters. As in WeVideo, all audio files can be exported for listening and sharing. Soundtrap also has a subscription package that is tailored to schools, and Forest Glen already had a school subscription at the time of this project. All students at Forest Glen are given a Chromebook for school use. These Chromebooks travel with them throughout the day and can be taken home each evening and over the weekend. As at Edgewood, several students chose to use alternative software and apps on cell phones and home computers to augment their soundscapes.

¹⁰ www.techdocs.blogs.brynmawr.edu

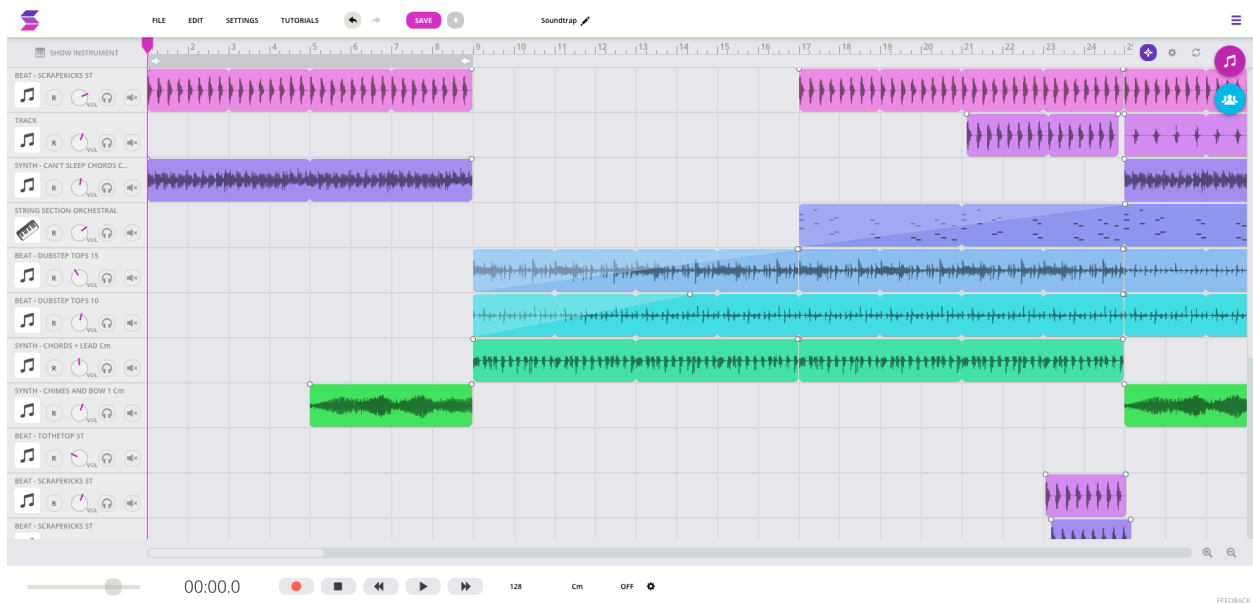


Figure 4.2: Soundtrap Platform¹¹

While students seemed fairly well-versed in using the Chromebooks, they were less familiar with the mixing platforms. As such, the teachers and I recorded brief tutorial videos that students could access with the basics of each platform. We also worked alongside students throughout the project to help them translate what they wanted to share into a musical format through the program.

I chose to use technology for this project purposely, as I hoped the digital mixing programs would offer an opportunity for students to use, mix, and manipulate recorded sounds. Because I intended for students to use “found sounds” (that is, sounds that were recorded from their environment) for at least a portion of their content, we needed to use programs that would allow students to drag and drop recorded files. I also felt that the use of digital platforms created opportunities for students to hear their compositions as they worked on them. Further, the

¹¹ www.blog.soundtrap.com

educators themselves noted that technology was a major focus at their school and were interested in developing creative and critical ways to engage with their school's resources. The use of technology in the music classroom has been problematized and explored by scholars (e.g. Benedict & O'Leary, 2018; Ruthmann & Mantic, 2017; Thibeault, 2015), and, while I do not go into detail about the advantages and limitations of engaging in such ways here, I do consider these issues below when I present data from each school.

As students created and explored musically, they also participated in ongoing dialogue with other participants, the educators and myself. Prompted by their creative processes, we grappled with complex viewpoints, considered multiple musical and verbalized ideas, and engaged with differing opinions as we listened to snippets of works in progress. Sometimes these conversations were formal and planned in class or in small groups, and other times they were informal and instigated by the students. They often followed the same questioning process that we utilized during the introductory activities. The purpose here was to help students continue to engage in critical listening, reflection, and dialogue as the project progressed. Further, this offered a glimpse into what and how students were composing, which later helped us facilitate discussions and dialogue in part three.

Part 3: Musical and Dialogical Encounters. The third phase of the project involved sharing and engaging in dialogue after hearing students' compositions. This portion of the project lasted approximately nine days. In what follows, I explain how students generated guidelines for sharing at each school, the different venues and contexts in which soundscapes were shared, and the ways in which dialogical spaces were developed for students to respond to the soundscapes.

When choosing how to share students' soundscapes, the educators and I wanted to encourage a process of critical listening that moved beyond appreciation in the "I liked it and here's why" sense to one that encouraged thoughtful questioning and dialogue, or as Feld (2015) states, "knowing through relations...an ongoing cumulative and interactive process of participation and reflection" (p. 14). As such, we turned to the students to ask how they wanted to share their work. Students at each school developed "guidelines for listening" (see data presented later in this chapter for further information). Central to these guidelines was the option to remain anonymous as one's composition was presented. Students cited vulnerability and insecurity as being part of their reasoning behind this request. Initially, I was uncertain about this guideline, as I felt that students' intentions for their compositions were potentially important elements in our dialogue. However, when I shared my project plan with two "critical friends" (Creswell, 2013), they suggested that anonymity might allow students to use the musical composition as an opportunity to project their ideas and feelings in a manner that was separated from their self-identity. Further, it might create more possibilities for students to push boundaries and enter into more complex debates and dialogues, since they would be discussing a musical work, rather than a person.

Despite their reasoning, I still felt as though something was lost in choosing to offer anonymity. There was a tenuous balance in helping students feel comfortable presenting their work and engaging in dialogue in relation to potentially controversial issues (Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Pierce, 2008). While students were able to reflect upon and share multiple ways of understanding the compositions presented, the student composer often shied away from verbally articulating the ideas and experiences that drove the development of the composition. This often meant that as students dialogued and debated about a composition, the composer chose to remain

silent. Anonymity also often led students to guess what a composition was “about,” rather than exploring what was made manifest for them as listeners as they experienced each composition. Ms. Smith, Ms. Green and I mediated these dialogues, trying to help guide the conversation away from a sense of description and toward connections to larger social issues while still honoring the voice, ideas, and intentions of the student composer. This proved challenging for each of us, and we were not always successful. This is further explored in chapter six.

Once guidelines were developed, soundscapes were played. Some were played in the large classroom, others in smaller groups led by myself or the educators, and still others in listening walks where small groups of students worked through several compositions on their own in class. The primary reason to break the sharing sessions up in this way was to see how students responded differently in each context. After students listened to each soundscape, they began by sharing their ideas with a partner, or writing their interpretations in a journal. We then returned to the larger group and the educator and I facilitated dialogical sessions that explored multiple divergent interpretations and aimed to connect students’ compositions with larger social issues. The purpose here was to continue the iterative integration of critical listening practices in each facet of the project. Based on students’ compositions, topics critically discussed included racism, immigration and deportation, isolation, cyber bullying, drug abuse, violence, mental health, identity, perfectionism, inequity, among others.

These dialogical sessions were, for me, the most complex and interesting part of this study. Students’ interpretations, willingness to disagree (and to do so boldly), and interest in hearing from one another were often the clearest examples of border crossing. Their soundscapes, in many ways, served as a catalyst for discussion and debate as they heard and engaged with interpretations that may have been different from their own. They also used these

dialogical spaces as opportunities to develop their creative artistic dispositions, and both Ms. Green and Ms. Smith noted that many students appeared more inquisitive and more interested in drawing connections between media and in-the-world experience in their music classes upon completing this project. As such, these dialogical engagements make up a large percentage of the data to be explored in the following chapters.

Part 4: Closing Conversations. At the conclusion of the learning project, we engaged in two days of closing conversations. The purpose of these conversations was to provide closure for the project and to help students draw connections between their soundscape compositions, personal experiences, and larger social structures in an action-oriented manner.

To begin, we returned to some of the guiding questions in the “Introductory Activities” section. We revisited how assumptions, stereotypes, and places influence the ways we see the world. As an extension, we expanded the conversation to explore how reflection might lead to action. At Edgewood, we considered the role of artists and musicians in illuminating and challenging taken-for-granted norms. Students explored their thoughts about what might happen if their soundscape “went viral” and their perceptions of the responsibilities associated with being an artist and musician. At Forest Glen, students were particularly interested in the ways in which students’ voices and ideas were heard and shared in school. As such, they explored how they might start a petition to integrate more opportunities for student voice in the school. Each of these engagements is further explicated in the data presentation section below.

Implementing the Project

While the above offers a general overview, the details of the project’s implementation were co-designed with each educator and, therefore, varied at each school. The project was implemented first at Edgewood Middle School in February and March 2019. Ms. Smith and I

began our discussions about the details of the project in December 2018, as soon as ethics approval was gained from both Western University and the local school board. This was followed by an implementation at Forest Glen in March and April 2019. Ms. Green and I began our discussions in February as the project was progressing at Edgewood. Most of the changes made between schools were related to a desire to be responsive to the students and overall curricular goals of each context. Some changes, however, were made at Forest Glen in response to my reflections and student feedback on the project at Edgewood. In what follows, I introduce selected data that is organized to delineate the research process and its unfolding in each of the sites. The aim in presenting this data here is to further provide insight into the dynamics of each case, some of the central points of congruence as well as places of distinction.

Edgewood Middle School

In what follows, I offer a presentation of select data from Edgewood Middle School to help paint a richer picture of what the implementation of the project looked like in this context. These data were selected purposefully to help illustrate the experiences of the project at this school. In between data sets, I narrate the project in my own voice. A full timeline of day-by-day activities can be found in appendix K.

There were 30 students in Ms. Smith's class who participated in the study, and we met every day over five weeks for a total of 25 class periods. All of the students were in grade seven (ages 12-13). I had previously been the music educator at Edgewood, but I had not taught any of the students who were in this class. A more thorough description of Edgewood is offered in chapter three.

Introductory Activities. On the first day, Ms. Smith and I decided that it was important to start the project with a conversation where we considered the idea of listening. We hoped that

this conversation would encourage students to begin to problematize this concept, as well as frame our engagements throughout the project.

Kelly: What does it mean to listen?
Maya: To make eye contact
Bobby: Don't talk when the other person is talking.
Elijah: Man, we hear that we gotta listen every single day
Ariel: To focus on the speaker
Aaliyah: Attend to the person that's talking
[...]
Kelly: When do you feel listened to?
Bobby: When people wait. When people let me finish what I was saying.
Kelly: Okay, let's explore that...have you ever had someone cut you off when you're talking?
Bobby: Every day. I mean, I do that every day, too. And then the other person, they think they got something to say that is better than what you have to say.

Bobby's response elicited a strong reaction from the class, who all began excitedly talking over one another.

Will: This is too much, too real
Kelly: (to the class) Have you ever been the one to cut someone off?
Bobby: Aw man, I do that to the teachers, I do that to my brother, I do that to my friends
Aaliyah: Definitely, definitely
Kelly: (to the class) What about the opposite? Have you felt like people haven't heard you?
Blanca: Yeah, my dad does that all the time. I try to share about something that's happening at school but he's too busy to listen.
Aaliyah: Yeah so this is teachers, too, like when I'm trying to answer a question, but I don't get to finish the answer. They just cut me off. Even though they say the thing I was gonna say.

[more examples ensue]

Kelly: Okay, so how might we listen in a way that responds to a person or to something that we're hearing in a way that shows interest? That shows that we care? Or that helps us try to help the person think or helps us try to explore the music more?
Joey: We could ask questions

(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

Over the next week, these conversations about listening continued, with students, educators and myself offering examples of how we might ask questions that would help one another think

through issues, topics and experiences. We placed ideas related to listening in multiple contexts and practiced them in various forums.

Of particular importance at Edgewood was day two, when we began listening to media. Before we began this project, Ms. Smith noted that she hoped students would use this project as an opportunity to share and dialogue about their experiences, and problematize some of the assumptions and tensions that surrounded those experiences:

- Ms. Smith: There are vast differences here in where students come from and what their prior experiences are. I would say at least a third, if not more, of this class has students that have recently moved here from somewhere else in like the last few years and their experiences are all just so different...and there's so much...tension or frustration here that's related to those differences.
- Kelly: Could you say more about what you mean when you say differences?
- Ms. Smith: Race, culture, economic situation, and where you grew up
(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

Ms. Smith and I decided that we would start with the One Chicago soundscape, just as I did in the pilot study and the narrative in chapter one. We did this not to perpetuate assumptions and biases, but to spark conversations about them, particularly as they related to the topics Ms. Smith hoped students would consider in this project.

We listened first with audio only. Students' responses to the soundscape varied, and when we asked them to share, we received several thoughts:

- Maya: I think it's somebody playing basketball, but they're playing it in the city. Cuz I think I heard shots and a siren. But that breathing, that's basketball.
- Aaliyah: I think it's somebody driving around in their car, listening to different stuff.
- Bobby: Why was the wind blowing so fast? It's cold weather. Whatever the story there's gonna be cold weather.
(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

Later in that period, we added the video back in, and invited students to watch with the video. Though students were not developing videos for this project, we wanted to talk through how the video impacted their perceptions of the soundscape and the story behind it.

- Kelly: Was this similar to or different from what you had in your head when you were listening the first time?
- Bobby: That like...the dude...like the white kid he had a perfect life. And the black kid...he lived in the hood with all the gangbangers. He had like, a bad life.
(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

Then, as we had hoped, conversations moved away from what the soundscape and video were “about” and toward dialogue about issues that were made possible because of the soundscape and video.

- Kelly: What do you think about this?
- Bobby: It’s true because...I used to live in the hood...and you know here, it’s not like that. In the projects. It’s a lot different in the projects and in the suburbs, so...(mumbling) cuz he gotta hear gunshots every day. The other kid don’t.
- Blanca: Yeah, but there’s a lot they’re leaving out there. This is a pretty one-sided story here.
- [...]
- Tyler: Yeah, but it’s like...it’s like propaganda. It’s like forced persuasion
- Edgar: Exploitation. They’re just trying to make you mad so you give something.
- Maya: Probably so you give money.
- Bobby: Yeah, but what they hearing, it’s not fake. Like this is real.
(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

While students appeared eager to discuss this particular example, their interest dwindled as we further discussed critical listening through a playlist of media Ms. Smith and I had curated. As we continued to listen, our questions to the large class were often met with silence. As time progressed, this lack of response in this large classroom setting became fairly routine at Edgewood.

Despite students’ relative silence in class, they often reacted differently in smaller class groups or in focus groups outside of the classroom context. These small group settings also began in the first week, as each student met with me in small 5-6 person focus groups during lunch or study hall, as well as in similar informal small class groupings. Here my questions were

often keenly and enthusiastically met with dialogue and debate. In one focus group during the first week, I asked students to return to the conversation from above:

Kelly: Okay, so let's go back to what we were talking about in class yesterday.
Blanca: Oh yeah....that song and the video. Yeah yeah. That was raw.
Kelly: What did you think about it?
Madison: I thought it was good.
Kelly: What do you mean by that?
Madison: Important. We don't talk about this stuff enough.
Kelly: Ok, so what is this "stuff" and why don't you think it's talked about.
Bobby: Big talk. Race. Guns. Violence.
Stokeley: The city.
Madison: Reality.
Kelly: Reality...can you talk more about that?
Madison: This is our world, isn't it? This is the stuff we experience it. And we don't ever talk about it in school. I get that some people think it's promoting one view or whatever, but this is real. This is happening. I talk about it all the time at home, but we should be talking about it more here. What's happening...and why it's happening, and how to change things. We should be talking about this.

(Focus Group, Edgewood)

Madison's response helped connect the larger conversations surrounding social issues back to the setting of the school, and the students began to articulate some of the disconnects between these two domains.

Kelly: Why do you think you don't talk about it?
Madison: We don't talk about it [violence, inequity, race] because [teachers] are afraid of it, I guess.
Bobby: They're afraid of a fight. They think that as soon as we talk about this kinda stuff, there's gonna be a fight, so we don't talk about it.
Blanca: They just don't take the time...there's so much we don't know about all of this stuff.
Madison: And we should be learning about it. This is real. How are we gonna change things if we ignore them?
Kelly: Is there anything other than fear?
Bobby: It's cuz they know people is gonna disagree.
Blanca: Of course we're gonna disagree! We have different experiences! That doesn't mean we shouldn't talk about it!
Will: You can try to talk about these things, but then it's just like insubordination. Right away. They just say it. And it's over. Insubordination.

Blanca: I don't even know what that means: Insubordination. I just know it means I stop or I'm in trouble. They just say "well you can't handle it." Well, have you tried? Have you taught me about it? Have you asked me about it?
(Focus Group, Edgewood)

While this particular group engaged in more back-and-forth dialogue than the other focus groups at Edgewood, the content of their comments was generally the same.

As this first week progressed, we opened up more spaces for students to dialogue and reflect outside the large classroom. In their journal entries, one-on-one conversations with me, and messages sent throughout this first week articulated similar ideas to those above:

Bobby: This is big talk. This is big talk that we never talk about in school. To tell you the truth, I was shocked on day one that you came in here and we were listening to that song and we were talking about race so quick. And I was like "Ok, aight...let's see what we got here. Let's see where this goes once we actually start making this music."

Johnny: When we talk in groups like this, it makes me feel like I'm not the only one who feels a certain way. Like other people also think we should talk about these things.

Madison: I just keep thinking about how everyone has a different story and how everyone sees the world differently and I just want to ask everybody why questions! The more we listen to examples, the more I want to know.

(Excerpts from student journal entries and informal conversations, Edgewood)

During this first week, it became clear that students were interested in thinking critically about their world and their experiences, and they were eager to find ways to do this in the school setting.

These introductory activities were not meant to define listening for students, but to help them begin to critically question how they understood listening and its role in our lives. The connections they began to make in these first few days also helped them listen with an ear toward larger social issues, such as race, violence and inequities. This way of listening likely shaped the soundscapes they developed in the next section.

Soundscape Composing. At Edgewood, we started part two of the project with an introduction to the tools and the technology that would be used. While students seemed fairly

well-versed in using the Chromebooks, they were less familiar with the mixing platform. Most had used WeVideo in previous classes, but for different types of projects. Ms. Smith and I spent the first day reviewing the basics (dragging and dropping sounds, looping, layering, dynamic changes, etc.) and then developed and shared a short web tutorial that students could access independently as they were working. Throughout the two weeks spent on composing, students approached us independently with questions related to technology and we worked through each question one-on-one. Students also often relied on their peers during this portion of the project, asking for technology help from those sitting around them.

At the beginning of this section of the project, we also worked with students to explore their compositional processes, helping them develop sound lists or storyboards to plan their compositions. We generated questions together as a class to help students think through what they wanted to include:

What are sounds that you associate with your experiences? With your life?
What sounds do you find meaningful? Why?
How do these sounds help represent how you hear your world?
How might these sounds represent what you think about the world?

Ms. Smith and I talked with students about the compositional process, noting frequently that students' paths would likely not look the same. Some worked in a linear fashion, with composition viewed as a step-by-step process, while others proceeded in a more cyclical fashion, exploring sounds and playing with the technological tools before beginning to articulate a compositional vision. In general, students at Edgewood seemed to appreciate this balance of a review of basic skills with an open conception of how they might musically articulate their final projects.

Chris: You have...and even Ms. Smith...you were open about this. It wasn't 'oh yeah, follow this rubric and do this, and do this.' I didn't feel controlled. You let it be open. So, we could each come at the question differently. We do projects

around here all the time, but they're not like this. They're not 'creative,' I guess. There's a rubric and we have to do what it says from A to B. But then we're not actually taught how to use the stuff we need to do the project. So, like, we used WeVideo once before for a project, but no one actually taught me how to use any of it, so I got all frustrated and did so bad on the project because I just froze. I learned nothing. It's like they thought that was 'creative' because we were using a movie making program or whatever, but really it just made me feel like I didn't know what I was doing...this was different.

(Student Interview, Edgewood)

From a perspective of musical and compositional construction, students at Edgewood drew from a variety of sources. Many used short snippets of media, such as Franco who used a portion of a 21 Savage rap and *The Star Spangled Banner* to develop a soundscape that centered on deportation and immigration policy, or Blanca who used Queen's *Somebody to Love* as a background to her composition about her experiences caring for her younger siblings. Others, such as Bobby, used media from television or video games. He used a series of football and basketball highlights from specific games he remembered watching with his cousin who was killed in shooting to discuss gang violence. Still others, like Mariana and Hunter, used only sounds to develop their soundscape. Mariana layered a series of seemingly commonplace sounds – a beating heart, a pen scratching paper, a ticking clock – to develop a soundscape that spoke to the pressure of standardized tests, while Hunter recorded sounds from the city – traffic, the sound of the lakeshore, basketballs bouncing – to paint a particular vision of summer weekends in Chicago.

Throughout the two weeks that students developed their compositions, they also participated in one-on-one and small group conversations with me about their creative processes. In these contexts, I often listened to snippets of works in progress, helped students think through how to musically actualize a particular idea, or offered questions to push students to think critically through their compositional choices. These questions often included:

Why did you choose to use this sound here?
What might change?
Were all of your choices purposeful? In what ways?
Is this speaking to something else?
Are you connecting this to the world or your experience at all?
How do you think other people might hear this?
What connections to do you think they might make?

Students often went back and made changes and adjustments to their compositions based on our conversations, or those with their peers. In this way, their compositional processes were cyclical, and students often generated multiple drafts or versions of their soundscape.

Initially, I had hoped that these conversations would help students think critically about their own artistic decision-making, as well as help them build upon the critical listening we had practiced during the first week. For many students, they did serve that purpose, but they also served as a self-reflective practice for me. I often caught myself concerned that students were developing soundscapes that seemed disconnected from social struggles. I grappled with this in my researcher journal:

There just feels like a huge chasm between students here. Some of them are developing soundscapes that are so connected to personal experience and social reality – like [Madison's] is really showing her thinking about inequity and stereotypes about different neighborhoods and [Elijah's] is so interesting...he's dealing with race in a really sort of "head-on" way...even students like [Mariana] and [Ariel] – their topics are less controversial maybe – they're talking about testing and perfection and pressure – but they're critical and creative processes just seem really clear. But what about students like [Tyler] and [Maya] who are writing about video games and sports? Or [Will] who seems to be putting together a series of laugh tracks. I don't want to create stricter parameters, but I'm not sure how they're really seeing the purpose of their soundscapes. I mean, musically, the mixing is interesting, but I feel like I need to talk to them more about the criticality, see if I can get a feel for what they're going for.

(Researcher Journal Entry)

The more I talked to students, the more I realized that the lack of critical listening was often on my part, not theirs. As we engaged in conversation throughout those two weeks of composing, their comments demonstrated what appeared to be a much deeper level of critical thought than I

had initially assumed. Tyler, for example, used video games in his composition, but he did so as a way of addressing stress and anxiety, noting that playing video games was the only time he felt “in control” of his life. Maya, who wrote about basketball, articulated a similar idea. In the classroom, she noted that she often feels behind, lost, or unengaged. On the court, however, she is constantly thinking, reacting, and problem-solving. Even Will, who used laugh tracks in his composition, articulated his own struggle to both make and keep friends, noting that he often tried to use humor and his self-applied label of “class clown” to appeal to his classmates. This growing awareness not only helped me, as an educator, reflect on the assumptions I had made about students’ own compositions, but it also helped prepare me for the next phase of the project, musical and dialogical engagements.

Musical and Dialogical Encounters. When it became clear in first week of the project that students at Edgewood seemed more open to discussion in smaller groups, Ms. Smith and I began to plan for multiple forums through which students might share their compositions. Thus, throughout the third stage of the project during weeks four and five, we varied the sharing sessions between large group discussions (full class), small group discussions (groups of 10-15 with myself or Ms. Smith) students, and listening walks (groups of 3-4 students listening and discussing on their own). I also brought many compositions into the 5-6 member focus groups that were still ongoing with students during lunch and study hall periods.

We listened to each soundscape twice and then often began the conversation with a question or series of questions. The purpose here was continue the iterative integration of critical listening that we had begun from the first week, building upon and developing this practice.

What did you notice?

What do you wonder?

What are you thinking about when you listen to this?

How might someone else interpret this differently?
Are there larger issues that this brings up for you?

In the first few students' soundscapes, Ms. Smith stepped back and I led most of the discussion. Many students at Edgewood developed soundscapes that reflected on potentially controversial or contentious issues, often relating to their personal experiences. These soundscapes addressed issues such as racial inequity, gun violence, cultural stereotyping, school safety, bullying, deportation and immigration, and other politically-charged topics. Prior to the project, Ms. Smith had been uncertain about how the conversations surrounding these compositions would play out:

Ms. Smith: We just don't feel like we're equipped to handle a lot of the stuff that many of the kids have experienced because we've never experienced them or whatever, so we just don't talk about it. How do we teach kids that are so different and who have experienced things that we could never even dream of experiencing?
(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

As the project progressed, Ms. Smith began to shift her perspective, noticing and engaging in the complexities that emerged as she spoke with students, listened to their soundscapes, and participated in dialogue with them.

As expected, students at Edgewood were more often open in the smaller groups than they were in the full classroom. These dialogical engagements often provided opportunities for the creation of contact zones (Pratt, 1991), wherein the pedagogical space was one in which divergent ideas and opinions were expressed and negotiated with those of others. It was in these spaces that moments of border crossing most frequently occurred (see chapters 5-7). While Ms. Smith or I often asked the initial question and mediated the discussion, the students were usually quick to respond to one another, as seen in this example where we were discussing Edgar's soundscape:

Kelly: So, can you take more about how and why you were thinking this way when you were composing...or how you're thinking now?

Edgar: It's from the 'new kids'' old school. The 'originals' – the people who have been here forever – they don't do anything bad. And the people that come here from other schools don't know what it's like here, so they just...it's not even throwing punches anymore. It's worse.

Bobby: But what if that's just what they know? What if that's what they assume school is supposed to look like...like it's just what people do?

Blanca: But they make the choice to do that. I don't think that that's really like their body is used to it...I think they make the choice. Because when they come to a new school, they have a decision: Start out fresh or become...become a brand new person. They say, 'I don't want to be like I was in my old school.' Or, they choose to act like that. I don't really think it's because they already have that background that they just know it. I think it's that they choose.

Edgar: Yep, yep...you have to not bring that here.

Stokeley: But can it be both? Can't it? It can be both. It can be a choice, but it's also, like, they made that choice because that's what people do in the world they live in. That's their normal. Like, they make that choice. But you can only choose from the things you know.

(Small Group Conversation, Edgewood)

Dialogue about assumptions, biases, and connections to lived experience frequently permeated these conversations.

Sometimes students used these spaces to return to issues that had been brought up after listening to soundscapes on previous days, such as in this example where we were discussing Asia's soundscape:

Will: After we listened to that one soundscape yesterday and someone has said specifically that it was African American person or their gender or something like that...how do other people think about who is doing it? Why are we making assumptions when we listen to everybody's songs? Why do we assume we know what the person's race or gender is? Where does that come from?

Hunter: It's kind of because just-- and when you see somebody, you already stereotype them. So, if a white police officer shoots a black man because of something they had in their hand or something, they're already assuming because of how he looks and how he talks and everything. So they think he's up to no good when there are very intelligent people that are African American.

Ariel: I think that it's not necessarily-- it shouldn't be assumption that a white man shooting a black man. It could be anyone because anyone is able to get a gun.

Bryce: And in that second one, there was nothing in that to say that it was a city. It was like, "Birds chirping," so, like, why don't we think it's rural or the suburbs?

Maya: Well, I didn't grow up in the city, but I had a lot of gun violence where I lived. And I don't think people should just assume that it's in the city just because there's gun violence.

Will: I mean that also plays into people's backgrounds and stuff. Maybe they've heard it-- maybe they lived in the city at one point and that's what they heard, or I think people can have a different perspective of it. They might envision something else different in their mind.

(Small Group Conversation, Edgewood)

As time progressed, students began to engage more in large classroom discussions, and Ms. Smith and I slowly started reintroducing more full class dialogue into our daily lesson plans during week five. One element of these sharing sessions that made large group conversations “easier” was anonymity. We discussed the advantages and limitations of having compositions presented anonymously at Edgewood and students overwhelmingly requested to remain anonymously. They often cited vulnerability and insecurity as being part of their reasoning:

Bobby: It comes down to your friends, right? Like, if they listening to these other soundscapes and they not making fun of them, then you know they not gonna make fun of yours, so then you feel like ‘ok, this one’s mine. I want you to know that this one’s mine.’

(Student Interview, Edgewood)

There were moments, however, at both schools where students eventually chose to “claim” their compositions. At Edgewood, many of the students did this in small focus groups, but not in the large classroom.

As noted earlier, this section of the project that occurred during weeks four and five was often the most complex and interesting for me. Students’ willingness to share divergent ideas, explore their own experiences, and build critical dispositions was often most pronounced during these weeks. As such, they are the primary source of data analyzed in the coming chapters. Further, at Edgewood, these two weeks also demonstrated the most significant shift in Ms. Smith as she tried engaging with students in different ways, reflected on the ways in which she posed questions, and considered how these conversations might impact her future curricular and pedagogical choices.

Closing Conversations. After our listening and sharing sessions had been completed, Ms. Smith and I noticed that comments and conversation related to the role of media, and in particular music, as a possible catalyst for social dialogue and as a form of political activism repeatedly came up in conversation, but were not often expanded upon. Therefore, in the final two days of the project, we discussed how various artists position themselves in society, using their media platforms to raise awareness, ask questions, or provoke conversations. Students began drawing connections to the dialogue we had in class over the past several weeks. How were their soundscapes representative of things that happened to them? How did they listen to the soundscapes of their classmates through the lens of their own experience? And what role do responsibility and intentionality play when an artist is developing a new song?

Edgar: Well everybody has their opinion on these things. Everyone has an opinion on gun violence. Everyone has an opinion about everything. It all depends on what their intentions are.

Ms. Smith: Is that part of an artists' job? Should it be? Can it be?

Bobby: No.

Edgar: Well it should be.

Blanca: It can be.

Maya: Yeah, it can be.

Edgar: But, again, they'd have to get over writing about themselves

Stokeley: Really there's two different types of artists. There's artists who do it to get the money and fame and stuff like that...and there's artists that actually want to get a point across.

Blanca: Well they don't have to talk about it. Sometimes it's too sad for them to talk about it. But if they want, they can. They have the audience. They have people that will listen. I mean, with social media...this is how people go viral. This is how people get the word out. This is how our generation talks about things. I mean it's really about how we pay attention to the world. We pay attention to what is around us, what is close to us. And not everyone pays the same kind of attention. It depends on what matters to you.

(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

In response to this conversation, students completed a final journal entry for the project. Here, they explored what might happen if their own soundscape "went viral," reflected on the project as a whole, and offered feedback that could potentially change how the project was enacted in

the future. Through their responses, several students explored their own capacities for potentially affecting change.

While I did not follow the students at Edgewood beyond my five weeks with them, I did complete a final interview with Ms. Smith after the project had ended. During that interview, I asked if any part of the project seemed to linger for students as they continued in music class or in other contexts. She noted:

Ms. Smith: I think they're listening differently...we've moved on to our next project and we're thinking about how music can be used in the media like commercials and stuff and normally, it takes a long time of asking questions and probing to get more than 'I don't know,' but I think they are just switched on to thinking critically about process and just thinking more deeply.
(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

Ms. Smith chose to share the students' soundscapes (with their permission) at the school's annual Fine Arts Festival in March of 2019. The soundscapes were posted to a website that allowed parents, community members, school board members, and other students and educators to listen, experience, and engage with students' work.

Forest Glen Junior High School. In what follows, I offer a presentation of select data from Forest Glen Junior High School to help paint a richer picture of what the implementation of the project looked like in this context. Just as in the section on Edgewood, these data were selected purposefully to help illustrate the experience of the project at this school. In between data sets, I narrate the project in my own voice. A full timeline of day-by-day activities can be found in appendix L.

Two of Ms. Green's classes participated in the study, and we met every day for five weeks. There were 14 students in period one and 17 students in period two. All of the students were in grade six (ages 11-12). For the purposes of this chapter, I do not delineate between the

two classes, as Ms. Green and I delivered the project similarly in each class. A more thorough description of Forest Glen is offered in chapter three.

Introductory Activities. On the first day of the project, Ms. Green and I began the project with the topic of listening, just as Ms. Smith and I did at Edgewood. We started with similar questions and conversations. Some of the students' responses were the same, but others differed:

- Kelly: What do you think it means to listen?
Nathan: You don't interrupt
Jimmy: Yeah, yeah and don't talk over them either
Alyssa: Yeah, you and you pay attention
Sarah: You make eye contact
Titus: Sitting up straight.
Jeremy: Raising your hand
Marie: ...but not 'til you know the answer.
Zamir: But also understanding. It means you make sure you understand what they're saying.
Elisabeth: No talking, feet on the ground, listening ears
Scarlette: I think listening means you catch every word that someone says.
Emma: Yeah, but it also means being able to ask a question. Like you're paying attention and you can ask a question about what they're saying.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

Just as at Edgewood, these conversations continued throughout the first week, as students practiced listening in multiple contexts and forums. Ms. Green and I worked with students to develop questions and ideas that might help them think through issues, topics, and experiences. During this process, students at Forest Glen seemed intrigued by the way were thinking about listening, and at the beginning of day two, students in one class noted:

- Scarlette: You know, I feel like we should rename what we're doing here.
Kelly: Can you talk more about what you're thinking here?
Scarlette: Listening gets used so much, but it makes us feel like we're in trouble.
Nathan: Yeah! Like, "pay attention! You better listen!"
Scarlette: Right!
Turner: We should call it hearing. That way, it's different.

Adam: Yeah, it feels different from the way listening is used in other classes
Scarlette: Because it IS different.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

Following their cue, Ms. Green and I tried to focus on using the word “hearing” throughout the project. The students shared this choice with their peers in the other class, and this distinction between “hearing” and “listening” carried throughout the project at Forest Glen.

At Forest Glen, we still practiced “hearing” or critical listening with examples from media, but unlike at Edgewood, we did not use the One Chicago soundscape. The student body at Forest Glen was demographically diverse, but here students had moved to district from Eastern Europe, Mexico, and Central America. As such, Ms. Green and I did not feel the One Chicago soundscape would spark critical, personal conversations. Therefore, we started with playlists and soundscape examples from other sources¹². Unlike at Edgewood, students at Forest Glen were interested in spending time unpacking ideas about interpretation and intent from the first week:

Elisabeth: Well it could be that they’re trying to speak out about something. To have a message.

Turner: Yeah, like they want someone to hear what they have to say and they’re using their famousness to show that.

Zamir: Yeah but sometimes they put it together cuz it sounds good.

Marie: That’s still a message though because they’re, like, putting together a certain way if they want you to feel happy when you listen to it or if they want you to feel sad when you listen to it.

Shelley: Yeah, but sometimes we listen and we feel or hear different things. Like, the way I feel it probably isn’t gonna be the same way [Elisabeth] feels or hears it.

Elisabeth: Yeah cuz we’re not the same.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

This awareness of how our experiences impact the ways in which we listen and relate to music and ideas permeated our discussions at Forest Glen through the project as a whole.

¹² e.g. The Urban Remix Project (urbanremix.gatech.edu) and The World Soundscape Project (soundexplorations.blogspot.com)

On day four, Ms. Green and I made a significant change from what Ms. Smith and I had done at Edgewood. This change was based on feedback from students at Edgewood who wished we had spoken more directly and openly about personal experiences with assumptions and biases earlier in the project. These ideas were threaded into our dialogue during the introductory activity section of the project and throughout the project as a whole at Edgewood, but we did not create an explicit space for a conversation about personal experience and opinions related to this topic in the first week. As such, Ms. Green and I chose to speak more candidly about ideas related to stereotypes and assumptions with students.

During our first week, students generated ideas about the sources of stereotypes and assumptions:



Figure 4.3: Where do stereotypes come from?

Social Media, and particularly Snapchat, were the most common responses from students, with friends and family close behind. We used this word cloud to trace people and platforms, both musical and non-musical, that influence how we come to know and understand the world

In the first week, students also engaged in an activity where they anonymously submitted an assumption that they feel that others make about them. We then printed these assumptions and passed them out randomly around the room.

Just because I'm a girl, some people assume I can't play soccer.
Just because I look Latino, some people assume I speak Spanish.
Just because I speak Polish, some people assume I wasn't born here.
Just because I get A's in my classes, some people assume school is easy for me.
Just because I don't wear Jordans, some people assume I'm poor.
Just because I wear glasses, some people assume I'm smart.
Just because I'm shy, some people assume I'm depressed.

(examples from student Google Classroom submissions)

Ms. Green and I led a class conversation on vulnerability, which moved into dialogue about listening and considering multiple perspectives when dialoguing in class. Students shared around the room, connecting these comments with personal experiences, larger social struggles, and ideas about both global and local issues. As the first week came to a close, Ms. Green and I were eager to see how these activities from the first week, when coupled with students critical listening and thinking practices, might help frame the soundscapes they developed in the next section.

Soundscape Composing. At Forest Glen, we began the second part of the project similarly to Edgewood. Here, students used Soundtrap as their digital mixing platform. We again spent several days leading students through the basics of the program and supplied them with a tutorial we had recorded to help them throughout the process. The tutorials and basic overviews helped students navigate the platforms, but they still often expressed discouragement:

Sarah: I know what I want it to sound like, but I don't know how to make the program do what I want it to do.

(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

Comments like this were common in the first few days of week two. As students' comfort and experience with the programs grew, however, their frustrations about how to artistically actualize

their ideas waned. In some ways, these expressed frustrations are not all that different from creative endeavors that do not involve technology. Creative frustration (Sapp, 1992), that is the stage between idea generation and creative actualization, is a recognized part of the creative process. In this project, frustration was often projected onto the technology, but I argue that similar frustrations would have likely arisen if students were actualizing their creative ideas without the use of technology.

I met with students both formally and informally throughout these two weeks. We discussed compositional ideas and creative processes, and I asked questions to help them think through their ideas. As at Edgewood, these conversations often prompted students to participate in a cyclical process of creation and revision (Webster, 2011), as they recognized and negotiated how they saw themselves and their world:

- Kelly: Can you talk to me about your process so far?
- Scarlette: I started out trying to do like, “Everyone’s different and no one’s the same.” And trying to use like difference languages but it wasn’t fitting together like I wanted it to. I was really frustrated. So then, like, I talked to you about it and we, sort of, like, mapped out what I was thinking and you asked me some questions about why I was doing the language thing, like, why this was important to me.
- Kelly: Right, yeah, I remember that. I feel like you surprised yourself with the answer.
- Scarlette: Yeah, yeah, I was talking about how I felt like how my point was that I didn’t speak another language and how that makes me different here. And that’s really the point of what I wanted to talk about. And then I was sitting with [Turner] and [Adam] and I was just sort of watching them. They were so relaxed about their composing and I wasn’t – I felt like I wanted mine to be perfect. And I realized it was really more about me and then like how different people get different messages from, like, the media and their friends and their parents.
- Kelly: So, are you thinking there is a relationship at all between your first and final ideas?
- Scarlette: Oh yeah, totally, it was just like, it was helpful to talk through it while I was working to sort of make sense of what I wanted to say. It was like nobody was just giving me their opinion and telling me what to do, but I also didn’t feel like totally alone.

(Student Interview, Forest Glen)

Students articulated a preference for different forms of conversation and reflection. Some appreciated conversations with myself or their teacher, some preferred to engage with classmates, and others preferred to communicate and reflect via online journaling or messaging. In each of these cases, the focus was on asking questions, rather than giving opinions.

Students at Forest Glen also expressed a desire to discuss how they might take their sounds and translate them into something that sounded more like a “musical” version of the story they wished to tell. Often Ms. Green and I worked with students to think through these questions on an individual basis, but occasionally a question would prompt an all-class discussion. As we thought through these ideas, we used Soundtrap and WeVideo to demonstrate and work with tools like looping, ducking, splitting, and pitch alterations to explore how they might be used to achieve the aesthetic musical experience students sought to create with their composition.

As students shared their in-progress soundscapes with me, I faced internal dissonance. Students at Forest Glen tended to use fewer environmental sounds and more excerpts from media. On the surface, I felt as though their soundscapes were less connected with the critical social issues and personal experiences we had discussed during week one. I expressed these concerns in my researcher journal:

Where are the ‘places’ in some of these compositions!? Where are the physical and environmental sounds? Did I explain the project differently? Did [Ms. Green]? We listened to examples that had environmental sounds! Are these going to just become remixes of their favorite songs? What do we do to fix this?

(Researcher Journal Entry)

My own language use here (particularly words like “just” and “fix”) tell of a bias I held and had to grapple with at Forest Glen. This passage demonstrates a very different internal expectation from my outwardly stated comments to students, where I said they could “garner inspiration from anywhere.” The students themselves seemed more than willing to expand their conceptions

of soundscapes well beyond my own. They mixed the work of Billie Eilish and Meko Supreme to consider media messages, video game music helped them explore isolation, and excerpts from *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* helped us think through family dynamics.

Scarlette used a variety of media clips in her soundscape, which was inspired by her own inner concerns about perfectionism. I asked her where the “world” or “environmental” sounds were in her composition, and she looked at me curiously and remarked,

Scarlette: But this is my world. This is what I hear in my head, what I hear in my earbuds, what I hear from my friends and parents. This is just as important to my world.

Kelly: Could you talk more about that?

Scarlette: It’s like when I’m in the car on the way home. I don’t hear the sounds of the car. I hear my mom asking me about the grade on my math test and the music on the radio about how to be pretty and my own voice in my head telling me that I have to try harder. So, that’s what my soundscape is about. That is how I hear my world. That’s the ‘stuff’ of my soundscape.

(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

Scarlette’s comments asked me to reframe my own conceptions of musical material, mixing, and soundscapes. As with many other moments in the project, this became a moment of reflection for me as both a researcher and educator.

Maybe the question I should be asking here comes back to how I am understanding the concept of ‘world.’ Why must ‘world’ be conceived of as closed? Or – more importantly, why am/was I conceiving of place as closed? And how is this impacting their creative processes? How are students thinking about this? How will this impact spaces for dialogue?

(Researcher Journal Entry)

Many of her classmates echoed Scarlette’s comments, and I explore the ways in which other students at Forest Glen challenged and negotiated these understandings in chapters five and seven. I found that the more we dialogued and reflected with students about their soundscapes, the more Ms. Green and I realized that they were complex, critical, and connected to students’ experiences; even if we did not see it at first. This experience reaffirmed for me the ongoing, practiced, and “everyday” nature of such critical and border crossing engagements (Martin &

Brown, 2013). It also highlighted the ways in which my own actions and pedagogy impact the positioning of critical frameworks (Pinar, 2009) and the construction of place in the classroom. These conversations also often impacted the ways in which I engaged with students during the dialogical sessions that followed in the next section of the project.

Musical and Dialogical Encounters. When we entered the third section of the project in week four, Ms. Green and I returned again to the idea of critically listening/hearing to help students extend their practices into this new setting. As at Edgewood, students requested the option of anonymity for their soundscapes, but here they also chose to develop more extensive “guidelines for listening/hearing” during this portion of the project.

They decided we would all look down at the floor while listening to avoid eye contact with others while listening, and, to avoid ‘knee-jerk reactions’ when listening, we would leave a few moments of silence after a composition finished playing before responding in small groups or more openly as a larger class. We would not raise hands to speak, but they did suggest that Ms. Green or I could step in to mediate if too many people were trying to get their point across at the same time, or if one person seemed to be dominating the conversation. Finally, they determined that our conversations should begin with questions (often prefaced with ‘I wonder...’), rather than statements, and we practiced asking and exploring questions before we started listening to their work.

Interestingly, these guidelines developed by the Forest Glen students were in complete opposition to the original statements they offered on day one of the project when asked “what does it mean to listen.” There, they mentioned eye contact, sitting up straight, raising your hand when you have the right answer, and paying attention as being key. I cannot ever be completely sure if the students at Forest Glen developed these guidelines because they thought they were

“supposed” to do so based on our previous conversations or if they had themselves had shifted in their understandings of how critical listening might operate. I do know that students in both classes at Forest Glen took these guidelines seriously, often reminding the class, including myself and Ms. Green, of their importance in helping us to create a space for critical listening.

At Forest Glen, students were very interested in participating in large group conversations, often responding quickly to their classmates’ compositions. As such, Ms. Green and I invited students to pause before sharing, encouraging them to write down their initial responses and reactions and then think them through in small groups before coming back to a full class group. When they did return, their conversations again often connected to our dialogue about assumptions, biases, and connections to personal and lived experiences.

Scarlette: I mean, in thinking about this soundscape, the one we just listened to, this does come back to what we were talking about earlier, like a couple weeks ago. That’s what we were talking about in my group with Turner and Lizzie. It’s that “Oh you don’t speak Polish, so you must not be Polish” attitude.

Adam: Yes! Exactly. I get that all the time with Spanish.

Phil: It’s just as bad as “you speak with an accent so you must not belong here”

Kelly: Do you want to talk more about that?

Jake: I do. Because, it’s like, this isn’t just in [Forest Glen.] This is like the president and just because people don’t have those green cards or the right visas...

Phil: Yeah, but this isn’t new. Like this has been happening forever in this country.

Scarlette: And it’s not just cultural. It’s also assuming that someone is a nerd because they do well in school and asking them for the answers to the homework.

Phil: ...or assuming someone isn’t smart just because they don’t get good grades.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

Unlike at Edgewood, students were less keen to return to different soundscapes in our focus groups, desiring instead to talk about the learning project as a whole and how it fit into their larger curricular experiences at Forest Glen and, more specifically, in their general music class.

Mateo: I’ve never had a project where another person comes and asks about how your opinion is and then actually cares about the answer. Because usually, the teachers just get to decide how it is but with this, we created this thing that was like, talking about how we feel about something and then it was like, people actually

listened when we talked about our ideas and, I don't know, I just never felt like I was wrong.

(Focus Group, Forest Glen)

This section of the project that occurred during weeks four and five was both the source of most of the data presented and analyzed in the following chapters, as well as the space in which the most significant shifts were observed in terms of how students and educators engaged with one another.

Closing Conversations. After our listening and sharing sessions at Forest Glen, students moved into thinking about affecting change at a more local level at their own school. Together we talked about how music might be used to help students think through and express ideas that could then be shared with other teachers, administrators, or the community.

Mateo: I mean, I put a petition together here once. I got people to sign it. But it wasn't taken seriously.

Turner: Oh yeah! Taking back the power!

Kelly: Wait, what? Can you tell us more about this, Mateo?

Scarlette: So, he started a petition

Mateo: Yeah, basically.

Sebastian: He made a sheet and then he had to get 100 signatures for teachers to let us do what we want or something like that.

Mateo: Oh, so basically in math class, I...

Sebastian: ...he got bored.

Mateo: Yeah. I was really bored. And so I just wrote like kid's voices should be heard because I didn't want to deal with this anymore. And so I asked other people if they wanted to sign it. And so I had like 7 people sign it.

Scarlette: That's it?

Kelly: Hang on, I want to go back to this idea of "kids voices being heard." What did you mean by that?

Mateo: Well, I mean, not just that we should get to do what we want, but maybe that we have something to say and we should have space to really talk about what we have to say...things we think are issues, things we talked about here in these things we did.

Scarlette: Yeah, like the bullying ones or the mental health ones

Sebastian: Or the ones where we learn about things that matter to us

Scarlette: You know, Mateo, this is a good idea. If you do it again, we could organize it. Get more people involved. Really think about what specifically matters to it. If you're serious about it, I think a lot of people would help you. And I think we could do this in a way that gets [the principal and vice-principal's] attention.

Lizzie: And people would sign it. But we'd have to really think about what we want it to say and why. And think about it from, like, what could actually happen. Like what [the principal and vice-principal] would do.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

In these closing conversations, the students at Forest Glen began thinking about how to move from a petition that just said “we should get to do what we want” to considering issues they saw in school, suggestions they might have for enacting change, and how they might earn the attention of their school administrators. We spent our final days of this project dialoguing about this and similar examples of how students might engage in and with their school community in a manner that possibly leads toward an altered possible future through their action.

Summary

The purpose of this section was to outline the framework of the learning project used in this study. I also sought to articulate the details of how the project was realized in each school, thus demonstrating the importance of context and teacher collaboration in the implementation process. In the chapters that follow, I offer an analysis through the framework of critical artistic dispositions, which is more fully explained in chapter two. In each of the following three chapters, I both present and analyze data through the lenses (1) dark and politicized funds of knowledge; (2) listening and agency; and (3) self-authorship. I argue that each of these lenses provided opportunities for border crossing and also helped students develop critical artistic dispositions.

CHAPTER V

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IN MUSICAL AND DIALOGICAL ENCOUNTERS

Introduction

Students' lives are imbued with a wide range of experiences. Through these experiences they amass skills, resources, knowledges, and dispositions, each of which is connected to sociopolitical and cultural-historic structures and processes. When curriculum is disconnected from these experiences, school can seem unrelatable and irrelevant (Gutstein, 2006). When connections are forged, however, school can be a place of criticality where curriculum "builds upon the sociocultural realities of students' lives, examines sociohistorical and political dimensions of education, and casts students as critically engaged, active participants in the construction of knowledge" (Salazar, 2013, p. 128).

The project in this study aimed to forge connections between learning practice and the realities of students' in-the-world experiences. As they developed their soundscape compositions, students drew upon their diverse "funds of knowledge" in order to explore a facet of how they understood their world (Moll et al., 1992). While funds of knowledge can span the gamut of experiences, skills, dispositions, and resources students accumulate in their home and community lives, many of the students in this study drew specifically upon knowledges that could be classified as "dark" or "politicized" (Gallo & Link, 2015; Zipin, 2009). This included experiences that might be deemed contentious or controversial in the classroom, such as topics relating to race, class, immigration, and gun violence.

In this chapter, I explore how students called upon their diverse knowledges and experiences in order to connect "moment to moment interactions in [the] classroom to larger social struggles that may be local and global in scope" (Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017, p.

33). Through data and analysis, the ways in which partnering creative work with ongoing critical reflection helped students and educators interrogate and problematize these knowledges in the music class setting are considered. I argue that these critically reflective practices helped illuminate the complexities of students' knowledges, facilitated moments of border crossing, and provided entry points for students to enact change in their futures.

Framing this Chapter

Within border crossing pedagogy, “students’ own voices and experiences become central to a process of creating new forms of knowledge” (Hayes & Cuban, 1996, p. 9). These experiences are then read dialogically from multiple perspectives, creating opportunities for students to “critically engage the strengths and limitations...that define their own histories and narratives” (Giroux, 2005, p. 108). Therefore, curricular endeavors that are grounded in border crossing pedagogy necessitate an engagement with students’ funds of knowledge, both as the source of texts and as central to dialogue and debate.

Dark and politicized funds of knowledge are particularly important in border crossing pedagogy (Gallo & Link, 2015; Zipin, 2009). Giroux (2005) notes that “critical educators need to challenge those educational discourses that view schooling as a decontextualized site free from social, political, and racial tensions,” choosing instead to actively engage with the diverse experiences that have traditionally been left out of the classroom (p. 226). If border pedagogy is to have any meaning, he argues, it must engage with the complex and controversial realities of students’ lives outside of school.

In what follows, the role students’ dark and politicized funds of knowledge played in their creative and dialogical engagements in this project are explored. I begin by clarifying and situating how dark and politicized funds of knowledge are understood in this chapter. I then

present and analyze data that explores how these funds of knowledge were negotiated through two themes. The first theme, dispositional and pedagogical reflections, explores the ways in which Ms. Smith, Ms. Green, and I conceptualized and engaged with students' funds of knowledge over the course of this project. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which our pedagogical actions served to support or curtail students' willingness and interest in problematizing darker lifeworld knowledges in their soundscapes and dialogues. The second theme considers how students and educators recognized and engaged with the complexities inherent in diverse knowledges funds. Here I consider the ways in which reflective practices helped to illuminate the complex and critical nature of students' knowledges presented in their soundscapes in order to help students link their creative practices to local and global social realities.

The Funds of Knowledge Framework

The funds of knowledge framework speaks to the “historically accumulated and culturally developed” resources and skills that students amass in contexts typically outside of school (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). As I articulate in chapter two, this framework is intended to help students and educators “become open to learning about and from the lives of others, with conviction that these lives embody both intelligence and knowledge assets” (Zipin, 2009, p. 317). This framework can also “create a space that allows students to form their own voice and hear each other’s voice in the classroom” (Liu, 2020, p. 98). In middle school, a time when students are often actively questioning, exploring, and developing their identities (Gerber, 1994; Sweet, 2016), opportunities to utilize and problematize their funds of knowledge are key as students engage in ongoing consideration of their role(s) in and with the world (Milner, 2014).

More recently, scholars have presented concerns related to how the funds of knowledge

framework has been utilized in curriculum design. In particular, studies have demonstrated that educators often focus on students' "light" (i.e. non-controversial) knowledges that do not take into account the shifting realities of students' experiences (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014; Zipin, 2009). A sole focus on lighter knowledges can actually further reinforce deficit perspectives and sever the connection between schools and student experience (Zipin, 2009). Students, on the other hand, seem to be eager for spaces to discuss and problematize more controversial knowledges and experiences in the classroom (Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017; Zipin, 2009). This tension was visible in the context of this study. At the beginning of the project, both Ms. Smith and Ms. Green cited a desire to critically engage students' various knowledges in class, describing curricular projects and school-based initiatives that were designed to connect to students' lived experiences. Students, however, noted that such initiatives and projects were often limited to non-controversial experiences and that more contentious topics, labelled "dark" or "politicized" funds of knowledge such as race, politics, inequity, and violence, were often relegated to hallways, locker rooms, and lunch tables (Gallo & Link, 2015; Zipin, 2009). They were rarely present in the classroom.

Zipin (2009) notes that educators often speak of dark and politicized funds of knowledge in "tones rife with 'deficit' perspective." They may be "wary" to engage with them in curricular units, as they often "pose stronger threats to institutional 'normalities' than do clear-cut 'positives'" (p. 322-323). Robinson (2017) states that when music educators feel unprepared to engage with diverse knowledges, especially when they appear to be distinct from their own experiences, they often revert to strategies that dismiss or simplify such knowledges in the music classroom.

Opportunities to tap into students' darker lifeworld experiences, however, can create openings for students to engage with and peel back the layers of an issue or outlook. In the process, these openings can generate "robust trajectories of learning" that would likely not have been possible with traditional unidirectional understandings of knowledge (Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017, p. 56). Over time, engaging with darker lifeworld experiences may help students and educators recognize and problematize multiple viewpoints on an issue and connect learning practice with in-the-world experience. Thus, scholars argue that it is "a vital matter of social-education justice to continue the work of making [diverse] lifeworld 'funds' richly and deeply curricular" (Zipin, 2009, p. 330).

Themes of Dark and Politicized Funds of Knowledge

I trace my experiences at each school through two themes, drawing comparisons where appropriate. In the process, the ways in which students and educators operationalized and engaged with dark and politicized funds of knowledge are analyzed. In the first theme, I consider how Ms. Smith, Ms. Green, and I engaged with funds of knowledge through dispositional and pedagogical reflections. Here, I explore how our pedagogical actions served to support or curtail students' willingness and interest in sharing and problematizing dark and politicized funds of knowledge in this project. I also trace the shifts each of us made throughout the project and how our reflective practices impacted our pedagogical choices. There is a focus on the importance of modeling self-reflection for students, and I offer implications for how pre-service teacher education programs might support educators' reflective practices and dispositional development as they pertain to engagements with diverse knowledges.

In the second theme, I consider how both students and educators recognized and engaged with complexity as they examined diverse funds of knowledge. Here the focus is on the

significant role that reflective practice played in helping students and educators engage with creative work. I begin by exploring the importance of communal critical reflection. The experience of Edgar (Edgewood), a student whose composition prompted several layers of reflection in multiple contexts, is used to explore how communal reflection added complexity to how the knowledges embedded in his composition were understood and examined. Here the implications for how communal reflection can help students draw connections between artistic work and social issues at both the local and global levels are considered. I then explore the importance of one-on-one reflection between educator and student. Using the experience of Nohemi (Forest Glen), attention is drawn to how students' artistic endeavors are often more complex and critical than they may initially appear. I then consider the implications for how trust and dialogue, over time, can help illuminate such complexities for both teacher and student.

Dispositional and Pedagogical Reflections

Engaging with students' dark and politicized funds of knowledge as an educator can be challenging, especially when there are significant racial and/or class-based differences between the teaching faculty and student body (Robinson, 2017). Scholars suggest there are myriad reasons for this, including a fear that engaging with such knowledges will generate tenuous conversations about inequities that educators feel unprepared to navigate (Gallo & Link, 2015; Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Zipin, 2009). Robinson (2017) notes that music educators, in particular, are often underprepared for engagements with diverse populations of students. She argues that music educators are rarely afforded both the theoretical and practical grounding required to "navigate the social and cultural facets they will encounter in their music classrooms" (p. 22).

Scholars suggest that, in order to engage with diverse ways of knowing, educators should focus on the development of their own pedagogical dispositions (Benedict & Schmidt, 2014; Kaschub, 2009; Robinson, 2017; Zipin, 2009). Central to this dispositional development is an ongoing practice of reflexivity, wherein teachers examine their “socialized cultural identities based on past experiences, knowledge base, and learned value beliefs,” as well as the ways in which those identities impact their pedagogical and curricular decision-making (Robinson, 2017, p. 13). This focus prepares educators to engage in agile practices that may help them recognize the connections between students’ funds of knowledge and the larger political, sociological, and cultural realities of the world (Benedict & Schmidt, 2014; Zipin, 2009).

Ms. Smith and Ms. Green both engaged in dispositional and pedagogical reflection throughout the project. Using data from formal and informal interviews, as well as my researcher journal and observations, I focus below on how each teacher’s perceptions of her students potentially impacted their engagements, as well as how those perceptions may have shifted over the course of the project. As I also played a similar, though distinct, role of educator in the project, I embed my own experiences here, as well. I then analyze all of these interactions to demonstrate how educators might use projects as an opportunity to grow alongside students in the development of their own critical artistic dispositions.

“We just don’t talk about it”: Finding the “gray areas” in student experience. In my interviews with Ms. Smith throughout the project, uncertainty about *how* to engage with dark or politicized funds of knowledge frequently arose. From our very first interview, she brought up concerns about equity, student experience, and how little she felt she could “connect” with students:

Ms. Smith: It’s frustrating. Like, in general -- we just have such a vast difference between the

kids in our school, and their home lives and their prior experiences, and, I mean, we talk about this as staff all the time. We just don't feel like we're equipped to handle a lot of the stuff that many of the kids have experienced because we've never experienced it or whatever, so we just don't talk about it. I mean, I think, in reality, the students here feel such a sense of severe injustice...and that's really matched by deep frustrations on the part of the faculty. How do we teach kids that are so different and who have experienced things that we could never even dream of experiencing?...I'm white. I grew up upper middle class. I had a supportive home life. I'm organized. I got a lot of positive praise. So, how do I relate?

(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

There is certainly problematic language in this excerpt and Ms. Smith's statements about her own home life suggest a deficit view of the students in her classes. In the same interview, however, she also articulated the school's recognition of geographical, racial, and cultural diversities, and the knowledges afforded by diverse experiences:

Ms. Smith: I really like how diverse it is here and it's truly diverse...It's not almost all minority with like a few white families and we're calling it diverse...I think it's great that the kids get to grow up seeing lots of different families and lots of different faces and ways of doing things rather than finding out when you go to college that the world is [diverse] like this and then trying to assimilate...the staff, they want to really embrace this diversity...

(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

In my notes, I often made comments that acknowledged the efforts made by faculty and staff to to embrace diversity and encourage communication and openness between students, educators, and families of various backgrounds at Edgewood:

I had a conversation with the [Edgewood] principal today. He has been really interested in this project since it started and he was asking me today about any suggestions I might have for professional development or ways of integrating these ideas related to practical ways of bringing these student knowledges and experiences into the classroom. He seems to recognize the need for some kind of shift and appears open to creative ways of thinking about this.

(Researcher Journal Entry)

It seemed, however, that the school was focused on "celebrating diversity," building relationships through games and team-building exercises.

Ms. Smith: I have to hand it to the administration...they keep trying to find ways to help students just play games together and to help them blow off steam together, and see those differences as positives...

(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

I noticed a disconnect between these activities and space to actually discuss and problematize the tensions that were causing the feelings of “severe injustice” and “deep frustration” she articulated earlier:

No classes on Friday – the students are doing an escape room and team building things instead of classes. [Ms. Smith] noted that the goal is social emotional learning, but I couldn't really get a sense of how this is connecting to the rest of their experiences here.

(Researcher Journal Entry)

Students recognized this same disconnect and spoke about it frequently in focus groups throughout the project:

Madison: We don't talk about it [violence, inequity, race] because [teachers] are afraid of it, I guess.

Bobby: They're afraid of a fight. They think that as soon as we talk about this kinda stuff, there's gonna be a fight, so we don't talk about it.

Blanca: They just don't take the time...there's so much we don't know about all of this stuff.

Madison: And we should be learning about it. This is real. How are we gonna change things if we ignore them?

Blanca: I don't want to play a game. I want to do things in class that matter. Things that are going to help me deal with all of this.

(Focus Groups, Edgewood)

Of the 30 students in the class at Edgewood, 18 composed soundscapes that dealt with topics that might be considered contentious or controversial¹³. Franz explored immigration and deportation; Edgar considered bullying and fighting; Bobby, Madison, Elijah, Renee, Semaj, and Jada all focused on racism and racial inequity; Blanca explored culture; and Asia, Jayden, and Dexter all dealt with gun violence in their soundscapes. They were clearly interested and willing to engage with dark and politicized funds of knowledge through their compositions.

¹³ Link to examples of student soundscapes shared in this dissertation: <https://bit.ly/3aw11sQ>

Interestingly, however, students at Edgewood seemed less confident sharing their thoughts and ideas on such topics dialogically in class. While there were moments of critical conversation during the introductory activities section in week one, there were also long stretches of silence. Once the venue changed and students were in small groups with me, either in class or during their lunch and study hall periods, they began openly discussing and engaging with these topics again. Their silences were replaced by almost constant conversation as these middle schoolers used the musical examples we listened to in class as springboards to discuss and debate their ideas and experiences with social struggles in small groups.

I inquired about the reason for this difference, and most students just shrugged. Bobby, however, stayed after class one day in the second week, and shared this thought with me:

Bobby: This is big talk. This is big talk that we never talk about in school. To tell you the truth, I was shocked on day one that you came in here and we were listening to that song and we were talking about race so quick. And I was like “Ok, aight...let’s see what we got here. Let’s see where this goes once we actually start making this music.”

(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

Bobby’s comments were echoed and expanded upon by several students in a focus group:

Will: You can try to talk about these things, but then it’s just like insubordination. Right away. They just say it. And it’s over. Insubordination.

Blanca: I don’t even know what that means: Insubordination. I just know it means I stop. I They just say “well you can’t handle it.” Well, have you tried? Have you taught me about it? Have you asked me about it?

Maya: It’s not everybody, though. Just some. But it feels like the culture around here.

Kelly: Okay, but I’m a teacher, right? Why is it different in here?

[silence]

Stokeley: It just is. It’s like, we don’t really know you. So, maybe we trust you more. We just don’t... connect you to [Edgewood] School.

(Focus Group, Edgewood)

While none of the students cited Ms. Smith, her actions or comments directly, they seemed to place her in the same category as the other teachers in the school. The culture of the school, from their perspective, seemed to prevent them from engaging in discussions. Upon further probing,

students did note that there were classes where they were able to talk about “big talk,” but they separated those conversations from “doing” school. It is possible, then, that they saw their conversations with me in a similar way, separate from “doing school at Edgewood.”

As the project progressed, students did open up more in dialogue in the large classroom and Ms. Smith began taking a more active role, working one-on-one with students on their compositions and asking critical questions in class. When the project came to a close, she reflected on this experience in a one-on-one interview with me:

Ms. Smith: I normally don't get to know my students that well because...the projects we do, and we do a lot of musical projects in this class, are independent. I give them the tools and they do their stuff...but we don't take the time to really engage in general music. We don't talk like this...In this class, I worry more about content and letting them think about media and popular music and stuff, and I do think we look at these things critically, but I don't ever really think about having them talk about or connect to their own lives...and this was a chance to see the gray areas, that things aren't just black and white...I want to see how this affects our next project in class.

(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

Here Ms. Smith seems to reframe both her understanding of projects, as well as her conceptions of the knowledges and experiences of the students in her class. In her first interview, she articulated what appeared to be a deficit view of students' experiences, as well as feelings of unpreparedness when it came to engaging with such experiences in the classroom. Here, her shift to language such as “the gray areas” suggests that she may be expanding her views, recognizing and acknowledging the complexities that permeate her students' identities, knowledges, and experiences

Pedagogically, there are several implications that emerged from these experiences at Edgewood. First, critical pedagogical engagements take time (Martin & Brown, 2017). One of the limitations of this project is its short length of five weeks. Despite this length, however, there were still visible shifts. Many students transitioned from only exploring dark and politicized

funds of knowledge in their music and in small groups at the beginning of the project to discussing these ideas more openly in class by the end of the project. In addition, Ms. Smith transitioned from a deficit view of students' experiences at the beginning of the project to a more open view by the end of the project. These shifts indicate that there may be a possibility for further or more sustained growth if this project were part of a larger curricular structure that prioritized criticality and created opportunities for students to utilize their own diverse experiences in their musical engagements.

This data also suggests that smaller, classroom-level pedagogical shifts likely need to be paired with larger, more significant shifts at the school level. Benedict (2012) notes that without placing this "curricular and pedagogical space wherein musical thinking and doing is tied to critical and transformative literacies" within the larger, whole school context, these pedagogies can "remain as disciplinary silos, effectively rendering them functional" (p. 157). While we saw small shifts in this project, they still existed in a school culture that students understood as "unjust." We might then view these micro-level shifts in the music classroom as starting points for future interdisciplinary or school-wide projects that aim to help develop critical literacy throughout the school context.

Modeling Reflection and Embracing Transparency. At Forest Glen, Ms. Green started our first conversation by stating:

Ms. Green: I love this community. It's not a rich school district and students do face challenges here that they might not in other places...I feel like I spend a lot of time reflecting on my teaching. I think a lot about why I'm doing certain lessons and what messages I'm sending to the kids and that my job isn't just notes and rhythms and whatever, but it's that hidden curriculum or hidden pedagogy and I ask myself all the time: "what are you teaching that you're not actually teaching"? That's important everywhere, but especially here with such a diverse group of kids and so many kids from immigrant families. I really try to be aware of what I'm saying and doing and teaching.

(Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

Like Ms. Smith, Ms. Green began her interview by acknowledging the diversity present in the school, but she did not frame students' experiences through a deficit or asset-based lens. Rather, she began by citing the ways in which Forest Glen's demographics prompted reflective awareness of the impact of her pedagogical and curricular decisions. She was cognizant of students' diverse experiences and hoped that this project would be an opportunity for them to engage with them:

Ms. Green: I think we're going to get a lot of soundscapes about immigration or about missing home or about language and culture. It's such a huge topic among the faculty and we're just very aware of the experiences that a lot of these kids have had or are having...But I've never found a way to really connect to those experiences in music. Students will sometimes do it on their own when they're composing...but I'm really excited to see what they do with this project.
(Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

In week one, during the introductory activities that Ms. Green and I had designed to help students think through stereotypes and assumptions (see chapter four), students explored and problematized a range of topics related to dark and politicized funds of knowledge. As we expected, issues related to language and culture arose:

Adam: It's like when someone plays a song in Spanish and everybody looks around the room at all the kids who look Latino...like we're going to have a different reaction to it or something.

Elisabeth: Or when people assume that just because you don't look Latino, that you don't speak Spanish. I'm Black, but my dad is from Mexico. I speak Spanish.

Turner: Right? Yeah. Or when someone sees you wearing a Croatia soccer jersey, and they assume you're from Croatia and you speak Croatian.

Sebastian: Or...not like here at school...but if I'm out and my parents are speaking Polish, people will look at us.

Phil: People are afraid of what they don't know.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

Here, these middle school students demonstrated an awareness of how language, in particular, impacted their daily experiences both in school and the community. These conversations were

common throughout our first week together as students listened to soundscape examples and practiced critical listening in class.

When students began composing their soundscapes, however, not one student wrote about language. No one wrote directly about culture or immigration. One student, Nohemi, wrote indirectly about deportation. Both Ms. Green and I were surprised. I wrote about this contradiction in my researcher journal:

I'm not sure what to make of this disconnect between students' conversations in class and the topics of their compositions. I keep waiting for a student to choose culture and context and ideas of 'place' or 'home' as central to their compositions, but it's not happening. It's like a switch gets flipped where they bring up these ideas in class – often almost out of the blue – but then once they move to their compositions, it's like they've all decided to go a different route. I expected that from some of them, but so far it feels like all of them have made that choice.

(Researcher Journal Entry)

In an effort to be transparent, I sat down with the students one morning at the end of week three before we began listening to the students' compositions and I shared my reflections:

- Kelly: I promised when I did this...that I was going to be really open with things that I expected or assumptions that I made. And I was reflecting a lot this weekend on an assumption that I made about coming here to [Forest Glen] and what I thought your soundscapes would be about...I made an assumption that many of you would write about immigration or language because there are so many kids here who come from such a variety of places. And in both classes, that really didn't happen, aside from one student. And I think that's fascinating for me and I'm trying to be reflective about the assumptions that I made about you before I've gotten to know you. And I really want to think about how this assumption might have impacted how I engaged with you during our time together. And I wonder if you have any thoughts about that, whether they are about my assumptions, which is fine, or how you're thinking about this?
- Zamir: That didn't happen that almost no one wrote about immigration, or like language because everyone, I think, they're accepted as who they are here.
- Elisabeth: I mean, some of the teachers are mean or make assumptions. But that's not most of them.
- Gia: Yeah. I mean, people don't say, "Oh, because you're this race, you can't do this, or because you speak this language, I don't like you."
- Titus: Yeah...I mean, just in this class I just counted six languages that we speak. And there's only, what, fourteen of us in class? Almost everybody speaks another language.

- Zamir: Yeah, it's normal.
- Nohemi: It could also be that people just don't want to talk about that stuff here. Like we feel it, but maybe we don't want to talk about that here. Maybe people have other things they want to talk about.
- Gia: You know what's funny though, I never got that vibe from you. Like, I never felt like you or [Ms. Green] were pressuring us to write about that. Like, you really did let choose what our compositions were going to be about and so we could write about other things that we're thinking about or want to think more about.
- (Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

In the two weeks that remained in the project, the students returned to this conversation several times as we listened and dialogued about their compositions during our sharing sessions. Despite their optimistic, positive comments above, many of the students at Forest Glen *did* have concerns and conflicting thoughts about immigration, deportation, and cultural stereotypes. As we entered our final week together, these ideas occasionally arose in dialogues and journal entries. Though there was only one soundscape about these topics, students drew connections to them as they listened to soundscapes about bullying, mental health, and family dynamics. Reflecting on this moment at the end of the project, Ms. Green made the following observation:

- Ms. Green: That was such a powerful moment. They were like "This is not how people in power talk to me!" It was awesome. It was like you were modeling your reflection for them in this critical and open and honest way and they totally responded to that. It was as though that moment gave them permission to be reflective too.
- (Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

Indeed, after this conversation, it seemed as though the more Ms. Green and I modeled and engaged in reflective practice, the more the students did as well.

As the project came to a close, Ms. Green reflected on the experience of the project as a whole and how her thinking had shifted over time:

- Ms. Green: Thinking about being critical helped me re-examine so many issues and trying to lead the kids to think about their world critically...it made me realize that there's a big difference between..."Oh, I want my students to think critically about issues" and educators who are actually doing this kind of hard work, where you're putting in the time and you're having these moments of openness and thoughtfulness

where you're letting yourself be vulnerable, too... This was my big takeaway. I didn't learn how to do this in school and definitely not in general music.

(Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

Pedagogically, there are several significant implications that can be gleaned from this experience at Forest Glen. First, the importance of explicitly modeling ongoing critically reflective practices as an educator emerged as important. Within music education, modeling is often used as a pedagogical tool (Haston, 2007) to introduce or reinforce musical concepts. This experience suggests that modeling might also be a pedagogical strategy for helping students practice critical listening and reflection. In the middle school setting, modeling critical practices may help students understand what these practices can look and sound like when operationalized. This may help them process their own thoughts and ideas in a critical manner. When engaging with dark and politicized funds of knowledge, many of which may be contentious and/or personal, educator modeling may also help students build trust and confidence that critical reflections on these knowledges are welcome in the music class setting. This may prompt them to find moments to share their own critical reflections, helping to build a critical, supportive classroom culture. Finally, the ongoing nature of our modelling throughout this study also demonstrates to students that criticality is not a capacity to be achieved, but one that needs to be practiced over time. Our willingness to share our own reflective practices and assumptions demonstrates that these are perpetual issues that require ongoing engagements in critical thought.

This experience also highlights the importance of personal reflection on our own assumptions about students and the ways those assumptions potentially impact our pedagogical choices. I had the best of intentions when I started conversations about cultural, immigration, and linguistic funds of knowledge at Forest Glen. Ms. Green and I both assumed that these were issues that students wanted to explore in class, and we were encouraged by their responses

during that first week. We could have pushed harder, encouraging students to pursue these issues in their soundscapes. However, that might have created a classroom community that was still predicated on our choice as educators of what/whose knowledge matters, thus potentially thwarting opportunities for multiple ways of knowing and critical engagements.

Creating curricular opportunities for students to utilize and problematize dark and politicized funds of knowledge does not, I argue, entitle educators to choose which knowledges students interrogate. This is a challenging tension educators have to navigate on their own. The purpose of this project was to create spaces for students to develop their own artistic responses in sound to the question “*How do I hear home?*” Pigeonholing them into a soundscape about immigration and language would have been limiting at best and unethical at worst. Rather, in asking open, critical questions and creating opportunities for students to explore, we heard soundscapes that employed students’ knowledges about bullying, school violence, perfectionism, mental health, drug addiction, family dynamics, and other topics. Each of these soundscapes, in turn, then created spaces for new ideas and thinking about different experiences to manifest.

Drawing Connections. While experiences at each school were different, there was one implication that emerged from both cases that I have not yet discussed. I believe that both Ms. Green and Ms. Smith’s reflections suggest a continued need for music education programs to examine how they prepare pre-service teachers to engage diverse groups of students in critical artistic endeavors. This might mean developing programs, classes, or curricula that help pre-service teachers develop both dispositions for and practical entry points that connect students’ varied knowledges and artistic endeavors in multiple settings (Benedict & Schmidt, 2014).

For teachers like Ms. Smith, programs or curricula such as these might shape the way that they understand students’ experiences as more multifaceted than deficit/asset, helping them find

the “shades of gray” complexities that Ms. Smith spoke about at the end of this project. For teachers like Ms. Green, curricular offerings such as these might shape the way they think about what capacities and practices we can model in the music classroom alongside musical skills. Further, this framing capacity may help middle-school educators develop a strong sense of purpose for general music classes, one in which the development of musical skills is intertwined with a critical examination of larger social struggles that may be personal or global in scope (Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017).

Recognizing and Engaging with Complexity

In this second theme I consider the importance of educator and student reflections in illuminating the complexities inherent in their diverse knowledges. In particular, I focus on the importance of having multiple forums and modes of reflection throughout the project to help both students and educators recognize and critically engage with these complexities.

Within the practice of border crossing pedagogy, opportunities not only to incorporate, but to challenge and problematize knowledges is critical (Giroux, 2005). This is important both to understand the underlying structures that produce such knowledges, but also to help students work to re-form their own understandings of the world to actively challenge such structures. Giroux (2005) notes that, we must develop pedagogical practices that help students “analyze [all] texts in terms of their presences and absences...dialogically through a configuration of many voices, some of which offer resistance, some of which provide support.” The educators and I sought to develop multiple opportunities throughout the span of this project during which students might engage in critical reflection independently and with others. Our aim was to use reflection to help them connect, challenge, and reframe experiences and knowledges, thus providing opportunities to uncover the partialities of all viewpoints.

In what follows, I explore how the complexities of students' dark and politicized funds of knowledge were amplified as they engaged in reflection during compositional and dialogical processes. While incorporating diverse funds of knowledge into their soundscape compositions was important, I argue that this was rarely the space in which border crossing occurred. Rather, it was in the moments of reflection on those compositions that opportunities for border crossing emerged. Reflection was practiced in multiple forums and through multiple modalities throughout this project, but two emerged as being most important for border crossing: communal reflective practice and educator/student dialogue.

I begin with communal reflective practice. Throughout the project, engaging in small and large group dialogue after listening to a student's soundscape often prompted the sharing of multiple viewpoints and ideas. These diverse views helped students uncover and grapple with the complex nature of their dark and politicized funds of knowledge, including the social and historical structures that underpinned their experiences. In this section I focus on Edgar (Edgewood) to explore how multiple scaffolded opportunities for communal reflection helped him disentangle structural issues of racism, violence, and inequity in his soundscape about bullying.

I then move to educator/student dialogue. Throughout the project, the educators and I designed opportunities for students to engage in one-on-one reflection with us through journaling, formal interviews, and informal conversations. In these exchanges, we often asked open questions that prompted students to critically examine and explore their compositions. In these spaces, students' reflections often illuminated complexities and criticality in their compositions that may not have been visible otherwise. This helped both students and educators connect the soundscapes with local and global social and political issues. Here I focus on

Nohemi (Forest Glen) whose soundscape initially appeared to avoid engagement with her funds of knowledge. Through multiple spaces for one-on-one reflection, I explore how Nohemi unearthed and critically examined complexities related to deportation in her soundscape.

While I focus primarily on the narrative of two students, they are meant to be representative of the critical and complex engagements at each school. Throughout this section, I also draw in examples of other students to offer support and demonstrate variances in how students negotiated dark and politicized funds of knowledge.

Collective reflective practice. When I first listened to Edgar’s (Edgewood) composition in a one-one-one conversation in week two, my heart raced. In a manner that reminded me of a horror film, Edgar had manipulated, juxtaposed, and combined sounds of teasing and laughter, heavy breathing, a composed instrumental track, and intense, driving beats from video games¹⁴. He used dynamic contrast and musical dissonance to play with the listener’s expectations, building suspense and featuring what he called a “jump scare”:

Edgar: It’s when someone jumps out at you from nowhere.
Kelly: So, what’s the reason behind this? Why was this important for you to write?
Edgar: I wanted to create music that makes people’s heart race like that. I wanted to get a reaction. I wanted to share that school can be scary. I want people to listen.
Kelly: Any particular reason?
Edgar: Yeah, yeah...I mean not so much this year, but at [Intermediate School], it was really bad. This was my experience.

Edgar went on to explain that he had written this song as a response to several interactions and instances of bullying and fighting he had experienced in school.

Edgar: Those kids that fight...they can’t do that here. It’s not right. The rest of us don’t do that here and they’re just trying to cause trouble. They do it on purpose.
(Informal Conversation, Edgewood)

¹⁴ <https://youtu.be/DssF1witiuc>

In the third week of the project, Edgar shared a portion of his soundscape with a small focus group, prior to it being listened to in the full class. These students focused on Edgar's "jump scare," equating it with physical altercations and fights that had been witnessed or experienced:

Kelly: So, where do you think this type of thing [fighting, bullying] comes from?
Stokeley: It could be social media or the person's background. Like, if they went to a different school before they came to [Edgewood], they might've had another experience with another kid and that like...might've just carried on to this school.

[...]

Stokeley: I have a couple of friends that, before they came to [Edgewood] school, they went to a school in either like...

Bobby: On the West side

Stokeley: Either like Chicago or something like that. So, a lot of fights would happen like after school, during school, and people fighting everywhere and stuff like that. So they probably just remember those things and then it carries on to the suburbs like [Edgewood].

(Focus Group, Edgewood)

Stokeley was beginning to peel back the layers of bullying here, drawing connections to personal experiences and histories. Edgar, however, was not yet ready to consider history and experience, focusing more on blame and dividing the student body into two opposing groups:

Edgar: It's from the 'new kids'' old school. The 'originals' – the people who have been here forever – they don't do anything bad. And the people that come here from other schools don't know what it's like here, so they just...it's not even throwing punches anymore. It's worse.

Bobby rerouted the conversation back to history and experience:

Bobby: But what if that's just what they know? What if that's what they assume school is supposed to look like...like it's just what people do?

Blanca: But they make the choice to do that. I don't think that that's really like their body is used to it...I think they make the choice. Because when they come to a new school, they have a decision: Start out fresh or become...become a brand New person. They say, 'I don't want to be like I was in my old school.' Or, they choose to act like that. I don't really think it's because they already have that background that they just know it. I think it's that they choose.

Edgar: Yep, yep. You have to...you have to not bring that here.

(Focus Group, Edgewood)

A contact zone, that is a space where diverse opinions and ideas meet (Pratt, 1991), appears to be developing in this excerpt. It is within this contact zone that collective reflective practice is beginning to take place. Edgar places the students at Edgewood in a clear “us vs. them” dichotomy and, with the support of Blanca, positions one group’s narrative (the originals) as dominant. Stokeley and Bobby are less convinced of the clear-cut determinations being made. They are beginning to raise questions about the impact of violent or physical experiences in one’s past, while encouraging their classmates to expand and question their view.

Stokeley went on to respond to Blanca and Edgar, challenging their viewpoint and calling for more complexity and criticality in how this experience is considered:

Stokeley: But can it be both? Can’t it? It can be both. It can be a choice, but it’s also, like, they made that choice because that’s what people do in the world they live in. That’s their normal. Like, they make that choice. But you can only choose from the things you know.

(Focus Group, Edgewood)

Here, Stokeley seems to be expanding upon the ideas he introduced earlier in this dialogue. He is exploring how these knowledges are not just about content, but about a “dispositional modality” that is often associated with a darker knowledge (Zipin, 2009, p. 330). He is no longer “just” talking about fighting or bullying or violence, but he is beginning to consider the “pedagogical transactions within [his classmates’] lifeworlds that have made [these issues] importantly thematic” in their lives (p. 328). Instead of stating “facts,” he is starting to ask questions, engaging with processes that consider not just what we know, but how we know.

Tucker-Raymond and Rosario (2017) note that opportunities for students to interrogate dark and politicized ideas in communal settings such as these are particularly important at the middle school level. As students grapple with their ideas, they are also exploring their positionings and are beginning to unpack the ways in which those positionings impact how they

related to others. Tucker-Raymond and Rosario note that these experiences are the kind that “must be foregrounded” in middle school spaces of identity exploration and critical action (p. 56).

This was not the only interaction with Edgar’s composition. Ms. Smith and I recognized that having multiple contexts in which to engage with students’ compositions was important if we wanted to encourage students to build upon their critical listening and reflection skills. As such, Edgar’s composition continued to be presented in various forums, with each new set of listeners expanding upon and adding complexity to the topics he explored. His soundscape was shared with the full class during the fifth week of the project. Most of the students in the class had not heard the focus group conversation from above, but nonetheless they raised similar issues. In the excerpt below, the class had begun to draw connections between Edgar’s soundscape and entering uncomfortable or unfamiliar spaces:

- Tyler: Like, this is making me think about when somebody moves to a new environment. When I first moved here, I was a bit nervous. Well, I mean, really, I was scared.
- Bobby: Why?
- Tyler: Cuz it was new. Everything about the system was new. I was used to just staying in one class. And it wasn’t a bunch of different people. My old life was basically all black people. I didn’t know what was gonna happen or how people were gonna think of me. I kept getting worried that something was gonna pop out and get me. Like the other shoe was gonna drop or whatever that saying is. I still worry.
- Rodrigo: When I moved here it was kind of weird for me because like I used to live in [another community]. I lived my whole life there. And coming to [Edgewood] was totally different because, like, I didn’t know anyone and it was so different from everybody in [my old community] where everybody is Mexican, you know? So I’m like [Tyler]. I didn’t know how I was gonna fit here.

(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

Tyler and Rodrigo’s comments opened the door for discussions about segregation, gentrification, and racism as we continued to use Edgar’s soundscape as a catalyst for discussing local and global social struggles. While these conversations did not change Edgar’s experience with

bullying, they may have helped both him and his classmates consider the structural and societal issues that can cause students to lash out in fear. Indeed, Edgar revisited his soundscape in a one-on-one informal conversation with me after this exchange:

Edgar: I didn't even think about it like [Tyler] and [Rodrigo]. I was thinking about bullies. But I never connected it like that
(Informal Conversation, Edgewood)

Ms. Smith referred to the dialogue that emerged from Edgar's soundscape frequently in our conversations. Near the end of the project, she noted:

Ms. Smith: For me, one of the biggest moments was the conversation about [Edgar's] soundscape. Just the idea that nothing is mutually exclusive, nothing is as simple as it seems on the outside...I think these are the ideas we'd like students to be able to discuss more and here this all came from creating and listening to a composition, from something in music class.
(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

Ms. Smith drew a connection here back to the original soundscape composition that created space for these conversations to be pursued. Critically important here, however, is that it was not only the act of composing, but the creation of space for that composition to be repeatedly heard, discussed and problematized that encouraged these conversations to manifest.

Many students at both schools had experiences that mirrored Edgar's wherein their understandings of the complexities of knowledge grew through communal reflection. For some students, spaces to interrogate soundscapes that appeared non-controversial often revealed connections to larger social struggles that may have otherwise been missed. Hunter (Edgewood), for example, developed a soundscape about summertime in Chicago. Utilizing the sounds of traffic, the lakeshore, and kids playing basketball, he painted a sonic picture of happiness and relaxation. When discussed communally in class, students shared experiences that helped us tease out issues of privilege and perspective in Hunter's soundscape. For other students, communal reflection helped them reframe a dualistic asset/deficit mindset. Scarlett (Forest

Glen), for example, developed a composition about perfectionism as a response to the pressure she feels to remain at the top both academically and athletically. Through communal reflection, both she and her classmates began to recognize the complexities of “achievement,” reflecting upon and acknowledging that a competitive, high-pressure environment is just as challenging for students who appear to be succeeding as it is for others.

The experiences of students like Edgar, Hunter, and Scarlett suggest that composing may be a curricular engagement that helps students negotiate and explore dark and politicized funds of knowledge. Such musical endeavors must also be paired with multiple, varied opportunities for communal reflection over time in order for the complexities of these knowledges to be illuminated. The first opportunity for each student to discuss or reflect on their own experiences was not in front of the entire class as their composition was presented. Compositions, particularly when they are inspired by potentially challenging experiences, are personal and can be a space of vulnerability for students (Ruthmann, 2008). Therefore, helping students reflect independently and in a small group before discussing their soundscape in the large class was likely crucial in their continued engagement.

These experiences also suggest that critical artistic projects, particularly those in which students are prompted to examine their own dark or politicized funds of knowledge, might be considered in stages, allowing space for students to build toward complexity over time. As music educators, it may seem challenging to find multiple spaces to explore student compositions, particularly in contexts where classes are large, or time is limited. Developing ways to listen and reflect in small groups or weaving a project such as this throughout a term or school year may help mitigate some of these issues.

Cultivating Reflective Relationships. Some students found one-on-one reflective engagements to be more impactful than communal critical reflection. These reflections occurred in informal conversations during class, formal interviews, and through journal entries. They served multiple purposes. For students, the questions we posed as educators often helped them tease out the knowledges and experiences at the core of their soundscapes and draw connections from those experiences to larger societal issues. For educators, these reflections were often an opportunity for us to challenge our assumptions about soundscapes that we may have falsely labelled as simplistic or disconnected from critical ideas. Nohemi (Forest Glen) was an example of a student who actively engaged in these one-on-one-reflection experiences.

Nohemi was representative of most of the students at Forest Glen. She was open and interested in engaging with dark and politicized funds of knowledge during our introductory activities in week one, but her composition, on the surface, appeared to avoid interacting with them. Through conversations with Ms. Green and I, Nohemi began to peel back some of the layers of her composition, connecting it to her own darker and more politicized funds of knowledge.

Nohemi was born in the United States, but her parents, uncles, and cousins were born in Guatemala. During the first week of the project, as students were listening to an example of a soundscape that dealt with language, their conversation turned to issues related to deportation.

Nohemi shared:

Nohemi: [It] makes me feel sad because when I was in the fourth grade my three uncles got deported because they just came here to get a job and get money and send it to their mom and dad because they didn't have a lot. So they got deported. And now, one of my uncles tried to come several times, but he keeps getting sent back.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

Nohemi's comment received several nods of agreement and understanding in the classroom, but the conversation quickly moved on to another topic. Later in the first week, we asked students to participate in an activity that explored assumptions and biases (see chapter four). In this activity, students anonymously wrote down assumptions people had made about them on post-it notes, and we distributed them around the room to be discussed in small groups. One of the post-it notes was related to assumptions based on how someone looks. Nohemi shared:

Nohemi: Yeah, there are some people who think like this, who think with assumptions, and they think that because of how people talk or how people look that they are from a certain place or they follow a certain religion or they must act a certain way. Like, people think I'm Mexican, but I'm not. I'm Guatemalan.

The conversation continued,

Adam: Doesn't that make you angry? I'm Puerto Rican and people say that about me all the time, that I'm Mexican. It bothers me a lot.

Nohemi: I guess it depends on how people mean it.

Adam: If they mean it because they're being mean and telling us to go back where we come from or whatever or if they just don't know and they're not trying to be mean or anything.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

Adam's comment prompted a response from Nohemi, and later in her journal, she wrote,

A conversation that was meaningful to me was the one when we talked about immigration this week. I have felt what it is to have someone deported, someone that you love that disappears suddenly...It made me feel relieved to know other people's feelings and made me more comfortable.

(Student Journal Entry)

At this point, both Ms. Green and I spoke about how we expected Nohemi to develop a soundscape that dealt with this issue. Pedagogically, we felt that we had created space for this topic to be explored and considered in the music class through our opening conversations. As this point, we were also still operating under the assumption that students *wanted* to write about these ideas.

For the next two weeks, Nohemi worked on her soundscape¹⁵. When Ms. Green and I listened to her final product at the end of week three, we were surprised. Upon a first listen it appeared to lack complexity and criticality in the both the content she chose and the way the composition was structured. Nohemi's soundscape opens with birds chirping and an alarm going off. A piano riff begins, the alarm is turned off, and the sound of children playing accompanies the birds chirping until the piece ends.

Kelly: That was strange, no? That wasn't what I expected from her.

Ms. Green: Right? Yeah. But she was really working the whole time. She had this whole list of sounds that just kept changing. I think she had a hard time making up her mind. It's odd, though – she was so vulnerable in class, so willing to talk.

Kelly: I think we really can't take this at face value...as what it appears to be. We're missing something.

Ms. Green: Yeah, I know we mostly left her alone while she was composing, but we probably should've talked to her sooner. But really we should take some time to ask her about this...see if there isn't something else in there that we are just totally missing.

(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

Music educators will likely recognize our reflection in this moment. Nohemi's studiousness as she was working resulted in our stepping back pedagogically. In middle school in particular there can be a tenuous balance of giving space and intervening (Sweet, 2016) as students are working independently or in small groups. Should we have spoken with Nohemi sooner? Had we missed something in her engagements earlier in the project?

To be clear, Ms. Green and my aim was not to superimpose meanings onto compositions that students did not intend. We also did not want to pressure or push students into composing or discussing something that they did not feel comfortable sharing. We were cautious not to become oppressors ourselves in the classroom, boxing students in to a particular way of thinking (Ellsworth, 1989; Pinar, 2009). However, we also wondered if there was perhaps more to her

¹⁵ <https://youtu.be/JWsY8LwBeyM>

composition (and others like hers) than we were hearing. Gaztambide-Fernández (2011) notes that “critical educators often miss the multiple layers embedded in the productions of youth, and tend to easily dismiss what they can’t interpret, or what they deem not critical enough” (p. 34).

Was that what we were doing here? Rather than belabor these questions, I chose to speak informally with Nohemi about her composition in class the next day. After our conversation, I wrote:

I spoke with [Nohemi] yesterday during class. I asked if she would share her process with me and she said that she wanted to write about summertime and what it feels like to play outside. When I asked about the kids, she said, “Oh, well those are my cousins and younger siblings. We all live together and I watch them in the summer.” After a pause she said, “because my uncles...they’re gone. There’s no one else to watch them.” This was the leap she was making that [Ms. Green] and I missed when we were listening. So, I asked her if she thought her classmates would make that connection when they listened, and if she even wanted them to. She said, “No, probably not. But I didn’t want to talk about the bad stuff about deportation. That’s what I started with when I was doing my soundscape, but I decided I don’t want to share that at school. One of the happy things here is that I get to live with my whole family, the whole big family. That’s the good part. That’s what I wanted to write the song about. Music is personal and I want to write about what matters to me, but I don’t want to write about it that way”

(Researcher Journal Entry)

Zipin (2009) notes that students often “keep deeper dispositions and darker knowledges tamped down” in the classroom (p. 329). These experiences, he argues, are so central to students’ identities that they may fear disparagement or that their experiences will not translate into a school context. Until they feel a reciprocal relationship of trust, they may opt for lighter or more “thinly connected” topics that feel less risky (p. 328).

Recognizing and respecting Nohemi’s decision, neither Ms. Green nor I steered the conversation toward deportation when her composition was shared in class. We did ask questions that drew students’ attention to the sounds of the children and the alarm clock, and the conversation turned toward topics of responsibility and taking care of one’s family. The dialogue was both critical and reflective, and Nohemi’s choices in her soundscape did create opportunities

students to think through issues and perspectives that may not have been raised otherwise. The politically charged topic that was really at the heart of Nohemi's soundscape, however, remained unexplored in the communal classroom setting.

There were other students at both Edgewood and Forest Glen who developed soundscapes in a manner similar to Nohemi. In these situations, the educators and I missed the criticality in students' creative work when we first listened to their works-in-progress or final soundscapes. Again, we found opportunities to engage in reflective conversations with these students. Tyler (Edgewood) used video game soundtracks in his composition and initially responded to my question about his process by stating, "I just *really* like video games" (Informal Conversation). As we continued to reflect, however, Tyler began to articulate the pressure he felt to succeed at home and in school, and he came to realize that he enjoyed playing video games because it felt like a space where he had control. Bobby's (Edgewood) soundscape pieced together highlight reels from football and basketball games with an instrumental backbeat. During our one-on-one interview, Bobby shared that this was his response to a gang shooting that had claimed the life of his cousin a few years prior. His cousin had taught him how to shoot a basket and throw a football. He wanted this soundscape to demonstrate that many of the people who lose their lives to gun violence are not gang members, but mentors and friends.

Experiences of students such as Nohemi, Tyler, and Bobby suggest the importance of pairing artistic creation with opportunities to dialogue with students about their work in a one-on-one context. In these examples, students chose not to overtly engage with the darker side of their lifeworld knowledges through their compositions. Had I (or Ms. Green or Ms. Smith) not spoken directly with them, we may have misinterpreted their soundscapes as simplistic or uncritical. Similarly, had we asked these students to write about their compositions or explain

them to the class, they may have stopped at a point where they spoke about summertime, their favorite video game, or why they love basketball. In choosing to engage in one-on-one reflective practice, we built trust with students and learned about the critical and creative connections between their compositions and darker lifeworlds. Further, and more substantially, these one-on-one dialogues also served as a pedagogical strategy to help students think through their own compositional choices and how they connect to broader funds of knowledge and issues of social and civic concern.

I would argue, then, that part of an educator's role when engaging with creative work is to create opportunities to dialogue with students individually about their processes and products. While this can be challenging in a large class or short time frame, utilizing multiple forums may help facilitate this practice. These forums may include engaging students in digital or written journal entries that educators can respond to with questions and reflections. Educators might utilize time as students are working on their compositions to meet with students in class, focusing not only on their musical decision-making, but also on their reflective processes. Not every conversation will illuminate these connections, but if we do not create the conditions for them to occur, we, as educators, may over-simplify or mis-read students' artistic endeavors. Through this dialogue, we may not only gain a sense of the complexities in students' lives, but we may also help students critically think through these complexities and begin to build a sense of reciprocal trust.

The Complexities of “Knowing”: Funds of Knowledge as Layered and Multiple

At this point, I bring together the themes above, analyzing the practices of both educators and students to consider the intersections between these experiences. In what follows, I explore what these engagements might mean for the development of middle school general music

curriculum, as well as for how current and future music educators reflect on their pedagogical decision-making.

The primary finding from the data presented in this chapter is the importance of reflection in exploring dark and politicized funds of knowledge in the classroom. When used solely as a source of content for musical (or other) curricular engagements, lifeworld knowledges may be misconceived as singular and constant. When problematized and viewed as open for critical discourse, the complexities of such knowledges may be amplified, enabling them to be seen as perspective, multiple, and interwoven. This aligns with Tucker-Raymond and Rosario's (2017) argument that the inclusion of multiple open-ended dialogical spaces that seek to amplify the complexities and interconnected nature of students' experiences can produce "powerful learning and identity-building opportunities" for middle school students (p. 54).

Engaging with these knowledges critically in the classroom can also help educators recognize the complexities in student knowledge and better understand students' critical and creative processes. In their final interviews with me, Ms. Smith and Ms. Green noted:

Ms. Smith: I never feel like I get to know my seventh graders that well because we do so many independent projects...but there's so many things I learned about the kids in this class that I never would have known if we had not done this project...but the reflections and the way we were able to get them to talk about their lives using music, that was my takeaway...so many surprises from so many of them.
(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

Ms. Green: I feel I have gotten to know my students so much better through this project than I feel I have in a long time...these open questions and the way we just helped them sit with an idea, but in this sort of communal way...there was something that I felt was super relational about what we did.
(Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

Prior to this project, both Ms. Smith and Ms. Green articulated uncertainty as to how dark and politicized funds of knowledge might be incorporated into the music classroom. Based on the

data presented in this chapter, it appears as though they both became more confident in embedding these knowledges into their curricular and pedagogical practices in ways that helped students engage critically.

Pedagogical and Curricular Implications

Pedagogically, there are two key implications that can be gleaned from the data and analysis presented in this chapter: modeling reflection and creating multiple opportunities for reflection to occur within artistic projects. Music educators recognize the importance of modeling musical artistry and skills in educational spaces, and this study suggests that critical reflection can and should also be modeled for students. At each school, the more the educators and I shared the ways in which we were thinking through our own assumptions and biases with the students, the more they seemed willing and interested to do the same. Further, making the commitment to model our own processes can help us, as educators, engage and learn alongside students.

This data presented here also speak to a need to engage with reflection through multiple forums and modalities. Middle schoolers are often just beginning to explore how they want to shape their identity individually, among their peers, and in their larger community. This means that always beginning with large group reflection may be less likely to produce productive dialogue. Rather, finding ways to help students reflect in one-on-one settings or small group contexts might help students build trust over time with their peers and educators. Further, multiple, scaffolded opportunities to explore and reflect upon each composition may help students recognize and grapple with the musical and social complexities in each soundscape.

Utilizing and reflecting upon students' dark and politicized funds of knowledge can also help music educators design curriculum that is not only functional, but also critical. As students

pull musical material from their own experiences (or potentially connect given material to their own funds of knowledge), accompanying space for theorizing about the strengths and limitations of each perspective can help students engage in critical practice and build critical dispositions. The purpose here is not for educators to play a role of substitute counselor, advising students on controversial issues in a therapeutic-oriented manner (Zipin, 2009). Building a classroom culture of care and listening where critical “controversial” conversations are the norm can help students approach knowledge and experience with curiosity and skepticism and examine their lives in relationship to social, historical, cultural and political contexts (Noddings & Brooks, 2017). As they continue to grow in these understandings, the music classroom may not only become a space to artistically and critically reflect on the world, but to actively work to effect change in it.

Project-based learning in the general music classroom has the potential to be a vehicle for such curricular and pedagogical engagements. PBL, when structured in a critical and open manner, can offer students the opportunity to personalize the creative elements of an artistic, musical engagement. There is flexibility for students to work in ways that connects the project framework to their own experiences, drawing on their funds of knowledge to develop artistic actualizations of their ideas and imaginings. Critical dialogue and problematizing can be done in multiple spaces that are responsive to the needs and wants of the students. At Edgewood, students responded more critically and openly to compositions in small groups, using the intimacy of the engagement as an opportunity for debate. Sometimes, the small group engagement offered space for students to develop ideas that might then be brought back to a larger space. At Forest Glen, students responded more openly and directly in large groups, developing and debating ideas as a full class. In moments with a particularly high possibility for vulnerability, working anonymously with journal entries created opportunities for more

challenging ideas to be considered and debated. Project-based learning, then, is one path that has the flexibility to offer diverse possibilities for engagement.

Finally, both Ms. Green and Ms. Smith's reflections suggest a continued need to examine how pre-service educators are prepared to engage in the ideas and practices suggested above. Finding ways to develop curricula and opportunities that help pre-service teachers develop dispositions and practical processes of implementation to engage with and reflect upon students' diverse knowledges is clearly of importance.

To develop such dispositions, music education programs might seek to help pre-service teachers develop a "framing capacity" (Benedict & Schmidt, 2014). This framing capacity might help future educators recognize the connections between music education and the "political, curricular, pedagogical, sociological, and cultural demands of schooling" (p. 89). For teachers like Ms. Smith, this might shape the way that they understand their students' experiences as more multifaceted than deficit/asset, helping them find the "shades of gray" complexities that Ms. Smith spoke about at the end of this project.

From a practice-oriented view, these examples seem to speak to a need to help pre-service teachers draw connections between their reflective practices and the practical pedagogical realities of music teaching. For teachers like Ms. Green, opportunities to engage in multiple contexts and develop curricula that pairs critical questioning with musical engagements would be helpful to help students draw upon and activate their diverse and complex funds of knowledge.

To be clear, I do not suggest here that teacher education programs do not already prioritize these issues, nor am I arguing that every musical endeavor need prioritize engaging dark and politicized funds of knowledge. What I am suggesting is that there might be entry

points in music education programs that could help pre-service teachers feel prepared to raise and critically engage with these issues in the classroom, helping students to draw connections between their musical learning practice and diverse in-the-world experiences. Music educators like Ms. Smith or Ms. Green, then, might be able to help their colleagues and school community build more critical school spaces.

Concluding Ideas and Lingering Thoughts

In this chapter, I sought to demonstrate and analyze the experiences of educators and students as they engaged with dark and politicized funds of knowledge throughout this project. I found that each school's engagements were distinct. Students at Edgewood often used dark and politicized funds of knowledge as central elements of their compositions, but were more hesitant to discuss these topics in large group settings. Students at Forest Glen were often interested in discussing these knowledges in class, but their connections were less clear in the compositions. Through time and ongoing critical reflection in multiple settings, the students at Edgewood seemed to become more open to discussing social struggles and personal experience in the classroom, and students at Forest Glen seemed to articulate connections between their compositions and dark and politicized funds of knowledge. The key to each of these shifts was multiple ongoing opportunities to engage in critically reflective practices. In the process, the educators, students, and I all grew in our own understanding of the complexities inherent in such knowledges.

Projects such as this, however, do not guarantee that opportunities for border crossing will continue to emerge after its completion. They are limited in their scope. While smaller, classroom-level shifts such as those within this project may have created opportunities for impactful relational engagements in the moment, it is the ways in which those moments lead to

pedagogical and curricular changes, larger school structural changes, and future action that can cause enduring criticality. If we seek to reimagine the possibilities of how the general music setting might serve as a catalyst for these changes, a project such as this might serve as a starting point. The understandings of the complexities of knowledge, reflective practices, and artistic engagements may then serve to impact ongoing and future actions and relationships.

CHAPTER VI

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN CRITICAL LISTENING AND AUTHORIAL AGENCY

Introduction

Harper Lee (1960) wrote that people generally “hear what they listen for” (p. 174). Indeed, our minds are so attuned to quickly and efficiently making meaning from the things we hear, that we often miss the surpluses or multiple possible interpretations of a sound, comment, or musical encounter. In a rush to respond or react, we may only engage with a singular dominating interpretation, often failing to reflect on how it may be informed by our own experiences, assumptions, and social realities (Lipari, 2014). If we hope to help students develop critical artistic dispositions wherein they seek to both recognize and respond to multiplicity, learning how to listen critically to both texts and ideas is essential.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which students practiced critical listening throughout this study. As I employ here, critical listening involves actively questioning and problematizing the things we hear, not to evaluate or pass judgement on them, but to help us explore texts or educational encounters from multiple viewpoints (Lipari, 2014; Sullivan, 2009). As is delineated throughout this study, border crossing pedagogy functions not only to help students recognize multiple viewpoints, but also to encourage spaces wherein something new may be produced from the sharing of divergent opinions (Giroux, 2005). Therefore, in this chapter, I pair critical listening with authorial agency (Matusov et al., 2016). I do this to examine the ways students drew upon their listening experiences in order to produce musical artifacts and dialogue that expanded upon singular interpretations or understandings.

In addition, curricular and pedagogical choices impact how and if students engage in critical listening and authorial agency in the music classroom. A pedagogical focus on listening

as a functional tool that helps us create meaning quickly and efficiently or to uncover the “right” or “best” answer is inadequate (Lipari, 2014). Similarly, a conception of agency that does not encourage multiple understandings or viewpoints is also insufficient (Matusov et al., 2016). Therefore, this chapter also explores the ways in which educators’ practices throughout this study helped students learn to critically listen to their world and develop musical and dialogical responses to that which they heard.

Framing this Chapter

Border crossing pedagogy is predicated on the belief that we must reflect upon our positionalities in order to recognize and engage with the viewpoints of others. In the process, we explore the genesis of such positionalities and grow in awareness of the structures and relationships that impact how we see the world (Giroux, 2005; Hayes & Cuban, 1996). A focus on recognizing and engaging with multiple viewpoints and understandings connects the practice of critical listening with border crossing pedagogy.

In addition to developing “pedagogical conditions in which students become border crossers in order to [explore] otherness in its own terms” (Giroux, 2005, p. 28), border crossing pedagogies also highlight opportunities for listening to become “a potential source of experimentation, creativity, and possibility” (p. 34). In this study, such experimentation manifested artistically through students’ soundscape compositions, and dialogically through the ideas and thinking that were generated from discussion. This type of productive creation can be understood as “authorial agency” (Matusov et al., 2016), a process of questioning, problematizing, and engaging with one’s own experiences in order to produce something new or unexpected that builds upon prior experiences and understandings. In this study, when moments

of border crossing occurred, they were often, if not always, preceded by practices of critical listening and authorial agency.

Listening, when viewed critically, can be both creative and productive (Dunn, 1997; Lipari, 2014; Kratus, 2017). It can prompt us to engage in divergent thinking, develop multiple interpretations of what we hear, and push us to question and problematize those interpretations. In these ways, it can also be reflexive, a means to “inquire more deeply into...differences, and to question our own already well-formed understandings of the world” (Lipari, 2014, p. 8). As educators, Ms. Smith, Ms. Green and I developed opportunities for students to practice critical listening throughout this study. Independently, students questioned and reflected on sounds in their world, drawing connections between their lived experiences and the ways in which they made meaning from what they heard. These practices then informed the ways in which they developed their soundscapes. Students also practiced critical listening communally through dialogue as they reflected upon and debated about their classmates’ compositions and interpretations during sharing sessions.

Similarly, authorial agency is our capacity to *act* in ways that are both creative and productive (Matusov et al., 2016). As we problematize texts and experiences, authorial agency is how we generate unique encounters and artifacts in response. These encounters and artifacts do not replace texts or experiences, but build upon them, adding complexity. Students in this study practiced authorial agency throughout their compositional processes as they navigated multiple ways of hearing, using, and manipulating sounds and media¹⁶. They also practiced it dialogically as they generated ideas and interpretations in response to their classmates’ soundscapes.

¹⁶ I define media in this context as excerpts from mass produced music, television, film, and advertising.

In what follows, I situate critical listening and authorial agency in the framework of border crossing pedagogy and as foundational elements to the development of a critical artistic disposition. I then present and analyze data that explores the relationship between critical listening and authorial agency in this study through two themes. I call the first theme reframing the familiar. Here I explore how students critically listened to media and sounds in their world, leading them to produce soundscapes that might be considered unexpected or outside the norm of a music classroom. I am naming the second theme interpretive divergence. Here I consider the ways in which students engaged in a communal form of authorial agency wherein multiple, sometimes conflicting, perspectives were explored and debated as they listened to, interpreted, and dialogued about their classmates' compositions.

From Functional to Critical Listening

In current North American culture, Lipari (2014) notes that listening is often “done primarily with the aim of conquest and control” (p. 2). We listen to try and “defeat” someone else’s argument, or to “master” a theory or skill. In education, we may use listening as a tool to help us create meaning quickly and efficiently or to uncover the “right” or “best” answer. In these instances, listening is perceived as something functional, a means to an end.

Functional listening can be understood as a form of functional literacy. As delineated in chapter one, functional literacy refers to the “various competencies needed to function appropriately within a given society” (Gutstein, 2006, p. 5). When placed in the context of music education, this may mean a conception of elementary and middle school music settings as preparatory in that they “exist to teach students to read and write notation or, in other words, to prepare them for the larger band, choral, and orchestral ensembles” (Benedict, 2012, p. 155). This may involve a focus on “concept development” wherein the purpose of developing listening

skills is to identify musical characteristics such as melodic patterns or instrumental timbres (Kratus, 2017, p. 46). This kind of literacy development can be “stationary” and result in unproblematized norms and singular narratives (Schmidt, 2012b, p. 12).

If we were to reframe listening as a critical engagement, however, we might find that allowing ourselves to explore multiple viewpoints and possibilities, or even creating space to just let ourselves sit with an idea or text, “can be more fruitful than striving for mastery” (Lipari, 2014, p. 35). In this way, listening might be seen as having “multiple dimensions” (Benedict, 2012, p. 156) and its value as a means to an end is potentially reduced, operating instead as “a momentary pause in an ongoing movement of unfolding” (Lipari, p. 139). In that pause, there is space to reflect upon our own positionalities and consider how they are impacted by the “sociopolitical, cultural-historical conditions of one’s life, community, society, and world” (Gutstein, 2006, p. 4). In spaces such as middle school music, this might mean developing curricular and pedagogical spaces where listening involves critical questioning and drawing connections between what we hear to larger social and cultural realities.

I use the concept of critical listening as delineated above to discuss the listening in dialogue that occurred in this study. By this, I mean the ways in which students listened to the soundscape compositions developed by their classmates and then engaged in a process of communally interpreting, discussing, and making meaning from those compositions. Critical listening in this situation refers to the ways in which students and educators moved beyond functional listening, deprioritizing a focus on a “right” interpretation of each soundscape in favor of a critical space in which multiple understandings were shared, discussed, and problematized.

Students also engaged in critical listening as they were composing and developing their own soundscapes. Hickey (2012) notes the importance of creating spaces for students to engage

in critical listening as a part of the compositional process, arguing that it can help students add to a “subconscious repertoire of tools for their own composing” (p. 43). Sweet (2016) contends that critical listening is particularly significant at the middle school level, as a problematization and investigation of how students understand media and sounds around them can aid them during this “pivotal time of self-discovery” (p. 35). As students questioned and problematized both sounds and media during their compositional processes, they engaged in critical artistic decision-making (Kaschub, 2009), manipulating and reframing sounds as they developed a theme or intention for their composition. To explore this form of critical listening, I use Schmidt’s (2012b) concept of “mis-listening.” As noted in chapter two, to engage in mis-listening is “to understand that any interpretation, any practice, any text, any musical interaction produces a surplus and ramifications of meaning and sound, a multiplicity of on-looks and outlooks upon which one can and should enter, contribute, and extend” (p. 13-14). In this way, mis-listening as a practice can become an extension of listening in that, instead of aiming for a singular goal, it allows us to enter a musical work or other text in multiple ways, thus facilitating alternative or various possible ends.

Creating Space for Authorial Agency

Critical listening, however, is only a first step in pedagogical practices of border crossing. As students practiced critical listening, openings were created for them to engage in authorial agency, that is, to respond or act upon their growing awareness of multiplicities in a way that challenged or built upon their own knowledges. As noted in chapter two, authorial agency centers on the possibility of working outside norms or expectations (Matusov et al., 2016). It is a way of engaging with the known in order to develop cultural practice that “transcends the given” (p. 435). In the context of this study, this meant that the students, educators, and I used our own

experiences, “established relations, history...structures, habitus, circumstances, and so on” (p. 435) as we listened in order to engage in practices that produced artistic products, distinct dialogical interactions, and critical dispositions.

In this chapter, I consider manifestations of authorial agency in two ways. First, I explore how it occurred in the ways in which students composed their soundscapes. In particular, I focus on examples of students who reframed familiar sounds or media excerpts, thereby opening spaces for new meanings to be made. Second, I consider how authorial agency occurred in dialogue as students listened to their classmates’ soundscapes. I focus on examples of conversations wherein students, alongside the educators and myself, shared and negotiated our interpretations of these soundscapes, thus producing dialogues that problematized and/or expanded upon the student composer’s intention. In the process, I also consider the ways in which authorial agency manifested for myself and the educators as we interrogated our pedagogical practices throughout the project.

I argue that because these manifestations of authorial agency created, promoted, and problematized multiple understandings, they are aligned with critical and border crossing pedagogies (Giroux, 2005). Furthermore, as these soundscapes often highlighted topics such as racial inequities, violence, and cultural differences (see chapter five), practices of authorial agency created opportunities for students to artistically and dialogically engage with cultural, civic/political, social, economic, racial, and interpersonal structures in the world.

Authorial agency can be contrasted with instrumental and effortful forms of agency, both of which, like functional listening, can be equated with functional literacies (Matusov et al., 2016). I spend time here defining these other forms of agency because they also emerged in this study. Instrumental agency, a focus on the development of capacities, is often compartmentalized

and content based. It is common in projects that focus on a singular topic, requiring students to generate a uniform final product that bears little resemblance to the experiential and inquiry-based processes of project-based learning (Strevy, 2014). Effortful agency is often code for encouraging students to “want what the teachers want them to want” (Matusov et al., 2016, p. 429). As such, it becomes a masqueraded form of agency, wherein one’s individual goals are shaped to become those of another (Osberg & Biesta, 2010). Effortful agency can often be seen, for example, in a dialogue that leads deliberately toward a consensus that may have been predefined by a teacher (Matusov et al., 2016). Matusov and colleagues note that both of these forms of agency, like all functional literacies, privilege a singular way of interpreting, understanding, or doing, making them antithetical to border crossing pedagogy.

In this study, students at both schools frequently juxtaposed their experiences with this project and those of other projects wherein instrumental or effortful agency were central. In addition, a small number of students at both Edgewood and Forest Glen struggled with how to develop projects and engage in dialogue that were not centered on a predefined ideal. In the data presented below, there are moments where this is evident, and I analyze these instances as counter-examples to authorial agency and border crossing.

Themes of Critical Listening and Authorial Agency

In what follows, I examine the ways in which students’ engagements in critical listening and their practices of authorial agency impacted and interacted with one another through two themes. I focus on how students’ individual choices, collective engagements, and our pedagogical strategies as educators impacted these practices over the course of the project. I present each of these themes separately, as well as counter-examples that demonstrate moments of functional listening and engagement, through data and analysis from both cases.

In the first theme, I examine how students engaged in a process of reframing the familiar during the compositional portion of the project. Here, I explore the ways in which students practiced a critical reframing of media and resituating of sounds in order to create artistic artifacts that challenged, redefined, or added complexity to a familiar song or commonplace sound. I focus on the importance of creating ongoing opportunities for critical listening and authorial agency throughout the study, drawing connections between the introductory activities (see chapter four) that explored critical listening to students' independent compositional processes as they developed their artistic intention and compositional voice.

In this theme, I also consider, as a counter-example, one student in particular who struggled with authorial agency in her compositional process, due to the way she focused on a literal and singular interpretation of a song for her soundscape. Here, I analyze the ways in which a seemingly less critical compositional practice can still generate complex and critical discussions.

In the second theme, I examine what I have come to call interpretive divergence. Here, I explore the ways in which students engaged in communal practices of authorial agency as they listened to and dialogued about their classmates' compositions. These engagements took place in the final weeks of the study as students presented their soundscapes and began to move from the role of creator to that of responder. In the process, they engaged in critical listening and authorial agency practices that often demonstrated divergent ways of thinking. In these instances, they had to negotiate their interpretations, listening critically not only to the musical artifacts, but also to one another as they engaged in dialogue. I also illustrate examples wherein students' interpretations aligned with that of the composer, and I consider how students expanded upon those interpretations, leading to conjectures and questions that explored alternative ideas.

While students at Forest Glen seemed to demonstrate growth in criticality in terms of how they engaged in critical listening and authorial agency throughout the compositional and dialogical portions of the project, this was less evident at Edgewood. At Edgewood, students appeared more willing to engage in such practices independently as they were composing or in small focus groups with me, separated from the large class. As such, I pay close attention to the roles played by educators as they facilitated these listening and dialogical engagements. In particular, I focus on how we sought to navigate multiple simultaneous manifestations of authorial agency, as well as moments where the dialogue did not lead toward authorial agency. Further, I consider instances wherein our pedagogical processes became forms of authorial agency in themselves, and I explore the ways in which those processes impacted students' practices.

Reframing the Familiar

Students began their compositional processes differently. Some began on a micro-level with the curation of a list of sounds and media that were important to them or that they perceived as relevant to their lives, followed by a period of critical listening wherein they experimented with how to reframe or recontextualize these sounds and/or media to develop a particular story. Others began with a macro vision of a world they sought to recreate through their soundscape, followed by a period of searching out, reconfiguring, and rebranding sounds or media to artistically actualize that vision. Still others attempted to navigate both the macro and micro simultaneously. In all instances, students were developing an intention that drove their artistic decision-making, a central part of the compositional process (Hickey, 2012; Kaschub, 2009; Ruthmann, 2008).

I begin here with the experiences of Franco (Edgewood) and Emma (Forest Glen) to consider how “mis-listening” (Schmidt, 2012b) to a familiar piece of music helped them enact authorial agency through their compositions. In these examples, Franco and Emma reframed excerpts of *The Star-Spangled Banner* and Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* in unanticipated contexts, thereby creating entry points for multiple and non-dominant interpretations of these recognizable pieces to be explored.

Next, I move to the experience of Mariana (Edgewood). Similar to Emma and Franco, she engaged in a process of critical listening and authorial agency, though her reframing was of sounds, rather than media, in order to construct a soundscape that prompted dialogue about testing anxiety and standardization. Here, I consider how students interpreted and utilized seemingly commonplace sounds to develop compositions that were both complex and thought-provoking.

Finally, as a counter-example, I consider the experience of Gia (Forest Glen) to demonstrate how, for some students, a reliance on literal lyrical understandings served as a barrier to engaging in authorial agency. In this example, Gia made use of a musical excerpt that she found meaningful but seemed to not question, problematize or reframe the excerpt in any way. I present this counter-example to demonstrate how listening may not always be creative and productive, but can still produce complex and critical discussion.

A Critical Reframing of Media. Many students at both schools opted to use media excerpts in their soundscapes. At Edgewood, Ms. Smith and I were not prepared for this choice, as we expected students to focus more on sounds. As such, our introductory activities had not been designed with media in mind. Recognizing that we needed to help students shift into a critical listening of media, we met with students in one-on-one or small group settings as they

were developing their compositions, asking questions that might help them consider these musical texts through multiple lenses (Abramo, 2015). For the majority of students, these individual meetings seemed helpful, and most of the students at Edgewood who used media appeared to do so in a critical way.

At Forest Glen, the second location in the study, I was more prepared for students to engage with media. As such, Ms. Green and I built in examples from media during our introductory engagements in critical listening. Recognizing, however, the impact the one-on-one and small group settings had at Edgewood, we still employed these strategies with the students at Forest Glen, asking questions designed to help them think through their perspectives and understandings of media. As at Edgewood, most, though not all students seemed to critically reframe the media they chose to use in their soundscapes.

Franco, a student at Edgewood, was one student who engaged in this manner. Franco's soundscape¹⁷, *Free 21*, is about the deportation of rapper 21 Savage from the United States to the United Kingdom¹⁸. Franco's composition opens with an orchestral rendition of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, which is then pushed to the background by a short excerpt of 21 Savage rapping. A record scratch sound effect interrupts the composition, and the sound of a police siren and cell door slamming can be heard. A choral/instrumental version of *God Save the Queen* begins, but it is quickly joined by the sounds of protestors. The anthem and the shouting of the protestors battle one another until a record scratch sound effect interrupts again. This time, the sound of a cell door opening can be heard, along with a cheering crowd. The composition ends

¹⁷ <https://youtu.be/byTfi79b2Y8>

¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-47250195>

with a vocal/orchestral rendition of *The Star-Spangled Banner* returning, this time only to fade as the song ends.

When I spoke with Franco about his soundscape, he shared:

Franco: I'm using my soundscape for a purpose...I want it to demonstrate an emotion, but really, I mostly want it to demonstrate unfairness for 21 Savage...so I wanted to say like 21 Savage that he was in America for a while and he was rapping. So I, like, took an acapella track from one of the songs and then I put it over like a star-spangled banner to show like he was in America and then the track just suddenly stops and there's like this record scratch. So it's like it was really unexpected when 21 Savage got arrested so I wanted to like show it with that record scratch. And then there like a jail cell sound like closing. And then...the anthem of England, God Save The Queen starts playing. And then I layered like a track of people protesting onto it to show that people were like angry about him being arrested. And so that goes on for a while.

(Student Interview, Edgewood)

Franco's process began with a broad topic. He was familiar with the deportation case of 21 Savage and, prior to this project, he had critically reflected on the impact of such a case. Here, however, he seems to amplify his critical thinking with a practice in critical listening, engaging the skills we had begun to develop in our introductory activities and transferring them to familiar pieces in order to help him tell a story.

Franco went on to note:

Franco: Yeah, the Star Spangled Banner represents America and God Save the Queen represents England, but it's more than that...like it's America that's sending him back and, like, you think about that song and it's supposed to be about freedom and good things, but I, like, I wanted to show that it can also represent, you know, scary things. Getting deported, that's scary.

(Student Interview, Edgewood)

Here, as I saw in multiple other occasions, Franco seemed to be simultaneously amplifying and challenging the expected meanings associated with *The Star-Spangled Banner*. He began by reflecting upon and recognizing common associations with the anthem. He may have been drawing upon experiences he has had listening to the anthem at sporting or school

events, or possibly the ways in which it has been discussed in literature or history classes. He then moved to present the anthem in ways that could be seen as non-normative, challenging associations that are commonly made, and recognizing some of the many cultural and social surpluses that exist around this piece. He reframes the anthem, emphasizing the “unfairness” that it also represents, which, for him, is manifested through 21 Savage’s deportation case. The anthem’s meaning is now amplified to one that also represents inequity and injustice, potentially adding complexity to how those who listen to his composition may come to hear and understand it in this context and potentially in the future.

As educators, it is worthwhile to consider how our engagements with critical listening throughout the project strove to help students build upon the critical thinking skills they already possessed and practiced. The development of a critical artistic disposition is, as I note in chapter two, about creating curricular and pedagogical spaces in the music classroom for students to cultivate flexibility and depth in how they engage critically. This suggests a need for students to practice and engage with their critical capacities through various curricular contexts. Project-based learning, in this case, should not then separated from the rest of the curriculum, nor from the rest of the school community. Rather, projects should serve as opportunities for students to amplify these capacities through the development of musical artifacts and engagements. This suggests a need for projects to be embedded within a curriculum that prioritizes criticality, where a project can be a way of building upon and adding complexity to dispositions already possessed (Behizadeh, 2014; Maida, 2011; Niesz, 2006).

Emma, a student at Forest Glen, engaged in a similar reframing of a recognizable piece of music. Unlike Franco, however, she started with music and sounds that were particularly

meaningful to her, rather than a larger topic. Emma’s soundscape¹⁹, *Hearing the Differences*, opens with Tchaikovsky’s *Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy*. This melody plays through the entirety of her piece, and as the composition progresses, Emma plays with dynamics, foregrounding and backgrounding the melody with two other musical vignettes. In the first, we hear the sounds of a ballet pointe shoe hitting the floor and dancers moving across a stage. In the second, we hear the loud cacophony of a basketball game, complete with cheers, dribbling basketballs, and buzzers. As one vignette fades, the other responds, and occasionally the two worlds seem to musically co-exist as they become entangled with one another. Tchaikovsky’s melody plays throughout, but fades away at the end, without coming to its expected conclusion. When speaking with Emma about her composition, she noted:

Emma: My creative process was about really listening to my world and things about me. About how I am my own person. I dance and my brother plays sports. We’re really different and we live in different worlds. But those worlds happen at the same time. I love dance and he loves sports...and so we are a part of both of those worlds in some ways. And I want whoever’s listening to my composition to feel that...to hear the differences.

(Student Interview, Forest Glen)

There are a variety of “expected” images that might be conjured upon listening to *The Nutcracker*: a ballet, a young girl, or perhaps a connection to the holiday season. Emma expands upon these ideas. The melody does represent “dance,” but it also represents her life as a whole. Similarly, the cheering and sporting sounds are not only heard as a basketball game, but also as a distinct and separate, but parallel, life. As a compositional device, Emma seemed to look for the surpluses that exist beyond the expected focal points in this recognizable piece. She appeared to purposefully manipulate those surpluses, pairing them with other sounds in order to make her point. When she juxtaposed them with one another, she appeared to be taking the “givens” of

¹⁹ <https://youtu.be/F0w0ljaUVng>

these sounds and musical works and re-situating them in order to create a new artistic artifact that expanded upon the meaning generated by each vignette or piece when listened to separately. This seems to exemplify a practice of mis-listening whereby she has explored and manipulated “a multiplicity of on-looks and outlooks upon which one can and should enter, contribute, and extend” (Schmidt, 2012b, p. 14).

At the end of the piece, both vignettes as well as Tchaikovsky’s piece fade away, but they never come to completion. As listeners, there is no sense of resolution, no sense of finality, no sense of conclusion. Emma noted:

Emma: Right, so....it represents my life. My life is, you know, it’s still, like going. Still happening.
(Student Interview, Forest Glen)

In choosing to not end with a sense of finality, the lives represented in Emma’s piece remain intertwined and continuous, despite the conclusion of her composition. As the piece fades away, the listener is left wondering how these two lives will continue to interact in the future. The class reacted to Emma’s composition with their own investigation of the surpluses and “ramifications of meaning” (Schmidt, 2012, p. 14) that could be gleaned from it, and I analyze this discussion later in this chapter. Through Emma’s creative treatment of each element of her composition, and perhaps most notably her use of Tchaikovsky, she seemed to be engaging in authorial agency, creating something new through the manipulation of pre-existing material.

Experiences like these suggest a need for openness in the ways in which we, as educators, encourage students to develop compositions. On the surface, Emma’s composition may not seem as critical because it does not explicitly engage with a topic that can be immediately associated with larger social issues, such as deportation in Franco’s or the myriad topics explored in chapter five. Emma also chose a piece that, while recognizable for some students, was not as ubiquitous

as a current pop chart or anthem. It is possible that one of the reasons Emma engaged in this way was because we aimed to focus on critical listening as a broad and flexible skill. Space was created for a process that began with a reflection on what mattered to her, which then led to a theme or intention that she generated. Had we started with content first (be it popular music, classical music, etc.), Emma may not have progressed to a practice of authorial agency because she may not have had the same connection to this content, thereby potentially curtailing her opportunities for border crossing. To be clear, I am not advocating for a curriculum that engages with open-ended musical engagements that are parameter-less, but I am suggesting that, for educators, the development of such projects requires an awareness of how a project's boundaries create or foreclose spaces for divergent thinking in music class. On a more macro level, this also requires the purposeful placement of different kinds of projects in the curriculum, and an awareness of how students might engage with these variations.

Emma and Franco were not outliers. Other students at both schools used critical listening and compositional devices in similar ways. At Edgewood, Ariel used excerpts from *Never Give Up* by Sia juxtaposed with the sounds of a dance studio to explore the ways in which songs that may be understood as uplifting can drive students to perfectionist tendencies. Tyler used the themes from video games to explore the ways in which he and other young people use such games to cope with feelings of anxiety and stress. At Forest Glen, Shelley, whose soundscape is discussed further in chapter seven used a variety of media excerpts juxtaposed against one another to explore the bombardment of media messages teens experience today. In each of these examples as well as in others, students engaged in ongoing, critical practices of listening to media as a central and foundational element of their compositional processes. Critical listening,

then, was not only a parallel process to authorial agency, but it was fully intertwined in students' processes over time.

Resituating sound. Whereas students like Emma and Franco began with media, other students focused on using only sounds to recreate environments and explore larger social constructs. The notion of resituating sound fits within this theme because students often curated lists of sounds that, outside of their soundscape, might have seemed commonplace. When these sounds were manipulated and resituated in compositional settings with other sounds, they were often reframed to prompt feelings and provoke reactions that each sound alone would not have achieved.

This was a much less common compositional path at both schools, which I initially found perplexing. Prior to beginning this project, I expected students to focus primarily on environmental sounds, as that had been my experience when working with students on similar projects in past contexts. I inquired with students at both schools about this choice. Some students noted that they chose to use media because of its pervasiveness in their lives:

Scarlette: But this is my world. This is what I hear in my head, what I hear in my earbuds, what I hear with my friends and parents.

(Student Interview, Forest Glen)

These students made the specific choice to include media because of its content and meaning, and then reframed those meanings through their practices in critical listening, as articulated in the previous section.

Some students noted that they found only engaging with sounds more challenging:

Elijah: But where's the beat? There's no beat. Music's gotta have a beat! You do this, you gotta create a beat with the sounds.

(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

Ms. Green, Ms. Smith and I spent time with the class as a whole during the first week demonstrating and exploring ways students could turn specific sounds into “beats” for their compositions. Despite these pedagogical strategies, most students opted to develop their beats in other ways. At both schools, students developed their own beats using software or instruments. Rather than limiting or excluding these musical practices, the educators and I chose to embrace them, and, like all other sounds and media, pushed students to critically listen and question their purpose and place in their compositions.

The compositional decision to focus solely on sounds, though less common, happened more often at Edgewood. This is likely due to the way Ms. Smith and I presented the project, choosing not to use very much media during week one. Mariana (Edgewood) was an example of a student who resituated a series of sounds in her soundscape. She knew from the beginning of the project that she wanted to recreate the stressful environment of standardized testing. She started by compiling a list of sounds for her composition that, independently, could seem rather anodyne: a beating heart, a ticking clock, breathing, a pencil writing and erasing, and a piece of paper being crumpled. When purposefully and intentionally situated, however, Mariana created a soundscape that prompted feelings of anxiety and discomfort for the listeners.

Mariana’s soundscape, *Frustration*²⁰, opens with a loudly beating heart and a ticking clock. The clock runs throughout the entire composition, serving as a consistent pulse. The heartbeat drops out and the sound of breathing enters. The breathing is intentionally inconsistent and labored, which causes the listener to feel a sense of unease. The sound of flipping pages and a wildly scratching pencil accompany the breathing and raise the anxiety level. The heartbeat returns and the clock gets louder until the composition stops abruptly.

²⁰ <https://youtu.be/-x1nFtpvObE>

While Mariana was hesitant to share about her own soundscape in the focus groups or in our one-on-one interview, we spoke informally several times as she was constructing and developing it. In my journal I made note of this, as I found her comments about resituating sounds through composition to make them more complex intriguing:

[Mariana] shared her soundscape with Ms. [Smith] and me today...when I first saw her sound list at the beginning of this project, I wasn't completely sure where she was going to go with it, but we spoke today about she feels like this project is really about taking something that might feel pretty simple on first glance and then making it more complex because of how we put it together which really is what creating music (or creating anything) is all about. Each of these sounds would be pretty unassuming on their own, but, with the way that she has brought them together, she's thinking about how to repurpose or reframe them to tell a story, which, really, is part of the whole point of this project.

(Researcher Journal Entry)

Here Mariana is articulating how the purposeful manipulation and situation of commonplace sounds can create complexity. In taking a selection of sounds which, independently, do not necessarily incite anxiousness, and layering and manipulating them in a particular fashion in order to deliberately provoke feelings of stress for the listener, she is demonstrating how sounds can also be read as texts, with multiple meanings to be heard and problematized. Other students at Edgewood also chose to work solely with sounds, but none articulated the process as Mariana did with such awareness of their creative processes and the complex potential that can exist in what may appear to be fairly simple.

Ms. Smith was not surprised by Mariana's comment, nor by her chosen process, noting:

Ms. Smith: It's no surprise...she knew what she wanted to create from the beginning. She's a very good student.

(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

Ms. Smith was correct. Mariana had made her topic clear from the beginning of week two in her journal entry:

Mariana: We take tests all the time, but in seventh grade, they matter. The [private]

schools— they use these tests to decide if you get in or not and if you get any money or whatever. If we don't get into a good school now, that's it.

(Student Journal Entry, Edgewood)

Though unsurprised by Mariana's work ethic, Ms. Smith *was* surprised by why she chose her topic:

Ms. Smith: [Mariana] who is so hardworking and so sweet. She clearly has text anxiety. Who would have known? She does well. She's a good student.

(Educator Interview, Edgewood)

From a pedagogical perspective, Mariana's experience demonstrates the importance of not only providing multiple opportunities for critical listening throughout the project, but also seeking out ways, as educators, to ask questions and support students' reflections throughout these practices. Part of our role in this project was to help students think through their perspectives and experiences in juxtaposition with larger social structures through listening and composition. In this way, critical listening is not only about recognizing the multiple dimensions of a text, but also the ways in which those texts can be connected to the larger social and historical conditions of one's life (Gutstein, 2006).

Returning to the larger overarching theme of "reframing the familiar," I would argue that the experiences of Mariana and students like her suggest that we, as educators, need to engage in ongoing personal reflexivity as to how we are responding to students' compositions. While Ms. Smith and I might have recognized Mariana's strong developing skills in critical listening as well as her articulate depiction of her creative process, we may not have discovered the meaning behind her soundscape without probing. It is important, then, to not lose sight of why practices in critical listening and "reframing the familiar" are so important in critical education. Not only can these practices help students grapple with their own experiences and recognize multiple

dimensions, but they also serve as an opportunity for educators to question our own “well-formed understandings” (Lipari, 2014) about our students and their identities.

When Authorial Agency is Missed: A Counter-Example. In some instances, students struggled to hear multiple interpretations of a media excerpt or sound. In these moments, the educators and I often worked one-on-one with students, asking questions to try and prompt different ways of hearing the song or sound. Sometimes, despite these pedagogical practices, students became stuck at the functional level of listening or engaging, unsure of how to progress to a more critical or agentic engagement.

Gia (Forest Glen) was one example. Gia’s soundscape²¹ revolves around one song: NF’s *How Could You Leave Us?* Released in 2016, the song centers on issues related to losing someone to drug addiction. In Gia’s soundscape, she leaves a significant portion of the song unchanged, but adds snippets of sounds that seem to act as effects throughout the piece. For example:

<u>NF Lyric</u>	<u>Added Effect</u>
“they say pain is a prison”	cell door slamming
“you call a minute later”	phone ringing
“you started cryin”	crying
“it took everything inside me not to scream”	scream

Gia was committed to working with this song and was not interested in trying a different approach. She was one of two students from each case who became committed to a singular song and struggled to hear it from multiple dimensions. Though rare, when students expressed the determination that Gia did, the educators and I often suggested that students develop two compositions, one that matched their focus and a second one that represented this issue (or

²¹ Note: Gia articulated that her soundscape could be discussed, but not shared. As such, her soundscape is not found in the playlist.

another) from a different perspective. When Ms. Green and I made this suggestion to Gia, she expressed frustration:

Gia: This song says everything I'm feeling already. So, I don't know how to add to it. And I don't want to. I'm really excited for people to hear my composition. I want to hear what everyone has to say.

(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

I do not doubt that Gia found this song meaningful. She worked diligently at her composition each day, searching for sounds that she thought would enhance the lyrics she had connected with, and she was an active and avid participant in dialogue with her classmates. Musically, she incorporated several sounds over the song track and employed various mixing techniques. However, she never seemed to amplify or expand upon the song itself, which could suggest that she found it challenging to listen in the critical manner articulated by both Schmidt (2012b) and Lipari (2014), instead focusing on listening in a more functional manner. Unlike Emma and Franco who resituated and reframed the musical pieces they used in their soundscapes, Gia enhanced the piece with added sound effects, but never really appeared to question, consider multiple perspectives, or generate something new from the material she used.

She did, however, choose a topic that she felt was a significant social issue and meaningful to her. In our focus group, she noted:

Gia: Everybody knows me around here. Everybody. My family isn't great, okay? Everyone in [Forest Glen] pretty much knows my mom does drugs and doesn't live in my life...and it's fine, like, I didn't write this because I'm not fine, I know people know and whatever...but I wrote this because this is an issue. Because we talk about drugs just being these bad things that we're not supposed to do and we get all this drug-free stuff at school, but we don't, like, talk about how big this issue is.

(Focus Group, Forest Glen)

When shared in the large class, Gia's composition generated the conversation she hoped for, and the class explored the pervasiveness of drug addiction in the United States. This suggests that

even engagements that might seem less sophisticated on the compositional level can still generate complex discussions.

Ms. Green and I spoke frequently about Gia during our informal conversations and she noted:

Ms. Green: You know, I think this was just something [Gia] just needed to write. I mean, yeah, musically, this was not complex. She basically used someone else's song. But that doesn't mean she wasn't thinking, that doesn't mean she wasn't connecting to bigger issues. This was just what she needed and, you know, she just seems more peaceful in class since we listened. Just more at ease.
(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

This suggests the importance of not dismissing students' work as non-critical just because they do not necessarily develop an artistic artifact that demonstrates authorial agency. These works can still offer spaces for students to connect their musical listening practices to larger social issues thereby helping them engage in a form of critical literacy. Further, when shared with a group of listeners, there may be new perspectives offered, new challenges posed, and new questions generated, some of which may help students like Gia continue to engage in a critical manner.

This example also suggests that the role of the educator is to find ways both within and beyond this project to help students continue to find ways to engage critically (Martin & Brown, 2013). Despite struggling with critical listening and authorial agency in her own composition, Gia did engage in such processes when she was interpreting her classmates' soundscapes, which is seen later in this chapter. It is possible that, over time, as she continued to engage in these practices, she became more adept at recognizing multiple viewpoints or challenging dominant narratives. It is also possible that this composition was too personal for Gia to recognize multiple interpretations of the song. This speaks to the importance of projects such as this not being seen as singular, transformative acts, but as a part of a larger vision of curriculum. Not every project

will result in every student engaging in processes of critical listening and authorial agency. However, developing multiple projects or entry points into these skills and building in opportunities for students to practice in various contexts does have the potential for creating a curriculum that helps students, over time, develop critical artistic dispositions through which they see and engage with various ways of knowing.

Interpretive Divergence

I move now into the second large theme of this chapter, interpretive divergence, to consider the ways in which students listened critically to their classmates' shared soundscapes, questioning and problematizing what they heard. Here, authorial agency was less explicit. Students did not produce a product, such as a new soundscape, after listening. Rather, I argue that the dialogue about different interpretations was, in itself, an act of authorial agency. Just as students listened for the surpluses of meaning that could be found in sounds and media excerpts, they did the same for their classmates' soundscapes. Instead of negotiating and responding to their problematizing through composition, they did so by producing a dialogue that often challenged the notion of a singular understanding, thus creating new ideas and interpretations.

In what follows, I explore three instances of critical listening and authorial agency through dialogue. As I analyze these examples, I focus on the role the educators and I played in each instance. I argue that as we navigated and negotiated multiple viewpoints in the classroom, how we engaged with students and our own educational responsibilities impacted the possibility for authorial agency and border crossing. Of particular importance was the ways in which we helped students practice critical listening, intentionally set up spaces for divergent viewpoints to manifest, and engaged students in one-on-one conversations about their compositions.

I begin by returning to Emma (Forest Glen), this time examining the conversation that resulted from her composition. I focus specifically on the multiple divergent interpretations that her classmates offered as they listened to her soundscape. I focus here on the educator's role in balancing these interpretations in order to create opportunities for authorial agency to emerge, arguing that the ways in which these projects and spaces for dialogue are developed and discussed with students can help encourage authorial agency.

I then extend this analysis of the role of the educator as I consider Ari's (Forest Glen) composition, wherein Ms. Green and I faced a dilemma of how to engage in our own authorial agency as educators, while also honoring multiple interpretations in the classroom. I present this example to explore the complexities of engaging in both critical listening and authorial agency in the classroom.

Finally, I consider Elijah's (Edgewood), composition, wherein listeners still developed their own interpretation of the soundscape, but this time, in alignment with the composer's intention. I offer this dialogue in order to explore how authorial agency need not only arise from conflict in the classroom, but can also manifest from agreement. The educator's role here, then, is to help students expand upon that interpretation in a way that is both critical and reflective and help them connect their learning practice with in-the-world experiences.

Whose Agency Matters? When authorial agency is practiced by a group of people, it can result in conflict. As multiple interpretations and understandings are explored and layered, there can be a struggle between conflicting ideas (Lipari, 2014). In this study, questions of "right" interpretations and composer intention as potentially oppositional to listener understanding, arose frequently. This was, more often than not, how dialogue unfolded at both Forest Glen and Edgewood. This was significant because intentionality is central in student

composition, particularly when students are engaging with complex topics (Hickey, 2012; Kaschub, 2009; Ruthmann, 2008). It drives artistic decision making and is central to the development of students' compositional voices (Stauffer, 2003). However, in order for border crossing to occur, space needs to be created for multiple interpretations to be explored. Through the example of Emma, below, I consider how educators might help negotiate instances of interpretive divergence in the music classroom.

In Emma's composition²², the conversation quickly moved away from her original stated intention, as discussed above in the previous section, and toward a conversation that explored social norms and expectations.

- Gia: It made me think about how I'll have choir practice or a concert and there's not always a ton of people cheering. But you go with the basketball games, and there's always people cheering.
- Zamir: Yeah...we applaud athletics more than we do arts.
- Gia: If you compare going to a basketball game. You know how in the Windy City Bulls game there was still a ton of cheering and everything. But then if we went to one of the—
- Zamir: ...Band
- Gia: Yeah. The band, the chorus things, there wasn't so much cheering on as much as there was at the basketball game like the athletic.
- Zamir: I wonder why that is?
- Alyssa: I think it's because they have to be silent during band. When they're playing.
- Sarah: Yeah. Because you can't be yelling with music.
- Kelly: But why can you yell then at a rock concert?
- Gia: Because they're screaming, so you can scream
- Alyssa: It depends on the kind of music, I think
- Gia: It's like when we go to one of those things at school. We have to sit in the seats. And we can't clap or anything until the end.
- Kelly: Okay, is that cultural? Like in terms of things that we do...
- Zamir: ...as a society? Yeah. That's maybe where it comes from.
- [...]
- Elisabeth: We know because at the band concert the conductor puts his conducting thing down and there's silence.
- Kelly: Yeah, but how do we know it's the end. How do we know to applaud?
- Gia: Because it just is! We just do!
- Alyssa: We're taught. We're taught what to do in each place. And then we know.
- (Class Conversation, Forest Glen)

²² <https://youtu.be/F0w0ljaUVng>

Emma offered a soundscape that juxtaposes two different worlds, using the Tchaikovsky to weave those worlds together. While she used this as an opportunity to explore and problematize her own family experiences, the class considered her composition on a more macro level. They moved away from Emma’s focus on the interweaving of two seemingly disconnected lives lived in parallel, and instead interpreted her soundscape as an opportunity to compare and problematize social norms.

Emma’s was one of the first soundscapes that was shared and discussed at Forest Glen. As such, students were often still exploring how these critical, dialogical spaces might function. There were frequently moments where students became caught up in trying to determine what a composition was “supposed” to be about or looking to Ms. Green and I for confirmation that they had heard a classmate’s composition “correctly.” The discussion prompted by Emma’s composition continued on, eventually resulting in this comment directed toward Ms. Green and myself:

Turner: Wait, did we get it right? Was that the right answer?
Zamir: Does it matter?

(Class Conversation, Edgewood)

Helping students move beyond the question that Turner asked was, pedagogically, one of the most challenging parts of this project. Students are often taught that there is a “correct” answer and here, since many of the compositions were presented anonymously, they often looked to the educators and I to “approve” their responses. The purpose of this project, however, was not to unveil the composer’s intention like a problem to be solved. Rather, it was to use the musical and artistic choices made by each student composer as a catalyst to help students think through and problematize ideas, issues, and topics that arose as they were listening.

Emma was unconcerned that this conversation moved quickly away from her original intention. There were other students, however, who expressed frustration when people did not seem to “get” their compositions. In these moments, students voiced concern that their compositions were being re-authored as their soundscapes were re-constructed with new meaning. These concerns align with the plight of all artistic work in that, as creators, we cannot control how others understand the artistic artifact once it is complete. Musical work is inherently subjective, and individuals enter a listening experience with what Lipari (2014) refers to as their own listening “habitus,” that is, a history of experiences and identities that inform how we interpret that which we are hearing. When opportunities for divergent thought are created, students have the possibility of sharing their unique interpretation, thus moving beyond a pre-determined “correct” answer.

In spaces such as these, educators ought to consider how to balance helping student composers feel as though their compositional voice is heard while also helping student listeners use these compositions as opportunities to engage in critical dialogue and generate diverse interpretations. To ignore or refute the possibility of multiple projections of meaning forecloses or at least diminishes the possibility of border crossing and can lead toward an effortful agency where students’ responses align with the answer they assume the teacher would like to hear (Matusov et al., 2016). To allow for openness in dialogue potentially leaves the student composer feeling unheard.

While somewhat inevitable as a pedagogical practice of border crossing, there are ways to navigate these tensions. As music educators, deliberately speaking with students about the challenges inherent in sharing your creative work, not knowing how it will be interpreted, is important. Helping students move beyond a space of judgement in order to recognize that

compositions are “stories partially told” that must “additionally be heard” and interpreted by others can be challenging (Lashua, 2006, p. 406). At Forest Glen, Ms. Green and I spoke openly about our own experiences as artists and creators, sharing stories about vulnerability and the personal nature of our musical work, and we invited students to do the same. We hoped that by engaging in these conversations students might recognize the benefits and possibilities in hearing diverse interpretations of their work.

Further, there should be pedagogical intention from the educator in terms of how dialogical spaces are constructed as well as how we act within them, particularly when using students’ own experiences as texts (Giroux, 2005). When these spaces of multiple interpretations are set up ahead of time by educators, such as through the introductory activities at the beginning of this project and the reflection activities that took place throughout, these tensions might be mitigated, and opportunities for border crossing may be more likely and more fruitful.

Educative Engagements between Teacher and Student. Throughout the study, we found moments in which our engagements as educators directly impacted the nature and direction of classroom interactions. This included how we mediated spaces of classroom dialogue, the ways in which we asked open-ended but purposeful questions, and how we made other pedagogical decisions throughout the project. While engaging with students is part of a teacher’s role and responsibility in the classroom, such engagements can also repress or inhibit practices of authorial agency.

There were instances of students who wanted to maintain anonymity as their compositions were presented to the class. This left Ms. Green, Ms. Smith and I in the position of having to decide whether or not to speak for or on behalf of the student during the discussion. There was the possibility, as articulated above, of our interventions projecting meaning onto a

student's composition. Here, however, that risk was increased because, as educators our comments were often weighed differently than those of the students and could steer the conversation in a particular direction, thus preventing opportunities for authorial agency to manifest.

When Ari, a student at Forest Glen, shared her composition with the class, both Ms. Green and I recognized and reflected upon how impactful our own comments could be in the classroom. Ari's soundscape²³ opens with the sounds of birds chirping and children playing and laughing. A school bell rings and a melancholic ukulele riff begins. A student can be heard writing upon and then tearing up a piece of paper. Chants of "You're so stupid" and deep breathing can be heard until the school bell rings again. The ukulele riff continues as we hear someone walking and slamming a door. More deep breathing and an alarm clock as we return to the same sounds in the beginning of the piece, chirping birds and children playing. The riff comes to a close and the birds fade away as the piece ends.

When we first listened to Ari's work, both Ms. Green and I were taken aback. Reflecting upon it later, Ms. Green noted:

Ms. Green: So, you and I were so sad...and it was so tender-hearted...And she is a beautiful-hearted girl, and we thought she was trying to talk about sadness, and to me, that song was like a knife to my heart. I'm like, "This is desolate. This is bleak."

(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

Out of concern for Ari's vulnerability, we considered setting the soundscape up with a conversation about inclusion and bullying to set the tone, but we decided to speak to Ari first.

Kelly: Could you talk to us a bit about your composition? Ms. Green and I were really taken by the emotion in your work and we're curious to know more.

Ari: Oh, well, I mean, it's about hope...and about how sometimes things are really hard and you don't want to get up in the morning, but every day is a new day and

²³ <https://youtu.be/tPIEQPE11DM>

a new opportunity and a new chance to have a really great day (pause)...why?
What were you thinking when you heard it?

Ms. Green: I think that's a really beautiful message. I think we heard the sadness at first and we were just really taken by that.

She was surprised by our reaction:

Ari: I mean, yeah, it's a little sad. But it's hopeful.
(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

She was insistent that we share the composition as it was, certain that our intervening would alter the class's perception, framing their listening in a way where all they would hear was a sonic story about bullying. Whereas Emma's soundscape, above, was one of the first we listened to as a class, Ari's soundscape was later in the process of sharing at Forest Glen. Students were becoming more comfortable with this critical, dialogical space and were asking questions, offering interpretations, and problematizing what they heard more quickly, and often with less prompting from Ms. Green or myself.

We wanted to honor Ari's request, so we did not frame her soundscape in advance. We played it twice, and then asked students to discuss in small groups before sharing their thoughts with the class:

Kelly: So, what did you all talk about in your groups?

Nohemi: We thought it was like a flashback

Jake: Yeah, like of someone who was bullied.

Marie: Right, but it's also happy at the beginning and at the end. It's sad in the middle, but happy at the other times.

Sebastian: We actually thought it was a dream.

Kelly: Ok, so was it sad? Can you talk more about what you mean there?

Adam: Well, it was hopeful. I mean, it made it feel like people could move on

Phil: Moving on is hard. I mean it depends on the person.

Rory: Right – depends on what they've experienced...like if everybody's being fake at school.

(Class Conversation, Forest Glen)

As Ari expected, the students almost immediately caught the balance of sadness and hopefulness in her composition. They did hear the idea of bullying, as Jake noted, but there was not the sense

particular importance. It illuminates another seemingly inevitable paradox that educators often face when engaging with border crossing pedagogy: when and how to intervene.

When considering this paradox, educators are faced with how to negotiate our own personal authorial agency with students' multiple interpretations and viewpoints. This is particularly complex when that personal authorial agency is hidden in our teaching. If we want to encourage authorial agency, but are unaware of the ways in which our own interpretations are influencing or limiting students' understandings, we may inadvertently promote effortful agency (Matusov et al., 2016), as students seek to match their understandings with our own. Our authorial agency becomes the dominant narrative, and students may not feel as though alternative understandings are possible.

To be clear, I am not advocating for educators to step back from engaging with students, modeling critical practices, asking provocative questions, or actively partaking in dialogue. To abstain from these pedagogical engagements in the classroom is to abdicate one's responsibility as an educator, particular within a critical border crossing framework. Further, there are instances where deliberate intervention, such as the one Ms. Green and I were planning, are necessary to help navigate conversations or to highlight marginalized or less heard voices (Valenzuela, 2017).

I am suggesting, rather, that educators might also engage in their own practices of critical listening, questioning and reflecting alongside students, with an added awareness of how the influence carried by our words and actions. Educators may pride themselves on being able to make meaning quickly and efficiently, especially in a large class setting. Taking the time to question our assumptions is important. I also suggest that the ways we speak openly with students is also critical. Had Ms. Green and I relied on our own unproblematized authorial agency, we may have thwarted the possibility for authorial agency from the student listeners, and

also potentially erased Ari's voice as the composer, thus curtailing or preventing the dialogue that ensued. In actuality, I think the sharing of Ari's soundscape was a moment of particular importance for Ms. Green and myself. It helped us grow in awareness of the impact we could potentially have on the class discussion and highlighted the importance of taking the time to dialogue with each student composer.

Aligning with & Expanding upon Compositional Intent. In both examples above, there was divergence between the intent of the student composer and the ways a composition was heard and interpreted by the educators or other students. There were other moments, though not as frequent, where there was alignment, or at least less divergence, between the listeners' interpretations and the composer's intent. These instances still became moments of authorial agency, as listeners expanded upon the composer's intent by connecting the interpretation with their own varied experiences.

At Edgewood, Elijah developed a soundscape²⁴ that opens with an emergency vehicle siren. Added to this is the sound of someone's footsteps as they trudge through the snow and a techno-style background beat. As the siren fades, we begin to hear a muffled voice, but it is difficult to make out the words. Suddenly, the beat and footsteps drop out, and we hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s voice clearly state:

This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice...

The beat returns, as do the sirens, and King's voice disappears. The soundscape ends abruptly with the beat and sirens still playing at full volume.

²⁴ <https://youtu.be/AbniqkCTuZ4>

Elijah did not want to speak about his soundscape during a one-on-one interview with me, but he did want to share with me informally in class as he was working through it. I jotted down some notes following our conversation:

[Elijah] just showed me his soundscape...he seems like he is almost at odds about what to feel. He talked about how he was walking home from school on Friday and decided to record his footprints in the snow, and how he started to hear the siren in the distance. His immediate reaction was fear – he thought it was the police – and he thought they might be coming for him for some reason. But when he realized that it was an ambulance, that fear was replaced by curiosity. “Who was in there?” he wondered. “Somebody I know?” So, he went home and started to mix the two sounds together, adding in the MLK speech as he was thinking about how to deal with these feelings, most of which, he noted, came from being a young black male. He said something like, “It’s just like nothing’s changed.” It was such a powerful moment with him. [Ms. Smith] says he’s never actually participated in class before – so I’m really interested to see how this comes together.

(Researcher Journal Entry)

Elijah’s soundscape highlights issues of racism, oppression, and inequality that he sees permeating his lived experience. Though he does not state this, it is possible that our classroom dialogue helped amplify his own critical listening practices, and potentially led him to question and interrogate his vivid reactions to what may seem like commonplace sounds. Recognizing that there may be other students in his class who might not hear these sounds with his set of experiences, his soundscape is developed as a way of illuminating his own processes of questioning.

Elijah’s soundscape was not irregular. There were many students at Edgewood who explored these issues, thus opening spaces for us to grapple with them when they were presented. Elijah’s soundscape was one of the first we listened to and dialogued about in smaller groups (see chapter four) as opposed to the large class. As a result, it was also one of the first that generated a more involved dialogue from the students. In the dialogue below, students in one group explored possible interpretations of his composition:

Bobby: I think it's about somebody. It's about a person.
Edgar: Could be about someone that got shot, they're sent to the hospital, they're now dead. The person who witnessed it is upset. Hence, the song.
(Class Conversation, Edgewood)

Here, Bobby and Edgar seem to still be trying to determine what the song is "supposed" to be about, considering possible storylines and inspirations. Quickly, though, Blanca responds by articulating the very goal of this project, not yet offering her own ideas, but thinking through how we listen:

Blanca: We all hear different interpretations
Maya: That's a big word
Edgar: It's people's perceptions of the world
Maya: That's another big word! (to Blanca) Can you break it down?
Blanca: (Starts sounding it out) (laughing)
(Maya rolls her eyes)
Blanca: (more seriously) It means like everybody thinks about a song differently...or like anybody thinks of anything that's in the world differently. So if I think that something's one way, you might think that something's another way.
Edgar: It's about how self-aware of who and how and where you are.
(Class Conversation, Edgewood)

Blanca's comment, and the explanation that followed, created the conditions for students to expect diverse possibilities. In an attempt to help the students move into thinking about interpretations that might be shaped by racial or socioeconomic experiences, I added:

Kelly: Ok...let's talk about self-awareness...so, you could come away from this and say that this is just like a cool beat...or you could come away from this and say that this is like something more than that. Like a story. (pause). I wonder...I feel like that Dr. Martin Luther King speech has to be purposeful, right? What do you think?
Dexter: Yeah. It's about racism.
Kelly: Ok, so...unpack that a bit
Dexter: Like, there's still racism. It's a white person killing a black person.
Kelly: Ok, so that's why the inclusion of Martin Luther King, you think?
Edgar: Prejudice in general. How do I put this...trying to explain that there's still conflict. That it's happening even after the speech.
Kelly: Yeah. It's been about 50 years since that speech
Maya: That's not that long ago.
(There's a conversation about how old people in their family are...and a debate about whether or not they had TV 'back then')

Kelly: Do you think there are still people speaking out against this today?
 Edgar: Some people, yeah, but there not as...let's say...known. They're not like on the news.
 Kelly: Why do you think that is?
 Edgar: (cautiously) There are people in the world that want this to happen.
 (There is a pause here as the students look generally uncomfortable with this comment)
 (Class Conversation, Edgewood)

Here, students seemed to recognize, understand, and align with Elijah's compositional intention, but still found ways to expand upon that it. This suggests that even when interpretations do not conflict, there is still space for dialogue, expansion, and amplification. In the process, they began to explore how social realities and experiences with race, class, and age inform those interpretations. Elijah's experiences as a young, black male are likely what drove him to develop his soundscape as he did. The students then expanded outward from Elijah to consider how the positionalities of others might inform not only how they interpret his soundscape, but, more importantly, how they engage in the world beyond school.

Edgar: Well...and...news people want to talk about what they want to talk about. They're not paid to tell the truth.
 Stokeley: But why? Who determines what's news?
 Blanca: Social media.
 Kelly: What do you think about social media or media in general? Has it impacted the way we see the world?
 Edgar: Abso-freakin-lutely. People just hide behind social media. It's the same racism.
 (Class Conversation, Edgewood)

Moments like these are significant because this is where the impact of the composition and the dialogue can extend beyond the confines of the project. One of the goals of border crossing pedagogy is to connect learning practice with in-the-world experience (Giroux, 2005; Hayes & Cuban, 1996). The role of the educator, therefore, is not only to design projects that encourage students to consider social issues, but also to help them navigate and negotiate the multiple manifestations of authorial agency that can emerge from such projects.

Reflecting on this interaction from a pedagogical perspective, I am not sure that my comments and questions in the moment were particularly helpful. Similar to the students, the educators and I also occasionally became entrenched in thinking through what the composition was “about.” We, too, struggled sometimes to construct questions in the moment that helped students move beyond this idea and toward authorial agency.

The students, however, were continuing to grow in their thinking, and they were beginning to listen with an ear toward making connections between “moment-to-moment interactions in classrooms” and larger social ideas and issues (Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017, p. 33). They considered counter-narratives, connected racism to media production, and reflected afterward on their social identities. As such, this conversation continued to develop. I commented in my journal:

Today felt like an important day. The students I was sharing with in my group, they were making all sorts of connections to what they were hearing. After one of the compositions, they were making connections to media and the way the news perpetuates stereotypes...they were connecting to their own soundscapes and experiences...[Bobby], [Stokeley], and [Maya] were talking about neighborhood experiences and how the media portrays those places...we even moved on to talking about how the way the media portrays violence has almost made us numb to it, and [Blanca] pointed out that part of who they are in their generation is and continues to be shaped by these issues.

(Researcher Journal Entry, Edgewood)

Through this study, it became apparent that, while pedagogical choices can at times repress students’ authorial agency, they can also support it. Educators can help students use their authorial agency to connect learning practice to social realities through purposeful pedagogical engagements in critical listening. Engagements, then, are complex, and should be considered critically and reflectively if one hopes to encourage practices of border crossing in the classroom.

A Spiral of Agency

I now bring together the themes articulated above, placing them into a timeline that considers the relationship that I saw between practices of critical listening and various manifestations of authorial agency in this study. To do so, I offer a model of what I am calling a spiral of agency, seen below (figure 6.1). In what follows, I explain this model and use it to aggregate the above themes and offer reflection on what this process might mean for the development of middle school general music curriculum.

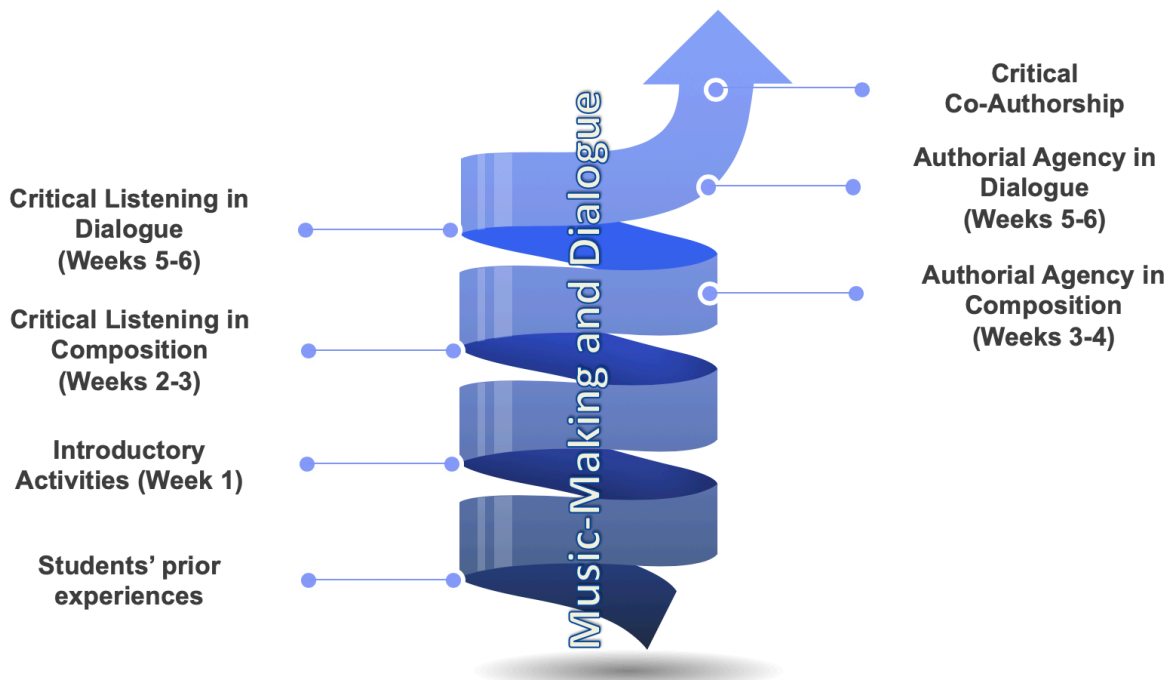


Figure 6.3: *Spiral of Agency*

On the left side of the image, I note the ongoing engagement in critical listening practices. These practices were deliberately designed and implemented to engage students in critical listening practices over time. This included beginning with the critical listening capacities that were already in place in student practice prior to this project, followed by the ways in which

the educators and I responded to help amplify those capacities through the introductory activities and ongoing practices of critical listening through composition and dialogue.

On the right, I draw a connection from critical listening to manifestations of authorial agency that occurred in this project. For many students, they first manifested authorial agency through the ways in which they “reframed the familiar” by resituating media and sounds, developing artistic artifacts that demonstrated new ideas and multiple perspectives. In the process, I argue that they authored an intention for their composition as they engaged in artistic decision-making. Then, as soundscapes were shared and critically listened to in class, moments of authorial agency in dialogue arose through divergent interpretations and meaning making that expanded upon or interrogated ideas brought about by the composition. As students grappled with multiple meanings, the soundscapes were re-authored and multiple meanings were able to emerge.

Practices of border crossing, however, can be complex and happen on multiple levels simultaneously. Rather than viewing critical listening and authorial agency as parallel, I suggest visualizing them as a spiral of understanding and reframing (see figure 6.1). Lipari’s (2014) notion of listening habitus is helpful here. Borrowing from Bourdieu, she defines “listening habitus,” as the “combination of cultural, social, and personal experiences” that shape the way we understand and make meaning in the world (p. 52). In this project, as a student like Emma listened to a piece of music in a way that sought to produce new meaning through an artistic process, she engaged her listening habitus. She heard the piece within the established boundaries of her own experience and expectation. When she moved to transcend those boundaries by “mis-listening” and considering multiple meanings and reframings, she engaged in an authorial agency of cultural production. She created a new artistic rendering that was then listened to and

experienced anew. When her classmates and teacher listened to the piece in class, they also called upon their own listening habitus, engaging this time not in artistic actualization, but in dialogue as a cultural product. Listening, then, became a creative act. Thus, a spiral of agency developed. What may have been framed as an “end product” (the composition) is now reframed as a beginning, and, as a result, both the creator and the listeners enter a space wherein they are “in conversation with past, present, and future speakers and listeners” (Lipari, 2014, p. 117). Understanding, then, is always partial and incomplete, and always mixed in with misunderstanding and mis-listening. Through authorial agency, there is a potential for layers of understanding to emerge, building not to an end goal, but to new ways of seeing, hearing, and engaging with the world.

Given the above, we might consider each soundscape as being co-authored, both created and listened to, suggesting that a multitude of voices and interpretations of a piece of music must be recognized, honored, and explored. Rather than an understanding that must be either/or, pedagogically this means helping students think about compositions as both/and. In the process of creating and responding, an additional level of meaning is produced through the process of listening. New ideas, thoughts, and dialogues are discussed because of the choices the composer has made in their composition. This requires moving beyond an understanding of what a piece is “about” in order to consider how a composition can create an opportunity for listeners to think divergently about and contribute to discourses of identity, experience, and social struggles both local and global in scope.

Furthermore, in co-authoring, both the authorial agency of the student-composer, as well as that of the listening audience is honored. We do not lose the intent and engagement of the composer’s process, but build upon it. As Matusov et al (2016) note, it is not a matter of

choosing what is “given” or what is new and innovative, but how one uses the given to continuously build and layer as “new goals, new definitions of quality, new motivations, new wills, new desires, new commitments, new skills, new knowledges, and new relationships” emerge (p. 435). In this way, students are bringing something new into existence through each interaction, leading not toward certainty, but toward new endeavors that build upon and add complexity to that which already exists (Biesta, 2014).

Pedagogical and Curricular Implications

There were several factors that played into the possibility of the spiral above, including context, student experience, and resources. While these details were unique to this project and these settings, there were two influences in particular that are directly connected to pedagogical and curricular practices. I conjecture that these are potentially transferable to other contexts and projects: the importance of repeated practice and educator/student engagements. In what follows, I consider both of these factors, and link them to a larger picture of project-based learning and curriculum development in middle school general music.

It seems clear that repeated opportunities for and practice in critical listening were central to the spiral above. In taking time during the introductory activities to engage with critical listening, discuss its purpose, and practice as we listened to examples and dialogued with one another, I believe we set in motion a pedagogical process that amplified and expanded upon students’ skills. By then returning to critical listening throughout the project as students listened to their world to reframe and resituate sounds and media, and then again in a communal space as they listened to their classmates’ soundscapes, we engaged in a spiraling strategy, building upon prior experiences in the project.

This argument suggests that when planning critical learning projects, there is a need for a purposeful, thought-out strategy of how to help support students' development in critically listening to musical artifacts as well as to the ideas of others. This requires both an internal spiraling of dispositional processes throughout the project as well as, I would speculate, curricular outcomes that connect the project with students' music educational experiences beyond this project.

While we, as educators, maintained an openness in students' selection of topics, compositional processes, and questioning practices, we also developed pedagogical strategies that deliberately placed critical listening in multiple contexts (discussion, composition, and interpretation). As students engaged in these various practices in critical listening, there was an added complexity that encouraged a continued development of a critical disposition. I would argue, then, that these carefully constructed structures are part of what can make projects like these impactful in the general music classroom. Further, if these same tenets extend beyond the confines of this project, with opportunities for critical listening and authorial agency becoming embedded into curriculum development more broadly over a term, class, or school year, it is possible that the development of a critical artistic disposition could become central to students' experiences in music education.

While practice in critical listening and multiple opportunities for authorial agency were important, the choices Ms. Green, Ms. Smith and I made about how and when to mediate were also significant. The shifts in conversation and engagement over time were different at each school. While there were multiple dynamics that played a role in this, the ways in which we, as educators, interacted with students was likely a contributing factor.

This supports the suggestion offered above that critical engagements should be an ongoing element in curricular development, allowing space for students and educators to build a sense of trust with one another that enables them to conjecture, question, and problematize in the classroom setting.

Additionally, while I tried in this chapter to construct a picture of listening as critical and productive, it is important to note, as educators will recognize, that there are times that we may engage in ways that deter students from sharing their critical thoughts and ideas. While there were instances of this at both schools, there was one at Edgewood that stood out to me. Ms. Smith often shared her own experiences or asked questions as students were debating and discussing their interpretations of their classmates' soundscapes. In one situation, Aaliyah, a student who rarely participated in class, offered the following comment during a conversation about Edgar's soundscape (see chapter five). Edgar's soundscape addressed feelings of fear when entering a new environment, such as transferring to a new school.

Aaliyah: Some people like coming to school. But it's like, I don't like coming to school. Not for the fact that I don't want to learn or anything, but it's just the fact that like it's always something with some teacher from the moment I walk in the door. And it's always my fault. And then when I try to stand up for myself...they just think I'm makin' excuses. And it's just scary...because I never know what it's going to be today.

(Class Conversation, Edgewood)

Following border crossing pedagogy, an educator's role in these moments is to help students think through this perspective in juxtaposition with others and ask questions that potentially lead toward a space for a student like Aaliyah to continue to explore and make meaning from this soundscape. Dialogue, however, has the potential to both silence and amplify, entrap and enable, constrain and release. Ms. Smith's reaction to Aaliyah was swift:

Ms. Smith: But why do you think people think that about you? Isn't it just your past patterns

of behavior? What I think is that this is what people are relying on. I mean, I do it as a teacher. I treat students based on the reputation and impression they have created for themselves. So if you want to be treated differently, how could you prove that you are not your reputation?

(Class Conversation, Edgewood)

In her response, Ms. Smith sought to make this a “teachable moment,” one in which she explained the reasons for teachers’ assumptions and placed the onus to “fix things” on Aaliyah and what she could (and should) do differently if she wanted to be treated differently. When Ms. Smith and I reflected on this moment afterward, she noted that she had, in fact, noticed teachers treating Aaliyah unfairly, making assumptions and speaking over her. She had intended for her comment to help, not hinder, hoping to offer advice to Aaliyah to help improve her relationship with other teachers. In the process, however, she seems to have reverted back to a moment of functional listening. Rather than asking questions or helping Aaliyah problematize, she rushed to respond, in the process hearing only what she expected to hear. Aaliyah stopped participating in that day’s dialogue after this exchange.

While these moments happen to all of us as educators, I think this is yet another reason to think about the practice of critical listening and authorial agency as a spiral and the development of critical artistic disposition as a process. Had this been the only opportunity for students to engage critically, Aaliyah would likely have shut down, and the chasm between her and Ms. Smith would likely have grown. In spiraling back to additional moments for critical listening and responding, Aaliyah had other opportunities to engage in dialogue in future days and, ideally, in future contexts outside of this project. Further, by engaging reflexively as educators, discussing the ways in which we were (or were not) modelling the tenets of border crossing pedagogy in the classroom, Ms. Smith was able to come back to Aaliyah and revisit this exchange, potentially

contributing the development of trust and relationality necessary when considering controversial topics and criticality in the classroom.

Concluding Ideas and Lingering Thoughts

In this chapter, I sought to consider the ways in which students and educators engaged in critical listening throughout this project, thus potentially resulting in the manifestation of authorial agency. I argue that when listening is expanded beyond functionality toward a level of questioning and problematizing that which we hear, there is the possibility for the development of artistic artifacts that demonstrate processes of criticality. I explored how students engage in compositional processes and develop artistic artifacts that reframe familiar sounds or media, prompting critical interpretations of that which they hear as a form of authorial agency. I then moved into a consideration of how the student composers' intentions often came into conflict with the interpretations of listeners, and I explored the paradox faced by educators as we seek to support and honor students' compositional voices while also creating space for reflexivity and multiple interpretations to manifest. Finally, I argued that a reframing of authorial agency as an opportunity for co-authorship wherein a composition is authored and then repeatedly re-authored as it is listened to and interpreted is one way to conceptualize this process.

Critical listening and authorial agency have their limitations. How might we frame these concepts as spaces for reflection, wherein educators seek to ensure that marginalized voices are represented in this process, particularly when soundscapes engage with complex issues of marginalization related to race, immigration, and gender? In those spaces, how can we construct a listening experience that honors multiple voices while creating opportunities not only for the juxtaposition of many interpretations, but for the highlighting of voices less heard (Hess, 2019; Valenzuela, 2017)? It is perhaps necessary in moments of co-authoring to not only reflect upon

how multiple voices are being heard, but also whose? And, concurrently, whose are not? Why are some students engaging in authorial agency, and others less so? Valenzuela (2017) points to the need to think across margins of oppression, deliberately seeking out discourses and voices from across races, classes, genders, sexualities, and languages, among others.

It would seem that a music classroom that views listening experiences as opportunities to develop spaces wherein co-authoring is a real possibility, would be in alignment with border crossing pedagogy, and would have the potential to help students engage critically and artistically with the world. Thus, the practices in the data offered above might be examples of authorial agency as momentary manifestations of border crossing that may then build to lead toward the development of a critical artistic disposition.

CHAPTER VII
CONSUMERS, PRODUCERS, AND AUTHORS: SELF-AUTHORSHIP AS BORDER
CROSSING PRACTICE

Introduction

Middle school is a time of transition, one that is characterized by a number of biological, developmental, and social changes (Hill, 1980; Lipsitz, 2019). It is also a time where young people need space to learn how to explore continually emerging identities as they engage in ongoing consideration of their role(s) in and with the world. They are growing in their awareness of and grappling with issues of identity (Sweet, 2016), including the ways in which classism, racism, heteronormativity, and cultural norms impact how they see the world (Clouse, 2017; Moore, 2017). Students need to be able to manage change, multiple perspectives, and conflicts (Baxter Magolda, 2014; Kegan & Lahey, 2009), as well as develop the ability to meaningfully engage and work with diverse others (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Kegan, 1994; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005), particularly if they hope to promote and participate in civic action (Giroux, 2011).

In this chapter, I use the framework of self-authorship to consider the ways in which students explored their continually emergent identities. As I employ it here, self-authorship is understood as an ongoing, critical process. It is the ways in which individuals reflect upon external experiences, internally (re)define them through personal meaning-making and negotiate their own beliefs through social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2009). In this study, students engaged in their own processes of self-authorship as they participated in compositional and dialogical processes that expressed how they understood their own identity in the context of their classroom, school, and community. The educator participants and I also engaged in processes of

self-authorship as we explored our roles in both the classroom and school communities through the creation, development, and implementation of a responsive curriculum.

Baxter Magolda (2004a) argues that schooling is a site of “crossroads” wherein students engage in an “evolving awareness and acceptance of uncertainty and multiple perspectives” (p. 12). It is the responsibility and imperative of institutions of learning, she argues, to help students develop and promote critical awareness and self-authorship. If these goals are a central purpose of school curriculum, then curricula must be developed that is in line with them.

Developmentally, students do not simply pass into and acquire such abilities. Thus, a narrow curricular focus on individual cognitive developments or discrete subject matter skills is inadequate (Reason, 2013). Deliberate curricular spaces and guidance for students to engage in self-authorship is necessary if we hope to help students in the music classroom develop critical artistic dispositions.

Framing this Chapter

Pedagogical practices in border crossing include the creation and problematization of texts that both affirm and interrogate the complexities of students’ histories, as well as “opportunit[ies] to engage and develop a counter discourse to the established boundaries of knowledge” (Giroux, 2005, p. 22). In the context of this project students’ soundscape compositions served as a form of text. As these texts are developed and problematized then, “not only are borders being challenged, crossed, and refigured, but borderlands are being created in which the very production and acquisition of knowledge is being used by students to rewrite their own histories, identities and learning possibilities” (p. 22). In this chapter, I argue that self-authorship can productively serve as one way to understand and frame students’ rewriting of their own identities.

Self-authorship, which I delineate in chapter two, is “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations” (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269). A shift from external to internal meaning-making, self-authorship begins with the awareness of external forces on one’s values, beliefs, and understandings. Rather than being “authored-by” external opinions, an individual moves to author her own identity and relations. Within the space of the music classroom, there is also the potential for double-authoring: as students develop (author) their own compositions, they are also authoring their own selves.

In what follows, I explore the role self-authorship played for students, educators, and myself. I begin by clarifying and further defining how I am conceptualizing self-authorship in this chapter. I then explore manifestations of student self-authorship, focusing on the narratives of four students – Jake (Forest Glen), Madison (Edgewood), Blanca (Edgewood), and Shelley (Forest Glen) – and the ways in which each of these students used composition and dialogue to negotiate their identities throughout this study. This chapter is centered on the narratives of individual students; as self-authorship is often conceived of as an individual process. The students’ experiences here featured are not to be understood as outliers. They are unique but also representative of cases that could emerge from similar projects in comparable contexts. In fact, the majority of students at both Forest Glen and Edgewood engaged in processes of self-authoring.

I then move away from narratives to focus on the project itself from a curricular and pedagogical perspective. I use data to explore the connections between self-authorship and music education, writ large, offering an analysis as to why the vehicle of music was important to students’ self-authoring. I also explore self-authorship from the educator perspective, considering the ways in which conditions were (or were not) created for self-authoring to occur, and how the

creation of such conditions impacted and were impacted by educator self-authoring. Finally, I consider moments of resistance to self-authorship, as well as the limitations of self-authorship as an analytical and practice-based model.

Dimensions of Self-Authorship

Self-authorship as a conceptual framework has appeared since the 1960's, though Kegan (1982, 1994) and Baxter Magolda (1998, 2001, 2008, 2009, 2010) are often associated with more current models. Their models of self-authorship are grounded in cognitive, psychological, and developmental understandings of identity. Central to these models are three interconnected dimensions of meaning making. Firstly, individuals consider their own epistemological commitments, or how they understand what it is they think they know. Secondly, on an intrapersonal level, individuals begin to shape and craft their own identities, and explore how balances between experience and values are negotiated. Thirdly, individuals examine their interpersonal relationships and work toward the ability to “genuinely take other’s perspectives into account” without being simply swayed or persuaded by them (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 8). These three interconnected dimensions can be visualized in Figure 7.1.

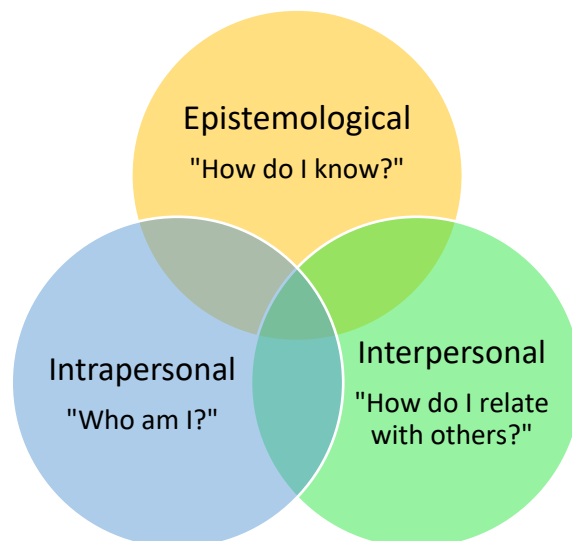


Figure 7.4: Dimensions of Self-Authorship, adapted from Baxter Magolda & King, 2004

I follow Letizia (2016) to conceptualize self-authorship in this study as a distinctly critical engagement. In the context of this project, self-authorship involved students developing their own internal voices as a step toward becoming more engaged citizens. Elemental to critical self-authorship here, then, was the analysis of both information and beliefs, including recognizing and challenging taken-for-granted norms.

Unlike Kegan (1982, 1994) and Baxter Magolda and King (2004), I view self-authorship as less of a developmental or psychological achievement and more as an ongoing, complex negotiation; a philosophical continuum of coming to know one's own self and beliefs in and with the world. As students engaged in composition and dialogue in this project, they also began to craft a sense of identity that honored and dialogued with multiple perspectives and ways of knowing. The purpose, then, of self-authorship was to develop a framework of what it means to continually make meaning and actively participate in a constantly changing world.

In this study, I also consider the ways in which border crossing occurred *within* practices of self-authorship, not only as a possible product of it. This transpired most often as students blurred boundaries between author, self-author, consumer, and producer during their compositional processes. To help me think through this integration, I use Gaztambide-Fernández's (2007, 2011, 2013) model of cultural production wherein individuals "engage in *inner* explorations, produc[e] *outer* representations, and communicat[e] *in between* the boundaries that encompass their everyday lives," (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2007, p. 36, italics mine). As students quite literally used the materials and sounds of their everyday lives, they "juxtapose[ed] sources to make a new statement" (Hess, 2006, p. 293). In other words, in the critically supported process of developing their soundscapes, many students explored the

information they consume from the media and their environment and musically (re)produced it in a way that was meaningful to them.

The educators and I also grappled with our own self-authorship. As we designed and enacted this project, we were not so much creating curricular components as we were proactively engaging in policy through curricular decision-making. We were exploring how to critically examine and “creatively renegotiate” our pedagogical practices to better align with the needs and goals of these schools and communities (Schmidt, 2019, p. 16). In the process, we were potentially changing the nature and parameters of our curricular aims and impacting the larger school environment. In choosing to “author” rather than be “authored by” curriculum, we explored external forces guiding our curricular choices, as well as how meaning could be made personally and philosophically through curriculum. Through the project, internal beliefs and considerations, as well as how curricular and pedagogical enactment exists on the continuum of self-authorship, were explored.

Student Manifestations of Self-Authorship

There were multiple, concurrent manifestations of self-authoring practices throughout this study. In what follows, I use data from interviews, field notes, and my own memos to explore self-authoring. First, I consider two examples of student self-authoring through Jake and Madison’s eyes. In both examples, I explore how student compositions not only told stories, but also offered doorways into engaged political practice and critical self-authoring. I then use Madison and Blanca’s experiences to consider how contact zones were created in this project, articulating the necessity of these spaces of divergence in the development of self-authorship. Finally, I examine connections between self-authorship and mashups through the experience of

Shelley. I do this to explore how students used media to (re)produce their world through the lens of self-authorship.

The Complexities of “Telling my Story”

In Baxter Magolda’s (2008) conception of self-authorship, one key argument is that self-authorship is not linear or singular, but that there are three interrelated dimensions; a complex interplay between the epistemological (how we come to know), the intrapersonal (how we see ourselves) and the interpersonal (how we understand and engage with others). This interplay is critical, as it leads toward an internal ability to define one’s beliefs, identity, and place in the world. This interplay is also dynamic and constant. As we grow or change in any of these dimensions, the others are then affected. Jake and Madison, whose experiences are offered below, were examples of students who grappled with finding balance between these dimensions.

Self-Authorship as Perpetual Renegotiation: Jake. When Jake began planning his soundscape in the second week of the project, he initially sought to paint a sonic picture of the teasing and humiliation one might face in school at the hands of a bully, as well as possibilities for how others might respond in such a situation. Jake’s story, however, began to shift as he shared his creative process and sought to clarify his thinking with myself and Ms. Green. His language changed to first person and it became clear that his soundscape was a reflection on how he was grappling with actually *being* the bully. Ms. Green, noted:

Ms. Green: As he kept talking and I started asking questions, it became clear that it wasn’t just about the bullying, it was about how hard it was to BE the bully...and then it became about him as the bully and how everyone just expects him to be this way...and how it can be hard when people just assume he’s that kid.
(Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

Jake was using his composition to help him renegotiate his own identity. In his work, he constantly jockeyed between how he internally viewed himself, how he represented himself to

others and their expectations of him, and the in-between spaces related to how he might alter his reputation through his composition. While Jake knew what he wanted to “say,” he had to grapple with how to say it in music. He poured over questions such as: What sound palette will I use? How does this feeling sound? How can I create a musical story that does more than just make people “feel” a certain way?

Jake’s soundscape²⁵ begins in a school hallway with a driving background beat. This is followed by a recorded shout of “you’re so stupid” and the sound of someone repeatedly hitting a locker or wall. The driving beat then gives way to a melancholic acoustic guitar riff and the sound of a boxer hitting a heavy bag in a gym. The song ends abruptly with a crash. Jake noted that he was hoping not to represent a physical altercation, but the frustrations he felt related to his own reputation. In this way, Jake felt he was flipping the script. He no longer wanted to be “authored by” the label of bully that had been placed upon him. Instead, he wanted to acknowledge how others’ assumptions made him feel and explore and negotiate that label with his peers.

Despite his open conversations with Ms. Green and several peers, Jake asked that his composition remain anonymous. Some students chose to maintain a passive role during the discussion surrounding their own composition. Jake, however, played an active one. He used the space as an opportunity to draw his classmates’ attention to this boxing gym sound. Jake’s coaxing led his classmate, Rory, to say:

Rory: Maybe it’s about the bully...the bully feeling like they have no choice. They don’t know how else to let off the steam, so they just let it off on somebody else. And then that person that they let it off on will probably get upset or sad...and then they’re in trouble...and it’s like a crazy cycle.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

²⁵ <https://youtu.be/Z0SxNYUabFo>

My interpretation of Jake's experience is one of constant negotiation as he explored his own experiences. During this process, Jake seems to begin externally as he processes and reflects upon his own understandings and experiences with bullying. This is evident in his soundscape as well as in his initial desire to focus on bullying as central to his composition. As he grapples with those experiences and seeks to redefine them internally, he musically renegotiates how he understands bullying, adding complexities and ambiguities into the sonic picture through the addition of the boxing gym and the abrupt shift to a more subdued musical choice.

I believe Jake's experience becomes more complicated when we move toward the third element of self-authoring: a renegotiating of one's beliefs through social relations. Rory's response to Jake's composition suggests that both may have been experiencing a moment of border porosity as they each considered how the stereotypes and labels associated with bullying may be more multifaceted than each had originally believed, but I wonder how Jake's choice to remain anonymous impacted his social relations with students in the classroom. Would Rory have made the same comment if she knew that it was Jake that composed the piece? Or would her experiences with and assumptions regarding Jake have altered how she understood the composition? And, if the anonymity did create an opportunity for the soundscape to speak without the weight of preconceived notions, was anything sacrificed? Did Jake's social relations (or other students' relations with Jake) change in response to this experience, and does that matter?

Gaztambide-Fernández's (2007, 2011, 2013) model of cultural production can help with this analysis. Rather than focusing on effect, cultural production views artistic experiences as "engaged, continued cultural practice" (2013, p. 213). The emphasis is on "the conditions that shape experience rather than the outcomes" (p. 216), and the processes of engagement are,

themselves, learning. If this project is conceptualized as cultural production, the focus is on the interactions, relationships, and moments, more so than a defined outcome. When regarded with this understanding, experiences are not simply viewed as “positive or negative, diminishing or exalting,” but “complex, open to interpretation, and always irremediably particular” (p. 225).

Gaztambide-Fernández (2007) articulates three interrelated dynamics of cultural production, noting that “engaging in processes of cultural production might open opportunities for students and teachers to engage in *inner* explorations, producing *outer* representation, and communicating *in between* the boundaries that encompass their everyday lives” (p. 36). *Inner* exploration is focused on the experience of self-authoring, as articulated above. *Outer* representations and relationships, those that are interdependent, are then also changed as one’s inner understandings shift. Finally, the *in between* renegotiation represents cultural production as an ongoing, active, and fluid process, a “perpetual reconfiguration of symbols and ideas” (p. 37).

Returning to Jake, Gaztambide-Fernández’s focus on “perpetual reconfiguration” is helpful here. Through the soundscape, Jake produced an outer representation (musically) of what and how he feels regarding the complexities of bullying. But this project did not intend to be a neatly wrapped opportunity for dramatic, transformational shifts. Rather, if this project intends to help in the development of a critical artistic disposition wherein a deepened sense of self helps us engage with the world in an ongoing, perpetual manner, then perhaps Jake’s musical experience offered an opportunity for criticality and self-reflection. Further, perhaps Jake’s composition created space for a listener like Rory to experience criticality and self-reflection, as well. The outcome is not a visible transformation, but a chance to problematize a complex idea like bullying.

Self-Authorship as Participatory Politics: Madison. While we never expressly used the term “self-authoring” with students, both the teachers and I frequently used prompts that asked students to examine how they saw the world, how they saw themselves in the world, and what that might mean for action in their present and their future. For students at Edgewood, responses to these prompts often centered around racial and cultural expectations. Emergent themes of the devout, family-focused Latina (as expressed by Blanca), the angry black male (as expressed by Stokeley and Bobby), or the drug and violence ridden West Side of Chicago (as expressed by Madison, Asia, and Jada) were often compositional topics. This suggests that students were not only aware of the ways in which such stereotypes authored their self-understandings, but also of the ways in which they wanted to develop counter-narratives in response. This tension frequently resulted in focus groups where students named and explored, these stereotypes and assumptions, creating spaces for border crossing not only in interpersonal negotiations, but also intrapersonally and epistemologically for individual students. This meant that students not only considered how they internally made meaning alone and with others, but also how outside forces, such as school, media, and family, impact how we each come to know differently.

Madison, an African American student who was new to Edgewood, set out to offer an “alternative” perspective to the West Side of Chicago neighborhood where she grew up. Like approximately one-third of the students at Edgewood, Madison’s family had moved to the district in the past few years. She recognized that many of her classmates who had grown up in Edgewood saw the West Side as a place of gang-ridden violence and crime, a place no one willingly goes, and most seek to avoid. As such, she wanted to offer a counternarrative, one in which the neighborhood that she knew could be represented. Her soundscape initially included

the sounds of her cheerleading practice and church choir, both of which she associated with her former home. She planned to introduce her song, *City Land*, as being a reflection of the West Side, acknowledging that there was little in her soundscape that fulfilled the stereotype.

Madison grappled with concerns regarding this compositional path from day one. She took the project very seriously and was one of the most vocal participants in early focus group conversations relating to stereotypes and race, commenting:

Madison: Of course, this stuff can happen to anybody, but we still have to talk about how it's usually African Americans here. But it depends on how you grow up. In [my old neighborhood] my friend, like, his father got shot right by school. My grandmother, we had to all evacuate her apartment one day because someone was being held hostage across the hall. A lot of things like that happened. There are mostly African-Americans there...so we should be talking about it because this is why people act this way. This is what people know. A kid grows up in a place like that and this is most likely what they're going to become. My dad and I talk about this a lot. He tells me that we can't pretend it doesn't happen. We can't be so scared all the time to talk about it or nothing is going to change.

(Focus Group, Edgewood)

The more Madison explored her own feelings regarding leaving her old neighborhood, the more she became convinced that a musical representation would be incomplete if she did not at least recognize neighborhood violence. Subsequently, Madison's soundscape²⁶ opens with an upbeat backing track that is foregrounded by the sounds of a cheerleading practice and children playing. In the midst of Madison's soundscape, gunshots and screams occur and the faint sounds of news reports and media excerpts can be heard. The backing track, however, continues throughout, drawing focus away from the sounds of violence and back toward the upbeat, repetitive melody.

From a self-authoring perspective, Madison's compositional process was one in which her internal identity came up against a series of external assumptions about her former

²⁶ <https://youtu.be/LHxSthMcpGy>

neighborhood. Madison did not struggle with being associated with her old neighborhood. Unlike some students, she claimed that identity. However, Madison was adamant that there was a need to both challenge and grapple with the stereotype of the West Side, seeking to do far more than create an artistic, musical project that told a story. She used her soundscape as a doorway into discussing how stereotypes of race and violence are perpetuated through media portrayals, assumptions, and a lack of open dialogue.

Madison's composition is also, in itself, a social commentary. It is a musical offering that provokes and prompts, but it is also artistically rendered in such a way that these sounds are placed in conversation with one another in a manner that suggests a statement in itself. Her creative tensions as she debated what and how to include content demonstrates the challenge composers face in "trying to artistically craft a sound-based version of a multi-faceted reality" (Kaschub, 2009, p. 281). In choosing to juxtapose and highlight sounds as she did, listeners are left with a series of potential wonderments: Is Madison trying to show that the "good" will always outshine the "bad"? Is she attempting to demonstrate the neighborhood's resiliency? Or is she perhaps concerned that violent sounds have become so commonplace that we as a society have become numb to them? Rather than providing a solution to these questions, Madison's soundscape is a process of inquiry, one in which she is seeking to manage multiple and, at times, contradictory viewpoints. In the process, she is engaging (and seeking to engage her classmates) in a civic-political sphere that is both personal and local.

Entering the Contact Zone

The interpersonal element of self-authorship was most often made manifest through dialogues that responded to the soundscapes. Prompted by the students' creative processes, we entered contact zones (Pratt, 1991), wherein the pedagogical space was one in which conflicting

ideas and opinions were expressed and negotiated. There we grappled with complex viewpoints, considered multiple musical and verbalized ideas, and engaged with differing opinions. In some cases, student soundscapes prompted full class conversations, as seen below with Madison's composition, during which students explored how their own experiences and expectations impacted their listening habitus (Lipari, 2014), as well as the ways in which they related to each other. In other cases, seen below with Blanca's composition, dialogue with peers led to a deeper introspection on the part of the student composer.

The teachers and I recognized that this dialogical process would likely be tenuous. We sought to avoid orchestrating it, instead choosing to engage as active participants in the classroom dialogue. This is demonstrated here as we endeavored to ask questions that expanded on students' thinking, rather than acting as external figures who instructed a "correct way" of making meaning and entering a contact zone (Ellsworth, 1989).

When the Intrapersonal becomes Interpersonal: Madison Revisited. Madison's soundscape did provoke the conversation she sought, though it was not one she participated in. Like Jake, she contributed the musical provocation in the form of her composition, but then observed as we listened and discussed. After listening to her soundscape, the class began to discuss their interpretations of its setting and purpose. There was quick agreement among students that this soundscape took place in the city. When asked why and how they came to this conclusion, the class went silent. Elijah, a student who splits his time between Edgewood and the West Side due to family dynamics, finally spoke up:

Elijah: Everything is different in the city
Kelly: What do you mean by everything is different?
Elijah: Everything. Like everything you can think of is different...the houses out here and the houses in the city, they don't look the same. The stores...the corner stores...they don't got corner stores out here. The houses, the building, they not

the same. In the city, the buildings are bogus. Out here, not a lot of buildings are bogus.

Kelly: What do you mean by the buildings are bogus? What does bogus mean?

Elijah: Like most of the buildings, they falling apart

Aaliyah: They falling apart

Stokeley: They're beat down

Elijah: They're boarded.

Aaliyah: Boarded windows and the buildings about...gonna, like, fall down.

Stokeley: The steps are like broken in half.

Kelly: Does a bogus building automatically make it a bad place?

Students: No

Kelly: So one of the things that's interesting to me is that oftentimes stereotypes leave out the reality...

Stokeley: (loudly) Yup, yup – that right there, that's it.

Kelly: So, what's the reality?

Stokeley: A whole lot more complicated than that. But also simpler. Every day, people are just driving down the street in Chicago – in the city or the hood, living their lives, looking for places to go find something to eat or whatever. But on the news, everything bad happens, which ends up with people believing 'oh Chicago is just a violent place' but no...In reality, it's just like any other city. That don't mean there isn't the bad stuff. There is. But when we assume we don't have the full story. We don't know. We can't make assumptions by how they talk or how they look. But we still make assumptions a lot.

(Students go back and review some of the assumptions they've made throughout this project)

Bobby: The assumptions be worse here at [Edgewood] cuz we've got a lot of different people from a lot of different places. We've got different kinds of kids from good sides and bad sides. You talk to kids that grow up here, and they will tell you this and that. You talk to kids that grew up there, it's a different story. But we haven't lived each other's lives.

(Class Dialogue, Edgewood)

In this excerpt, the students do not explicitly address Madison's use of gun shots in her soundscape, but they grapple with issues of poverty and violence in their discussion of "buildings." They also reflect on narratives and counternarratives, just as Madison did while she was composing. Stokeley problematizes the idea of a singular narrative when he challenges the idea of Chicago as "just a violent place." Like Madison, he considers a counternarrative, but ultimately embraces a viewpoint that sees multiple narratives existing simultaneously. In this way, he is using Madison's soundscape to grapple with his own conception of "cities," but as a

listener, rather than a composer. He is also considering these ideas aloud, potentially entering a space of positive conflict with his classmates.

This discussion also offers a potential extension to self-authorship. While self-authorship is a move from external to internal meaning making, I think it is impossible to make that move singularly. In order to reflect upon our own experiences, we need to see them in juxtaposition with those of others. I wonder, then, if the creation of contact zones might be an opportunity to not only make meaning internally, but to do so by debating and thinking through ideas aloud with those who may have different experiences or opinions. Within these spaces, participants may be called upon to decide what they will defend, what matters to them, and why. Both Madison and Stokeley chose to defend a conception of a city that allows for multiple concurrent narratives, electing to not buy into a singular narrative or stereotype (or to combat a stereotype with a singular, opposing narrative). At the close of this excerpt, Bobby takes this a step further, noting how our experiences impact the singular way we often see the world and the need for considering multiple views.

Most importantly, these contact zones were not ones in which each student simply rattled off an “I agree” or an “I disagree” statement, not listening to anything that followed. Rather, they were spaces of continual dialogue wherein each student sought to engage with the dialogue and conversation in the moment of the interaction. I think that it is this awareness and the space to engage with and explore multiple views that border crossing can begin to occur. This excerpt, then, did not have a tidy resolution, nor was that the aim (Warren & Davis, 2009). Rather, this interaction became a jumping off point for further engagement, dialogue and action within and beyond the scope of this project.

Getting Defensive: Blanca. As noted in chapter four, most students chose to remain anonymous, but as the project progressed, some students claimed their soundscapes in focus groups, small group discussions, or large classroom dialogues. In these instances, contact zones often grew to be more heated as students found their own positionalities challenged and interrogated. Blanca's soundscape, *A Day in the Life*²⁷, is most notable for the Queen song, *Somebody to Love*, playing through her composition. As the song plays, she manipulates it by adding layers of self-recorded soundtracks from children's shows and the 5'o'clock news as well as environmental sounds of her baby sister crying and breakfast foods being prepared. In talking through her motivation, she noted:

Blanca: So my soundscape is basically a day in the life of me, and what sounds I have to deal with throughout the day that most people don't have to deal with...and then it's just basically showing people that nobody's life is the same, and nobody can think that somebody's life is the same, and nobody can just...examine a person and put all their thoughts that they think about that person on them because that's what you see at school, and assume that's all you need to see because everything else doesn't matter...We all act a certain way at school, but it's not like you actually know what's going on with them. You don't know if they're going to have dinner tonight or not. You don't know what goes on in their life.

(Student Interview, Edgewood)

In the focus group where we initially listened to Blanca's song, student reactions prompted her to dig deeper than her original articulated motivation suggests. When another student noted that it sounded like an episode of *Teen Mom*, suggesting that Blanca was overdramatizing her home life, she was offended. She began rattling off a list of personal and family responsibilities that "[her classmates] wouldn't understand." As the conversation continued, however, Blanca's defensiveness turned to inward reflection as she realized that "responsibility" was not actually at the center of what she was trying to say. Rather, she found herself continuously coming back to the convergences and divergences between her own experience and her presumed assumptions of

²⁷ <https://youtu.be/G6n4TQAqZpI>

what it means to be Latina. Blanca's struggle was the tension between her perception of her illegitimacy as the child of unwed teenagers with a father who was in and out of her life, and her grandmother's strict Catholicism that she felt stood in opposition to her very being.

In entering that intrapersonal space, Blanca's interpersonal relations shifted, and borders appeared more permeable. Edgar, a student who had lived his whole life in Edgewood, explored his struggles growing up in a religious family wherein his own lived experiences didn't coincide with his experiences of organized religion. Bobby, who had recently moved to Edgewood, shared his own frustration with balancing his goofy, clownish self at school and his role as a father figure for his younger siblings at home where he lived with his mother. Stokeley brought the conversation back to stereotypes, prompting him to inquire about each student's parental situation, noting that we, as a group, fit his presumption that all of the students who were white (and myself) grew up in homes with two, married parents, whereas the students of color in the group did not.

This conversation was different than the dialogue surrounding Madison's soundscape. I expected it to provoke charged dialogue, but it morphed into a series of stories. Stories, however, can be powerful, and those told during this focus group stayed with me. It is possible that in my eagerness to engage in both intra- and interpersonal reflection with students, I expected both to be inherently visible in our dialogue. This does not need to be so. While this example seems to have outwardly demonstrated intrapersonal negotiation, the impact of those negotiations did not end as the dialogue did. Just as a piece of music often stays with us for us to turn over in our minds long after the final sound is played, intrapersonal and epistemological negotiations may continue long after a conversation such as this has ended.

Self-Authorship and the Mashup

Both Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2008) equate self-authorship with internalizing the external, critically examining the ways in which the world “authors” us in order to explore our own epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal tensions as we then “author” ourselves. But what happens, from an artistic standpoint, when we use the work of others, that which we consume, in order to (re)produce our own positionalities?

While some students used primarily environmental sounds, many used the work of others to develop their soundscapes, creating mashups that offered new meanings and new directions. Gunkel (2012) notes that mashups are “assembled from prefabricated materials that are plundered from the recording of others” (p. 72), and Hess (2006) posits that sampling can “make connections across difference fields, juxtaposing sources to make a new statement” (p. 293).

These intentional juxtapositions of media are not all that different from the original concept of soundscapes. In fact, Schafer (1993) notes that “all sounds belong to a continuous field of possibilities lying within the comprehensive domain of music” (p. 97). We could argue, then, that media is and should be included under the umbrella of “all sounds.” Truax (1984) furthered this notion by stating that the compositional strategy of soundscape is based on interactions and relationships between environment, individual, and community. As such, I argue that mashups can be a form of soundscape in which the creations of others are manipulated by students in order to grapple with their own positionalities, develop critical dispositions, and self-author.

It is important to note that Schafer (1993) was not supportive of the “radically different” sounds present in a changing, increasingly technologic world and warned against “the dangers of an indiscriminate and imperialistic spread of more and larger sounds into every corner of man’s

[sic] life.” (p. 95). His concern was primarily with reducing noise pollution, “improving” the world soundscape, and discriminating between natural and unnatural sounds. The purposes of our soundscapes in this project, however, were different. As students sought to critically reflect on positionalities and experience porosity in and among their bordered spaces, these “more and larger” sounds were central and foundational to their own life worlds, and therefore served as building blocks for their compositions.

Voices in Conversation: Shelley. At Forest Glen, we introduced the soundscape project on a Friday. On Monday morning, Shelley came bursting into the music classroom, eager to share with me the beginnings of her soundscape.

Shelley: I think all the time about how much stuff like on TV and music stuff...how much it influences people. I have so many thoughts about this and I’m so excited to do this. I even showed my brother what I have so far and he’s started calling me a producer.

(Informal Conversation, Forest Glen)

Shelley’s excitement was palpable. Initially, her compositional plan gave me mixed feelings. Would she create a soundscape that was a mashup of her favorite songs? Was that still a soundscape...and who decides what “counts” as a soundscape? How might I participate in her process to help her use media sources in a way that was critically introspective? Shelley, it turned out, had a lot of thoughts on how to use media from her life to tell a story. She had carefully and thoughtfully selected each song clip, and each had a purpose in what she wanted her soundscape to articulate.

For her soundscape²⁸, Shelley pulled multiple sources and placed them in conversation. The soundscape begins with multiple layered clips. Snippets from Lukas Graham’s *7 Years*, the opening of Billie Eilish’s *Clarity*, and the intro to Meko Supreme’s *Uncle Phil* present a

²⁸ https://youtu.be/3jXTZnt5L_Q

cacophony of sounds representing competing voices regarding self-image and belonging. As the soundscape continues, a short piano riff is repeated, drowning out all but one solitary voice that speaks of seeking meaning from external sources in the internal struggle with identity. Through this soundscape, Shelley explained that she was wrestling with how to make sense of competing voices that spoke of success, body image, depression, and suicide. Despite borrowing from these artists, however, she was not enamored with them. Rather, she found them problematic. She was frustrated by how their messages seemed to have the power to drive how individuals make meaning from their own experiences.

Shelley: I see the world differently than other people because of what I've been through...and so I should worry about me. So, it's like, in my song, there's all this chaos and all of these other voices telling me what to do and what I should believe and how I should deal with stuff. But I need to think about my own experiences, my own life.

Kelly: Why use these songs in particular?

Shelley: Cuz when I was listening to music to try to help me make sense of things, this is what I was listening to. But, it's like, why do I think their songs are going to fix things? It's not going to get better just cuz I listen to these songs. So, I'm using their songs and words as something different.

(Student Interview, Forest Glen)

Shelley's mashup became a process of self-authorship as she considered external forces, in particular the media, and their role in how she was understanding herself. In a very literal way, she was musically representing, acknowledging, and then shutting out these external voices so that she might internally define her own beliefs, identity, and social relations.

Rojas (2002, as cited in Gunkel, 2012) notes that in "combining elements of other people's works in order to create new ones" mashup artists challenge a model that suggests that "the building blocks of creativity should spill forth directly from the mind of the artist" (p. 72). The creative endeavor, he notes, is located within a "network of pre-established textual relations [in this case, the digital and media world] such that creativity is a matter of drawing on,

reconfiguring, and repurposing remade materials that are on hand and in circulation” (Gunkel, 2012, p. 85). As Shelley reconfigured and repurposed these works musically, she was also (re)producing the way they are understood and the meaning that she found therein. She used the words of others as creative material, but, through her process of self-authorship, she was rejecting the idea of a singular meaning in favor of the possibility of multiple, contextual meanings. Through her soundscape, then, Shelley was already beginning to apply a critical artistic disposition to the media she consumes in her life. Did this project foster or contribute to this disposition or was this already Shelley’s way of navigating the world? hooks (1994b) argues that dispositional attributes of criticality and artistry already exist and are often enacted by individuals as a regular part of life. By deliberately engaging with them in school through curricular practice, I wonder if this project helped Shelley connect these dispositions with her in-school experience, thus helping to bring learning practice and out-of-school experience together in that moment.

Shelley’s composition generated substantial conversation in class on the ethical responsibilities of musicians and artists, their role in perpetuating and challenging stereotypes, and an absence of personal agency and reflection from young people who listen to their music.

Kelly: So, we’ve been talking here about responsibility. Is an artist responsible for the way people interpret their music?

Zamir: No, they’re just feeling it. They just want to make music. For entertainment. There isn’t an actual purpose, it’s music.

Elizabeth: Yeah, but some people do it to go out and tell people something, to teach people not to do things.

Gia: Why does it have to be about the person whose listening? Why can’t it just be a way to show people that everyone experiences things differently? Some people have it worse.

Marie: When they’re expressing these things in songs, though, they’re making excuses or they’re trying to explain how he or she really is or why they do it.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

Similar to Madison, Shelley's composition was also serving as doorway into participatory politics as students engaged in disputes regarding the responsibilities of both producer and consumer. Here, this contact zone can be identified not only in how the students are bringing in their own perspectives and experiences to comment on Shelley's composition, but also in how they are asking questions that extend the conversation and lead toward further dialogue regarding public and personal concerns.

Shelley's composition also prompted a shift in interpersonal relationships. Her soundscape was not anonymous and was often the topic of focus groups. At one point, Alyssa noted:

Alyssa: She's always smiling and laughing and cracking jokes. She's always clowning...and hearing this...I don't know...maybe I should be talking to her more about some serious stuff, checking in, listening to her, reminding her that I care...

(Focus Group, Forest Glen)

In her compositional process, it felt like Shelley's negotiations were less intrapersonal; in our conversations, she seemed confident and unwavering in the ideas and thoughts that shaped her sense of self around which she centered her composition. Shelley's focus was on her outer representation of self and interpersonal relationships as she negotiated how she wanted to represent her ideas to her peers. Alyssa's comment suggests Shelley's composition may have been a step toward such a renegotiated relationship that extends outside the confines of the music classroom.

In creating her mashup soundscape, I wonder then if Shelley opened up multiple spaces of possibility for border crossing in the classroom. She developed something that was not only new, but also musically complex in its layering and creative refiguring of material that exists in her world. This could suggest an opening in how we understand multiple possible narratives

within musical works, particularly when they are refigured and reassembled (Gunkel, 2012). Shelley also created something that was open to interpretation and fostered dialogue related to the impact and role of media in how we author and understand personal identity in and with the world. This could imply a juxtaposition of multiple ideas and interpretations, offering an opportunity for contact zones and a sense of border porosity as the class as a whole engaged in a kind of group self-authoring. Additionally, she developed an artistic rendering of her own intrapersonal negotiations in such a way that impacted a social relation in her class. This may suggest a crossing of borders in her individual social relationship with Alyssa. Through one artistic engagement, Shelley appears to have created multiple, simultaneous openings for border crossing to occur.

Self-Authorship Through the Medium of Music

In each of these examples and in this project as a whole, the engagement in and with music was foundational. The framework for the analysis of this study considers a critical *artistic* disposition. This disposition centers not only on the development of a critical awareness of and engagement with the world, but also on a frame-of-mind in which one seeks to imagine, creatively generate, and artistically actualize ideas. Through an artistic endeavor, students contextualized and explored particular ideas, creating opportunities for them to engage affective domains and develop a musical rendering that helped them create spaces for multiple narratives (Chappell & Chappell, 2016). In short, the creative, musical process served as an opportunity to develop musical skills as well as a medium for fostering self-authorship.

Despite much of the literature in self-authorship being associated with psychological development and writing, an arts-based approach to self-authorship has also been explored. This approach aligns more readily with my own conception of self-authoring as an ongoing, complex

negotiation, a space of coming to know one's own self and beliefs. In the arts-based approach, the text is understood from a postmodern perspective in that it can be plural and artistic (Barone & Eisner, 2006). As examples, Welkener and Baxter Magolda (2014) used self-portraiture as a pathway to representation and self-authoring, using student-drawn self-portraits as both the content of the project as well as a data gathering tool. Mantie (2008) found through his research that composition could be an avenue for musical self-authoring, particularly for marginalized youth. Lashua (2006), while not specifically using the framework of self-authoring, also explored how music and soundscape composition may help youth from underserved communities explore their own identities and positionalities.

In this project, engaging with music helped students negotiate the vulnerability of exploring positionalities and spaces of dissensus in group settings. Pierce (2008) notes that while there is a plethora of theoretical insight "imagining the various ways in which [the] contact zone of the classroom might manifest itself, what is missing is a practical discussion of how to *manage* the contact zone" (p. 65, italics in original). Pierce notes the need for thoughtful, ongoing, directed reflection, as well as moderated dialogical spaces that require teachers to not only be questioners, but also participants, reflectors, and provocateurs. Pierce also articulates the benefit of using tools such as the arts to "redirect the oppositionally discursive responsibility from students" to that of a text in order to help students engage with multiple voices with a lowered possibility of negative trauma (p. 70). While Pierce is referring to previously produced texts, student participants in this project noted that the soundscapes filled a similar role. For example,

Chris: This actually...brings out people's emotions without saying it and then putting it through music, which is really helpful. That's one of the things that I love about it is...it's not-- it's one thing to just sit in the class and be like, "Okay, we're going to talk about this. And here you go, be vulnerable, say all of these things." If you can

do it through music, you can make the choice if you want to contribute during class or not because you've already contributed because, like, you made the music.

(Student Interview, Edgewood)

It is important to note that creating and making music, and then having that music listened to and discussed, can also be a space of vulnerability. Similarly, self-authorship can also be a vulnerable process as individuals feel a sense of upheaval and tension between internal beliefs and lived experience. Chris, however, separates the music from the person, as though the music serves as a space of projection. He suggests that an individual can project their message and feelings into the artistic creation, enter a vulnerable space, engage in border permeability during the process, but then also potentially separate their musical creation from their personal self. In this way, contact zones are still foundational to the process of self-authorship and the development of a critical artistic disposition, but through the use of music, negative trauma may be avoided. In spaces of vulnerability such as middle school, this ability to create separation may be particularly important (McMahen, 2008).

Students also commented on the use of music as a vehicle for self-authorship as “freeing.” In some cases, the teachers and I felt some of these comments were indulgent, as though students could not really pinpoint *why* the musical experience was so important. As we continued to ask this question in different ways and through multiple outlets (journals, discussions, focus groups), several comments emerged that could be unpacked. For some students, the musical element was important because of what it did (or did not) represent. Sarah, a student at Forest Glen, noted

Sarah: Some kids might not enjoy writing...and I guess not everyone loves music, but it's not as stressful. With writing, you feel like it has to be good. With music it can just be. You don't have to worry.

(Class Dialogue, Forest Glen)

composition that played upon the “storytelling” aspect of country music. Others, like Edgewood student Mariana, whose experiences were shared in chapter five, focused solely on environmental sounds. Mariana’s soundscape, *Frustration* used musical conventions she was familiar with, but recast them specifically through the mixing process. Using the ticking of a clock like an insistent metronome, she layered a pounding heart, heavy breathing, pencil scratching, and papers crumpling to take the listener through an anxious panic as time is running out on a test. Her ticking clock kept a steady pulse throughout the soundscape while the pounding heart added a rhythmic bass line. The additional layers added rhythmic riffs that played off of another throughout the piece.

It is not so much that using musical conventions that may be familiar was problematic, nor are they inherently “un-critical.” Awareness of how individual musical experiences shape compositional processes is, however, necessary for a critical compositional experience. Indeed, self-authoring does not eliminate all outside influence as we are making meaning. Awareness of the impact of such influences and a sense of agency over meaning making is elemental to self-authoring. Similarly, border crossing does not ask individuals to abandon what they know, only to recreate a bordered space with a new perspective. Rather, making borders porous and flexible necessitates an awareness of multiple pathways, multiple definitions, and multiple knowledges.

As such, the teachers and I sought to help students engage in reflection that helped them realize the boundaries and impact of their own musical knowledge. We spent time at the beginning of the project discussing definitions of music, and we listened to a variety of musical samples (e.g. Idle Chatter by Paul Lansky; the opening of Money by Pink Floyd; On the Transmigration of Souls by John Adams; and Thung Kwian Sunrise by the Thai Elephant Orchestra). Each of these samples offered a different way of thinking about music: the use of

environmental sounds, manipulation of recorded sound, juxtaposing pre-recorded and live music, and “non-traditional” use of instruments. Our hope was that these examples would both support and challenge students’ conceptions of music. Throughout the project, we asked students to reflect on their creative processes (e.g. What is the purpose of this particular syncopated electronic beat? Why are you choosing to place these two sounds in juxtaposition to one another? Why does this pulse remain throughout the entire soundscape and what does it represent to you?) The musical engagements in the process, then, not only helped students grapple with ideas and larger civic, political, and social concepts as a part of their own self-authorship journey, but they may also have been a form of musical self-authorship themselves.

Creating Conditions for Self-Authorship

When we first began this project, we did not specifically set out to engage students in self-authorship. The conceptual use of self-authorship as an analytical model occurred after the project, as I sought to make meaning from our experiences and the possible ways they related to a larger vision for general music education. Thus, while models exist for promoting self-authorship in educational (university) settings (e.g. Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004b), we did not use them to guide our curricular or pedagogical choices.

The manifestations of self-authorship offered above did not occur by chance, however. As music educators, we are in a somewhat unique position. Artistic creation is, or should be, at the heart of what we do, and there is an opportunity here to help students create something that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also speaks in response to the world. In this project, we sought to co-create a curricular musical encounter that supported the possibilities of border crossing, multiple ways of knowing, and critical engagement. Therefore, the development of a particular set of conditions was deliberate and, in our process, we found that we as educators also

engaged in our own form of self-authorship. In what follows, I consider how curricular and pedagogical choices supported (or curtailed) possibilities for self-authorship and the development of a larger critical artistic disposition through this project.

As noted earlier, Baxter Magolda (2009) explains that schooling can be a site of “crossroads” wherein students often experience a clash between lived experience and personal worldview. She argues that it is the responsibility of institutions of learning to deliberately create curricular spaces and guidance for students to engage in self-authoring practices. To do so, she sets out three imperatives for educators: one must invite and trust student knowledge; situate learning within student context; and mutually construct knowledge with students (Baxter Magolda, 2004b).

In our context, inviting and trusting student knowledge did not mean that students created and directed the entirety of the curriculum without teacher guidance. It meant that we aimed to develop a project that encouraged student opinions and responses. These responses then helped guide curricular and pedagogical choices we were making. Biesta (2006) notes,

It becomes clear that one of the key educational responsibilities...requires first and foremost the creation of situations in which learners are able and are allowed to respond. This not only means that there must be something to respond to – a curriculum, for example, but not a curriculum as the content that needs to be acquired but as the practice that allows for particular responses. It also requires that educators and educational institutions show an interest in the thoughts and feelings of their students and allow them to respond in their own, unique ways. (p. 28)

Curriculum, then, is not a passive document, but an active, ongoing, responsive engagement. The educators and I intentionally used open questions that we hoped would provoke critical responses. As noted in chapter four, prior to beginning their compositions, we asked students to participate in an activity where they anonymously generated a word cloud of assumptions they have or ways in which they have felt stereotyped. In groups, they then explored a set of these

assumptions, asking questions and thinking critically about where those assumptions may have originated and how they might be juxtaposed with their lived realities. Examples from the media, home life, and school were all considered. While their projects were not intended to be a direct response to this activity, we did use it as an opportunity to encourage the types of critical engagements we hoped for in their compositions. They were spaces for students to think through ideas, identify issues and ask questions as they explored how they might make an artistic statement through music. Furthermore, in asking them to process, reflect upon, and grapple with external experiences such as stereotypes; internally (re)define those experiences through personal meaning-making and lived experience; and negotiate their own beliefs through social relations as they were discussing communally, we were also encouraging a disposition of self-authorship.

Deliberately drawing upon students' funds of knowledge was the subject of chapter five, but deserves to be revisited here. The choice of soundscapes was a deliberate one. We wanted students to think through their lived experiences both within and outside of school, using musical endeavors to help them make new sense of those experiences. This provided a very direct connection to student context. Just as importantly, we also sought to situate learning within the context of their relationships with their own identities, with their classmates, and with the world.

Mutual construction of learning is often associated with "student-led learning," a term that I argue is overused, often uncritically. Maton (2000) notes that student-led learning can place knowledge as secondary, offering little guidance in how it might be co-constructed, and lacking attention to the norms, inequities, and values that may underpin the construction of such knowledge. Further, within student-led learning there is often still a predefined standard (e.g. a rubric) that seeks to measure a specific, and often discrete, set of skills. These skills may or may not have been taught, and may be devoid of sociocultural context (Boughey, 2012). This can

result in projects that may be “student-led” in terms of openness and freedom but are disconnected from contexts and assessed on one’s ability to “figure out what the teacher wants.”

Chris, a student at Edgewood, made this (unsolicited) comment one day after working on his composition:

Chris: You have...and even Ms. Smith...you were open about this. It wasn't 'oh yeah, follow this rubric and do this, and do this.' I didn't feel controlled. You let it be open. So, we could each come at the question differently. We do projects around here all the time, but they're not like this. They're not 'creative,' I guess. There's a rubric and we have to do what it says from A to B. But then we're not actually taught how to use the stuff we need to do the project. So, like, we used WeVideo once before for a project, but no one actually taught me how to use any of it, so I got all frustrated and did so bad on the project because I just froze. I learned nothing. It's like they thought that was 'creative' because we were using a movie making program or whatever, but really it just made me feel like I didn't know what I was doing.

(Informal Conversation, Edgewood)

While we did not provide step-by-step instructions in this project, we did provide guidance, support and direction both musically and creatively. Similarly, while we did not offer a model of an “ideal” or “A” project, we did model critical questioning and engagement through our participation dialogue, contact zones, and musical conversations. We also recognized and embraced our own uncertainties and focused on a daily process. What were they working on today? How might we support them? What is exciting them? What information do they need in order to help them with their work? Further, we avoided talk of a “finished” product.

Compositions were always in flux, always able to be rewritten and re-explored.

As an example, there was a set of skills we knew students would need in order to navigate the recording systems we were using. As noted in chapter four, instead of presenting them as a step-by-step process to be followed in class, we recorded video tutorials for WeVideo and Soundtrap, enabling students to move through the tutorials at their own speed. But we also kept the set-up open. At Edgewood, where students were limited because they were working on

school laptops, we encouraged them to use alternative software and mixing programs if they wanted, and some created their projects on phones or iPads. At Forest Glen, students were able to bring their ChromeBooks home with them, offering greater flexibility. While I recognize that this availability of technology is not an option in all educational settings, the key here was our flexibility, not the programs themselves.

We listened to examples of mixing and talked through different ways we might tell stories or provoke emotions through sound choice, layering, and dynamics. We guided students toward tutorials that would help them create the effects they wanted to include, and we discussed pacing and impact. But we never controlled the topics students chose or how they structured their compositions. In this way, our reflective questions and deliberate conversations in regard to social consciousness framed the project, but students interpreted and musically articulated these issues in very different ways, engaging in self-authorship that was, ideally, responsive to their own internal beliefs and values.

Educator Self-Authoring

While much of the literature on self-authorship is associated with secondary school and university aged students (Gunersel et al., 2013 as a notable exception), I understand self-authorship as a continual and dynamic possibility throughout an educator's life. As in life in general, we do not simply learn how to live with others in a world of plurality and difference once. As contexts change, epistemological understandings shift and evolve, and our relationship with ourselves, others, and our world grow in complexity, fluidity, and intricacy. Therefore, I find it important to consider the educators' processes of self-authorship as well.

Similar to students, each educator crossed between epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions as we grappled with curricular and pedagogical choices.

Epistemologically, we considered how we continually came to know what mattered in music education, and how students or colleagues might see this purpose differently. Intrapersonally, we considered how our lived experiences in the classroom aligned with or diverged from our views and beliefs. Interpersonally, each teacher and I engaged together and with colleagues, using our planning as a path to consider how our intrapersonal and epistemological lenses were shifting.

Ms. Green's Epistemological Shift

Ms. Green entered this study as a critical, creative, reflective educator who sought to contextualize and connect her curriculum to larger aims. In our first conversation, she noted tension between her philosophy as a music educator and larger, structural issues:

Ms. Green: Your job isn't just notes and rhythms and whatever, but it's that hidden curriculum or hidden pedagogy and 'what are you teaching that you're not actually teaching'? And so, I do think I think about [criticality] maybe more than - I don't know - the average teacher. [The band teacher and I] were doing our curriculum maps...rewriting our curriculum and we got so off-task with the instructional coaches because we're like, "Is that meaningful and should we--?" And they're like "We're just trying to figure out what goes on the report card, you guys [laughter]." We were like, "Well what does that mean if we put it on the report cards?" Those why questions. They were like, "Oh my gosh. They don't do this in the math department!"

(Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

Firstly, Ms. Green is actively participating in both the development of her own curriculum, as well as participating in conversations that explore how that curriculum fits into (and possibly challenges) the larger goals of Forest Glen Junior High School. Secondly, she is doing so in a way that is multilayered, reflective, and critical. Ms. Green is considering what matters to her within the curriculum (and, just as importantly, why those things matter), how she might prioritize those goals within her curriculum, and how she might represent those goals on a curriculum map or "on the report card." She also wants to recognize hidden practices, critically examining how the values she inexplicitly shares through may impact students. This is self-

authoring in the way Ms. Green is exploring her own epistemological and intrapersonal beliefs through her teaching philosophy, as realized in her curricular choices. She is articulating an authoring-of, rather an authoring-by, the curriculum. Ms. Green also engages in self-authoring on the interpersonal level as she represents epistemological beliefs to her school community through conversations with her colleague in music and the instructional coaches at her school.

While the last comment regarding the math department may seem flippant, there is a possibility that conversations such as these may lead to further conversations with other faculty members, potentially creating pathways toward reflective, critical questions and a sense of authorship on the larger school level. Ms. Green raised this idea near the end of the project, noting,

Ms. Green: I am reflective as a teacher and I do consider how what I'm teaching expresses value...and I think that I do create spaces for the kids to compose and discuss and do those kinds of things, but it's always so structured and fill-in-the-blank. But I think when you ask such open-ended questions, and you do it frequently as part of the lessons - I just feel like it changes their thinking as artists. And I just feel like we're really helping develop them more than I have in the past. You know?...This is really just the best start to the day...Can you imagine what things would look like if this were their whole day? If this wasn't just music class, but they thought this way in every class? I mean, I don't think it's necessarily about the musical content, but it's about a disposition...it's about cultivating an artist's disposition and critical eye, not just about creating art. I mean, could they do this in math? Couldn't they do this everywhere?

(Educator Interview, Forest Glen)

Ms. Green is again demonstrating a sense of personal reflection on her curricular and pedagogical choices, considering the ways in which a project such as this might align, challenge, or expand her understandings of what matters and why. Her comment at the end also could demonstrate the possibility of moving toward engaging with these same reflective practices of hers, as well as the critical engagements of this project, in a larger discussion with colleagues. Through this discussion with colleagues, some of whom may view the purposes of practices and

things like curriculum, curriculum maps, and report cards differently than she does, she is also potentially opening possibilities for border crossing on a school-wide level.

Limitations, Risks, and Realities

There are risks and limitations to curricular choices that have aims such as the development of critical artistic dispositions, contact zones, and self-authoring. Education involves complex human beings, each impacted by their own experiences, responding to environments, individuals, and provocations in their own way.

There were several times where the teachers and I felt confident that a student's soundscape would provoke an engaged, charged dialogue, but the conversation fell flat. Mariana's soundscape exploring standardized testing, for example, discussed earlier in this chapter, prompted some nodding from fellow students, but the conversation did not go anywhere, despite a variety of different questions from both myself and Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith and I took a step back and considered what we may have missed from a pedagogical standpoint in relation to Mariana's soundscape. How could we have set this composition up differently? How would different questions or settings have impacted student engagement? Was it the issue or the composition? Was standardized testing taboo conversation...or was it over discussed?

This does not mean that Mariana did not engage in elements of self-authorship, as she was internally grappling with the role of standardized testing in her life, and, therefore, which authority decides what and how to value what she is supposed to "know." It does suggest that, as educators participating in the conversation, we may also overemphasize topics that are interesting to us, but less engaging for students, and that perhaps not every topic can cause students to enter a contact zone. This, again, demonstrates a fine line between the assumptions and interests of teachers/researcher and what matters to students.

Concluding Ideas and Lingerings Thoughts

If we revisit the relationship between self-authorship and border crossing, the experiences of individuals like Madison, Jake, and Shelley suggest that projects that promote the possibility of self-authorship can create opportunities for border crossing. As students process, reflect upon, and grapple with external experiences and then internally (re)define those experiences through personal meaning making, as demonstrated through the creative process of composing their soundscape, they may start to see the permeability in their own borders. The more impactful moment, however, in border crossing, is the negotiation of one's own beliefs through social relations. A purposeful decision was made to focus not only on the soundscape composition, but also on the dialogue that critically engaged with those compositions. This required students to develop an interpretation that was unique to them. As students shared these interpretations, using their soundscapes as a catalyst for productive dialogue, they began to see how multiple ways of knowing and understanding were possible. The juxtaposition of these multiple, divergent interpretations opened the door for border crossing and helped them reflect upon, expand, and deepen their own sense of self-authorship.

A project such as this does not, however, guarantee border crossing. While the educators engaged in processes of self-authoring as they developed curricular and pedagogical opportunities, it is, ultimately, up to the students to enter and participate in contact zones in a way that can promote a discourse of multiple, critical voices. Within a greater vision of the development of a critical artistic disposition, the creation of space in which self-authorship can manifest plays a key role. If we seek to reimagine the possibilities of an education in and through the general music setting, as I do, engaging in self-authorship creates the possibility of individuals seeing themselves within the broader sense of humanity. As such, individuals may

recognize and participate in the civic-political sphere by challenging the status quo and engaging in a critique of one's interactions with society as a jumping off point for future action.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND LOOKING AHEAD

Summary

Music education is inextricably connected to the sociopolitical and cultural-historic realities of our world (Gould, 2009; Woodford, 2019). Ignoring these connections can lead to curricular engagements that prioritize a singular narrative and promote a functional understanding of how and why we engage with music (Schmidt, 2012a). Finding ways to embrace, navigate, challenge, and critically reflect on these connections through musical engagements, however, may help students build skills in critical literacy (Benedict, 2012). Through creative work, students may expand upon their diverse knowledges, challenge taken-for-granted norms, and connect learning practice with structures beyond the music classroom.

In an educational culture predicated on high-stakes testing, “teacher-proof” curricula, and a fragmentation of disciplines, music educators often find engaging with criticality to be challenging (Benedict, 2012; Tobias et al., 2015). This challenge is often amplified in the environ of middle school general music; a context that scholars note has often been ignored in scholarship and for which educators often feel underprepared to teach (Cronenberg, 2016; Giebelhausen, 2015). Teaching and learning within general music education can be designed, however, to help students engage in critical manner, aiming to encourage students to examine their own positionalities and embrace borders that are flexible, permeable, and crossable. How, then, might music educators design and implement responsive, critical curricula that helps students engage in such practices?

My desire to pursue this research stemmed from my own personal experiences with this question. As a middle school music educator, I grappled with how to develop musical encounters

that would help students engage critically with the world around them. My engagements with students were, at times, frustrating moments of perspectival fixity. We each held assumptions about one another, the communities in which we lived and worked, and the place of general music in the greater network of school and personal life. Alongside these frustrations, however, were powerful moments of border crossing, wherein dialogue, debate, and possibility occurred within and among musical endeavors. I desired to learn more about how curricular designs and pedagogical engagements might help promote these moments. This was the impetus for this study.

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which interactions between students and educators impact opportunities for critical engagement and the development of critical artistic dispositions. This was achieved through the implementation of a musical learning project. Situated within the framework of critical and border crossing pedagogies, this study combined soundscape composition, critical listening, reflection and dialogue to explore how existing patterns of thought related to the self, experience, and others can be called into question. This study also aimed to trace potential links, gaps, and challenges between learning practice and in-the-world experience, as a critical conduit in facilitating multiple ways of knowing and being in the middle school general music classroom.

The overarching theoretical framework for this study was border crossing (Giroux, 2005). Border crossing pedagogy entails, firstly, a recognition of the strengths and limitations of the “epistemological, political, cultural, and social” realities that “frame our discourses and social relations” (p. 20). Secondly, it involves the juxtaposition of those realities with others in order to help students “understand difference in its own terms” (p. 20). Finally, it entails the creation of

spaces for “critical analysis...experimentation, creativity, and possibility” as students develop new dispositions that impact how they engage in and with the world (p. 151).

Throughout this study, I also called upon additional frameworks to help me analyze the data. Dark and politicized funds of knowledge were used to help me consider the content, ideas, and topics students chose to engage with throughout the project (Gallo & Link, 2015; Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2009). Practices of critical and mis-listening helped me explore the ways students and educators reflected musically and dialogically (Lipari, 2014; Schmidt, 2012b). I intersected these practices with authorial agency to consider how students developed new texts and ideas from their previous knowledges (Matusov et al., 2016). Finally, the framework of self-authorship helped me investigate how students and educators “authored” their own personal and pedagogical identities over the course of this project (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

A critical qualitative study was employed to help me consider the inquiry from the perspectives of the participants and to contextualize it within the social realities of individual classroom contexts (Glesne, 2006; Matsonobu & Bresler, 2014). A hybridized methodological framework of design-based research (McKenney & Reeves, 2012), critical educational action research (Kemmis, 2010), and case study (Yin, 2014) was utilized. This framework allowed me to develop a learning project that could be iteratively implemented alongside educators in two contexts, critically exploring the similarities and unique manifestations of the project in each classroom practice.

Several data collection tools were used in this study, including interviews, focus groups, journaling, and participant observation (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Cohen et al., 2017; Hayman et al., 2012; Kitzinger, 1995). The combination of these methods helped support triangulation, the inclusion of multiple voices, and helped me remain reflexive throughout the study. Data

collection for this project took place during the Spring Term of the 2018-2019 school year in two Chicago-area middle schools: Edgewood and Forest Glen. Data were organized by case and then analyzed through cross-case analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Two main cycles of coding, descriptive and pattern, generated themes and categories (Saldaña, 2009). These categories were then developed into a conceptual model with implications for middle school curricular practice which I have labeled *critically artistic dispositions*.

This study began with the following research questions:

4. In what ways, if any, can a musical learning project serve as a catalyst for spaces that promote border crossing pedagogies?
5. In what ways and through what processes do students conceptualize curricular engagements as promoting or inhibiting multiple ways of knowing in the music classroom?
 - a. How do students articulate the connections and disconnections between curriculum in the music classroom and their own experiences and realities?
6. What role and impact do the pedagogues have in supporting or curtailing opportunities for critical engagements through the learning project?
 - a. What role and impact do the music educators in two schools have in supporting or curtailing these opportunities?
 - b. What role and impact does the researcher have in supporting or curtailing these opportunities?

As the study progressed, it became clear that these questions were inextricably connected. In particular, multiple ways of knowing and connections between learning practice and in-the-world experience (RQ #2) were deeply embedded in question one, which focuses on student engagement in the project and question three, which focuses on the roles and responsibilities of

the educators in this study. Therefore, I present the conclusions drawn from the analysis of this study in two parts: The Possibilities and Limitations of Learning Projects and Roles and Responsibilities of Educators in Supporting Critical Practice. I then present the conceptual model of *critically artistic dispositions*, delineating the ways in which it may be utilized to help music educators design critical curricular and pedagogical engagements in the middle school general music classroom. This final chapter closes with suggestions for areas of further research.

The Possibilities and Limitations of Learning Projects

Central to this study was the design and implementation of a learning project. This project sought to engage students in composition, productive dialogue, and critical reflection, with the aim of creating opportunities for students and educators to engage in border crossing (Giroux, 2005). The term “project” is used to describe a host of various educational endeavors, but I sought to create a project that was critical, reflective, and connected to the lives and experiences of the students in these schools (Behizadeh, 2014; Maida, 2011; Niesz, 2006). Throughout the course of the project there were moments when border crossing occurred and others where the limitations of a project such as this were made evident. Here I trace each section of the project separately, summarizing findings that emerged from each component. I then explore overarching possibilities, limitations, and implications for project-based learning in middle school general music classes.

Composing with a Critical Lens

The soundscape compositions were the primary musical component of this project. These compositions were designed to promote both critical and functional literacies as students drew upon and problematized their experiences and understandings, while also learning skills related to mixing, layering, and manipulating sounds through digital audio workstations. At both

schools, most students cultivated both sets of skills concurrently. Functionally, students expressed that they not only learned basic mixing techniques, but they also grappled with how to present their ideas through a deliberate musical story. As new musical problems arose, they learned new skills to help them move toward the critical story they wished to tell.

Critically, students problematized their everyday worlds as they searched for a theme to both inspire and guide their compositional processes. Through the introductory activities that preceded the actual compositional process, they were encouraged to call upon their diverse experiences as inspiration. This aligned with students' acknowledgement of a desire to integrate their personal knowledges and inquiries into their project, noting a belief that school can and should be a space to consider and problematize the diverse experiences they find relevant to their lifeworlds. As such, most students drew upon their funds of knowledge in their soundscapes, often focusing on dark and politicized experiences and understandings (Gallo & Link, 2015; Zipin, 2009).

In some cases, students' compositions were explicitly and visibly connected to issues of social struggle. This could be seen in the soundscapes of students such as Madison, who problematized racial stereotypes and segregation; Franco, who explored issues of deportation; and Bobby, who interrogated assumptions about gun and gang violence. In other cases, students' soundscapes were grounded in related complex issues, but less explicitly so. This could be seen in the soundscapes of students like Nohemi, who composed about family and summertime to explore her feelings about deportation. Some students elected to problematize personal issues that were less directly related to politicized funds of knowledge, but still critical and representative of their personal perspectives. This could be seen in the soundscapes of students such as Scarlett, who explored perfectionism; Emma, who considered the formation of personal

identity within a familial context; and Mariana, who explored the anxiety and stress brought about by high-stakes testing. In each of these examples, students were drawing connections between their learning practice and in-the-world experiences.

Students did not, however, simply utilize their funds of knowledge in a static manner. They also engaged in critical and mis-listening practices to interrogate those knowledges, playing with the surpluses and complexities of sounds and material culture to produce their own unique interpretations. These practices align with Giroux's (2005) insistence that border crossing not only involve opportunities for students to "read texts that both affirm and interrogate the complexity of their own history," but also to "create their own texts" in order to "rewrite their own histories, identities and learning possibilities" (p. 22). This process of creating their own texts (soundscapes) required critical reflection and a musical reframing of media excerpts and recorded audio in order to develop an "artistic statement in sound" (Kaschub, 2009, p. 281).

I do not wish to imply here that every middle school general music class should highlight the composition of lived experience soundscapes. I do suggest that finding opportunities to integrate students' lived experiences as well as local and global issues into the curriculum is important, particularly if we hope for music classes to facilitate critical engagement. Students at both schools noted that this project helped fulfill a desire and need to explore personal experience through the medium of musical engagement. Ms. Smith and Ms. Green noted that this project served as a valuable entry point for future critical engagements. The implication here, then, is that projects that involve critical listening and composition might serve as a medium for middle school music educators to help students engage with their personal knowledges and draw connections between musical practices in the classroom and in-the-world experiences.

This project also suggests that music educators might more fully consider how to frame listening as a critical practice. I follow Schmidt (2012a) in suggesting that listening be conceptualized as more than a skill to determine accuracy and musicality. We might build upon these ideas to simultaneously encourage students to investigate the multiple interpretations and entry points into a song, musical work, or media excerpt. Such practices can be configured in myriad ways and might guide our engagements with listening in the general music classroom; encouraging students to explore various genres and media with an ear toward criticality. In performance, this orientation might impact how ensemble, chamber, and solo pieces are entered and explored.

Finally, the act of creating was significant in this study. While I believe critical engagements in general music can and should expand beyond composition, this study also demonstrates the importance of the inclusion of creation-oriented musical practices, particularly when connections are made between compositional content and personal experience. In particular, these practices may be a way to help students not only negotiate their own experiences, but also author their own identities.

Engaging in Dialogue

The second component of this project was dialogue. Rather than presenting the soundscapes as finished projects to be displayed or judged, the aim was to create spaces of sharing that helped students critically engage with their classmates' creative work. Pedagogically, this often proved challenging. As educators we struggled to help students move beyond a functional determination of what a composition was supposed to be "about" and toward a more critical perspective. This could be seen in experiences with students such as Emma and Elijah. In some cases, however, open questions and critical listening practices helped students

use the artistic choices made by their classmates as a catalyst to think through and problematize ideas and issues that arose as they were listening. In these moments, hearing and exploring multiple responses to a composition helped students see knowledge and understanding as “partial, polyphonic, and vibrant” (Giroux, 2005, p. 104). As narratives and counternarratives were juxtaposed with one another, divergent interpretations helped extend students’ ability to reexamine their own views and critically consider the experiences that shaped them. This was a critical function of dialogical practice as experienced and evidenced in this study.

The dialogical portion of this project highlights the importance of designing questions and practices that help students critically engage with musical pieces, including those that are composed in music class. Finding productive ways to help students problematize what they are hearing, without being judgmental, can be challenging, but this study suggests that such practices can be taught over time. Rather than encouraging students to consider what a musical piece is “about,” we might reframe our thinking to consider what a musical piece makes possible. In this way, the purpose of creating and responding to music is not only to explore its functional and aesthetic purpose, but also to use it as a catalyst to critically consider multiple interpretations, ideas, and understandings.

Further, we might frame dialogue as a productive process; one that promotes the creation of new ways of thinking and acting. In chapter six, I considered the ways in which students engaged in authorial agency through their dialogical interactions. Rather than view dialogue as a move toward a pre-defined end goal, this study supports the work of scholars who argue that dialogue can and should focus on dissensus and divergence, pushing toward the creation of new ideas that reframe experience and lead toward constructive action (Burbules, 2004, 2006; Gould, 2008; Schmidt, 2007, 2012b; Pratt, 1991; Young, 2001). Practically, this may mean designing

curricular experiences that are flexible and responsive. Utilizing open questions that have multiple possible answers, encouraging response and debate, and actively challenging students to build upon what they think they know are also crucial. These dialogues might serve not as a replacement for performing and composing, but as an additional way of promoting critical musical thinking in the classroom.

The Centrality of Critical Reflection

Critical reflection emerged as a central, perhaps essential, component of this project. This follows the work of scholars from Dewey (1916/2009) to Giroux (2005) who argue that experiences must be reflected upon and problematized if we hope to help students develop “a permanent disposition of action toward the world” (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 175). Critical reflection ran as a constant current through this project and manifested individually through students’ written and verbalized thoughts, dialogically between teacher and student, and communally through classroom conversation. Reflection helped participants recognize the complexity and depth of diverse knowledges, assisted students and educators in their paths toward self-authorship, and created opportunities for border crossing to occur during compositional and dialogical engagements.

Reflection was key in helping students and educators negotiate the potentially contentious knowledges and experiences explored throughout this study. Through both the compositions and dialogue, lifeworld knowledges were viewed as open for critical discourse. Personal and social narratives can be challenging to discuss and there were moments where divergent opinions created spaces of conflict. At Edgewood, we navigated this conflict by diversifying the spaces in which we listened and reflected, utilizing breakout and focus groups to

help students think through ideas. Students often responded more openly in these smaller sessions, demonstrating a willingness to express diverse views and challenge one another's ideas. At Forest Glen, students' own guidelines for listening helped facilitate reflective practice during listening and dialogue, for example encouraging participants to pause before reacting to what they heard. Students even renamed this process of critical listening as critical "hearing" in order to differentiate it from more functional kinds of listening and to encourage open, productive dialogue. These practices helped each of us recognize the partiality of our own views, the flexibility of our perspectives, and thus, the permeability of the borders that shape our understandings.

Reflection also helped students move toward spaces of self-authorship and authorial agency. In chapter six, I explored a spiral of agency (figure 6.1), highlighting the importance of deliberately designing and implementing multiple opportunities for reflection throughout this project. Including purposeful reflection throughout the project, as opposed to only at the conclusion, helped us, as educators, engage in ways that were responsive and supportive toward student learning. Opportunities for reflection early in the project helped plant ideas that impacted student engagement in the future. This could be seen, for example, with Gia, whose reflections grew deeper and more critical as the project progressed. This corroborates views that reflection is a learned skill that can be built over time (Seaman, 2008). As students continued to engage reflectively over time, new ideas were often illuminated that led students to develop soundscapes and dialogues that demonstrated a sense of authorial agency and an authoring of personal identity.

The experiences in this study suggest that music educators should consider designing multiple, varied, purposeful opportunities for reflection in project-based learning. Introducing

opportunities for reflection throughout a project design may help students understand it as an ongoing learned practice. These opportunities might expand upon traditional notions of reflection as a written response or class discussion to include short conversations about creative process or a pause to think before responding to a musical work. Viewed in this manner, we might see reflection as a practice deeply embedded in musical learning, rather than simply as an assignment to be completed.

A central message here is that purposefully designed reflection can help promote criticality. Rather than designing reflective practices that ask students to think about what they have learned or how they might do differently next time, reflection can help students draw connections between their projects and processes and larger socio-political and cultural-historic issues. This helps ground musical projects and thinking in the realities of the worlds in which students live and learn, potentially inspiring them to engage in civic action beyond the confines of the project itself.

Project Design

While each of these educational encounters – composition, dialogue, reflection – were important in their own ways, I believe it was how they were designed and implemented as interconnected elements that opened spaces for border crossing. Projects, then, are complex endeavors that require balance on multiple levels. They can be designed promote both critical literacy alongside more discipline-specific skills. They can embrace student knowledge while also amplifying, problematizing, and building upon it. They can be thoroughly designed while also creating space for students to pursue paths of inquiry that are meaningful to them. Thinking about and planning musical projects in this way, as multifaceted, well-thought through endeavors

that seek to link learning practice with in-the-world experience might open spaces for them to be curricular pathways toward border crossing in the middle school general music classroom.

Projects are not transformational on their own, however. No part of this project guaranteed or explicitly incited actionable transformational change. The students whose lives were impacted by racism, deportation, mental health struggles, violence, and feelings of insecurity quite likely still experience such oppressions. Projects can, I believe, impact how we relate to one another; as in the case of Alyssa and Shelley. They may help us recognize privilege and the complex nature of our experiences; as in the cases of Hunter and Edgar. They may, through reflection and meaning making, impact how we frame human experience and understand social relationships. Therefore, projects that are designed to promote criticality may be a pathway toward actionable change today and into the future.

Roles and Responsibilities of Educators in Supporting Critical Practice

Throughout this study, the pedagogical choices Ms. Smith, Ms. Green, and I made significantly impacted how students engaged in the project. This impact was felt not only in the ways in which we designed and implemented the learning project, but also in how our choices each day impacted the possibility for students to engage critically. Reflection was, again, a central component in investigating the impact of these choices.

Reflection helped each of us recognize our own biases and assumptions and the impact they had on how we engaged with students. Even if we have the best of intentions, even when we work promote critical engagements in our classrooms, assumptions will always exist, they always play an insidious role. In this study, Ms. Smith seemed to hold assumptions about the value and impact of the Edgewood students' experiences. Ms. Green and I both assumed that students at Forest Glen would call upon issues related to immigration, culture, and language in

this project. I held assumptions that students wanted to engage with the dark and politicized elements of their lifeworlds in the setting of music class. In each of these situations, we were only seeing one facet of students' experiences, placing them into a box that downplayed, if not downright ignored, the multifaceted nature of their identities. Reflection, however, helped us recognize these biases and the ways they impacted our pedagogical choices, guiding our efforts to adapt the project plan throughout the implementation, and our commitment to engage responsibly with the students in each class.

These findings align with arguments made by scholars that pre-service music education programs should continue to expand how reflective practice is considered and conceptualized (Benedict, 2012; Benedict & Schmidt, 2014; Kaschub & Smith, 2014; Robinson, 2017). Such practices might begin with a view inward, grappling not only with personal views and values, but also the ways in which those views impact engagements with students in the classroom. Further, this suggests the importance of reflection and reflexivity being conceptualized and taught as ongoing practices that are a fundamental part of educators' pedagogical dispositions (Benedict, 2006; Robinson, 2017; Vagle, 2011).

While personal reflection was an important first step, it was also the move to model our reflective practices and present them with transparency to students that was vital in this study. The more we modelled reflective practice, the more students at both schools engaged reflexively and critically, as seen in my own experience speaking about my assumptions with students at Forest Glen. Further, our modelling of reflexivity and vulnerability seemed to help us build trust with students, an important element in creating a classroom culture that values divergent ideas (Pierce, 2008). Finally, as students witnessed us engage in reflection as educators, it may have

helped them see reflection not as something to be achieved, but as an ongoing practice in the life of an artist as well as an engaged citizen.

Educators often model musical skills and artistry (Haston, 2007), but it is perhaps less common to model our own reflective practices in an explicit and visible manner. Music educators might consider finding opportunities to share reflections with students that demonstrate processes of critical thinking. Some may see this as reaching toward vulnerability, and I acknowledge that sharing our own assumptions and experiences can be challenging. Finding ways to reflect with and alongside students, however, may help us grow in our own knowledges, illuminating spaces for us to see our own borders as permeable and crossable. From a pedagogical perspective, this may impact the ways in which we design future curricular engagements and, relationally, this may help us build spaces of trust and openness where future actionable change is a real possibility.

Finally, reflection also led to a sense of pedagogical authorship as we designed and implemented this curriculum. Both Ms. Green and Ms. Smith noted that reflective practice helped us build a sense of purpose and aims for this project. The project curriculum was not viewed as a passive set of steps, but as an active, ongoing engagement that required us to remain agile and responsive. In this way, the project was mutually constructed, with each of us providing parameters, as well as guidance and support both musically and through dialogue, while the students generated the artistic artifacts to be discussed and often determined the direction of our conversations. This process led to epistemological reflection for each of us as we continually came to explore what we find meaningful in music education and helped us create a curricular experience that was engaging, interconnected, and critical.

Our practices in pedagogical authorship have implications for how music educators and pre-service teachers conceptualize curricular development. Thinking beyond methods and models may help us develop curriculum that honors, problematizes, and amplifies learners' diverse knowledges. Further, reflective practice that is responsive to the "particularities of the students in a given classroom" may help educators situate musical practices and thinking within learners' self-chosen personal experiences (Hafen, 2009, p. 67). Projects may be conceptualized not only as an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned, but also to help them position musical experiences in their own inquiries and intellectual curiosities. Such issues are particularly important when engaging with students whose knowledges and experiences may differ from that of the educator (Robinson, 2017).

Teacher education programs might play a role in helping support critical reflective practice and pedagogical authorship. On a micro level, such programs might expand individual class curricula to help pre-service music teachers further examine how their experiences and biases can lead to conscious and unconscious exclusions and assumptions. On a macro level, through programmatic design we might explore the ways in which pre-service educators develop skills in reflective practice across courses in order to build toward a pedagogical disposition that carries reflexivity at its core.

Engaging in curricular and pedagogical authorship might also support the development of an overarching vision or model for the context in which they teach. It is this topic I explore in the next section.

Critical Artistic Dispositions: A Model for Middle School General Music Education

As noted in chapters one and two, middle school general music has historically been conceptualized as lacking consistency and vision (e.g. Bawel, 1992; Giebelhausen, 2015;

Menard, 2014; Regelski, 2004; Reimer 1966). Based on the findings from this study, I argue that this context holds possibilities for creative engagements that are grounded in both criticality and the development of musical skills. Further, I argue that middle school students are both capable and interested in grappling with sociopolitical and cultural-historic issues through their music-making in these classes. As such, I have aggregated the findings from this study into a conceptual model that places pedagogical practices of border crossing into a creative musical setting.

This model proposes a focus on the cultivation of *critical artistic dispositions* (figure 8.1). I define a critical artistic disposition as a frame-of-mind in which one seeks to imagine, creatively generate, and artistically actualize ideas that interrogate and engage with cultural, civic/political, social, economic, racial, and interpersonal structures in the world. The purpose of this model is to delineate foundational aims that can be utilized by educators seeking to design critical curricula in the general music setting.

This model is predicated on a belief that middle school general music can and should be a place for students to develop as capable and creative musician-citizens who actively and critically participate in civic society. Each facet, therefore, leads toward this goal. At the center of the model are artistic and creative engagements, such as composing, listening, mixing, arranging, and performing. Each of these engagements requires functional skills, however this model does not privilege those skills as precursors to critical work. Rather, I argue for a model that brings functional skills and critical engagement together using six critical foundations to help guide musical practices.

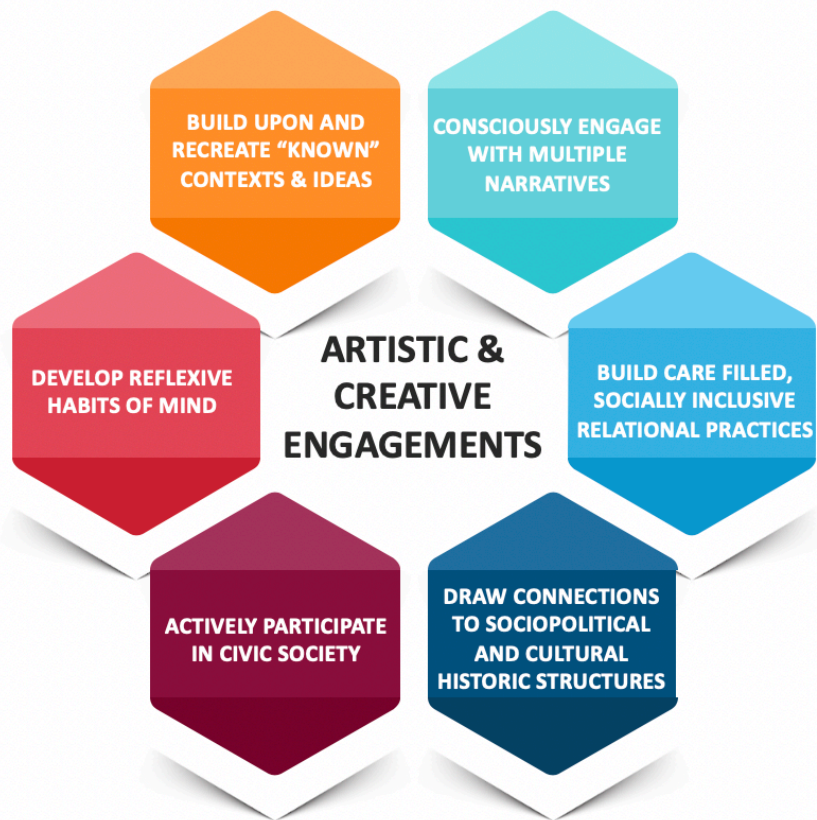


Figure 8.5: Critically Artistic Dispositions

Starting from the left, developing reflexive habits of mind might include engaging in critical listening that encourages reflection on one’s experiences and taken-for-granted assumptions. Building upon and recreating “known” contexts and ideas might involve recognizing the value and complexities of our experiences and knowledges while also problematizing them in a way that encourages renegotiation of what we think we “know” about and through music. Consciously engaging with multiple narratives decenters a singular, dominant way of understanding and creates space for naming difference and considering multiple interpretations of an idea, story, or musical work to be explored. Critically listening to one another’s ideas, stories, and musical offerings in a manner that recognizes and engages with difference might help us work toward building care-filled, socially inclusive practices in a world

populated by diverse others. Drawing connections to sociopolitical and cultural historic structures helps us situate musical practices in narratives that shape music making in schools, communities, and media. Finally, I follow scholars who argue that critical pedagogical engagements should push toward actionable change (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2005; Martin, 2017; Shor, 2012). Therefore, I also suggest engaging in musical endeavors that seek to help students actively engage in civic action, developing their own narratives and counternarratives toward multiple imagined futures. I do not suggest that each musical engagement involve every one of these facets, nor do I think these aims are static and unchanging. Rather I see this model as both an entry point and a foundation that might guide the trajectory of musical learning in the middle school general music classroom.

This model has limitations. As with all critical pedagogies, there is a risk of boxing students in to a particular way of thinking that may be assumed to be empowering, potentially resulting in strengthened power inequities, reinforced assumptions, and the perpetuation of deficit views (Ellsworth, 1989). In accordance with the findings in this study, practicing and modeling on-going critical reflection is crucial for educators to help mitigate this risk. Caution should be taken that former dominant narratives are not simply replaced with new ones, rebuilding new borders around our understandings and perspectives.

I believe that music education can and should play a role in helping students critically examine their own ways of thinking through creative and artistic engagements. My hope is that this model might guide educators to pursue pedagogies that help students imagine, creatively generate, and artistically actualize ideas that interrogate and engage with local and global issues. Through pedagogical practices that see critical and functional literacies as operating in tandem, I believe curriculum can become a commitment to “supporting students’ examination of the social,

political and historical contexts that impact their developing identities, roles and responsibilities as citizens [and] artists” (Chappell & Chappell, 2016, p. 292).

Areas of Future Research

The need for critical approaches to curriculum development in music education will persist well beyond this study. As such, the continued examination of pathways and processes toward enacting critical frameworks is necessary. I note throughout this study that this project meant to open the possibility for actionable change, but that it did not explore how and if students and educators engaged in their schools and communities beyond our time together. Longitudinal studies in music education that explore the impact of critical project-based learning over a school year or a student’s middle school experience might shed light on the potential impact of these endeavors.

Additionally, as the model of critically artistic dispositions presented above emerged from this study, it would be interesting to observe educators who implement this model in iterations beyond Edgewood and Forest Glen. How might other middle school general music educators make meaning from these ideas and foundational goals? How might music educators outside this unique context implement such a model?

Following Benedict and Schmidt (2014) and Kaschub (2014), I believe moving these conversations relating to practical engagements with critical curriculum into pre-service teacher programs would also be a powerful extension. Following those educators into their first few years of teaching, particularly those who teach in the middle school setting, might provide insight into how teacher education programs might build additional support for helping pre-service teachers develop critical dispositions.

Finally, while music educators' practices in developing cultures of criticality in their own classrooms are important, I recognize the need for these micro-level choices to be paired with larger, more structural changes at the school level in order to push these pedagogies beyond disciplinary silos (Benedict, 2012). Therefore, an examination of how critical frameworks in music classes impact interdisciplinary or school-wide endeavors would also be a worthwhile exploration.

A Final Thought

In 1966, writing about the middle school setting, Bennett Reimer invited the music education field to consider that “one’s dissatisfaction with traditional general music stems from one’s conviction that it *can* be significant” (p. 43, emphasis in original). My own desire to pursue this path of inquiry derived from my experiences as a middle school music teacher and my belief that music education in this context can and should matter. The stories presented here are a snapshot, a representation of weeks of music-making, problematizing, and border crossing. Though I entered this study hopeful that students would be interested in participating in this project, I was still inspired the depth of criticality, creativity, curiosity, and eager willingness to engage with one another demonstrated by these 11-14 year old students. It is my hope that it is with these same dispositions and curiosities that we as educators design curricula, engage in pedagogical practice, and embrace the role of middle school music educator.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form for Teacher Participants



Western
UNIVERSITY · CANADA

January 15, 2019

Project Title: Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities through Soundscape Composition and Critical Reflection

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Patrick Schmidt, Associate Professor, Music Education, Western University

Co- Investigator:

Kelly Bylica, PhD candidate, Music Education, Western University

Letter of Information – Educator

1. Invitation to Participate: You are being invited to participate in a research study that looks at how soundscape composition might help students talk about and reflect on their own experiences in their music class.

2. Purpose of the Letter: The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. Purpose of this Study: The research project aims to explore critical reflection in the context of a soundscape learning project, as well as to explore how teachers and students interact during this project.

4. Inclusion Criteria: You must be the music educator of the participating music class to be eligible to participate.

5. Exclusion Criteria: Individuals who are not the music educator of the participating music class will not be eligible to participate.

6. Study Procedures: If you agree to participate, this study will take place during (insert month) 2019 during your music class periods (insert periods) over a period of approximately 15-20 class periods. You will be asked to plan the learning project in conjunction with the researcher. The researcher has already outlined the project and you will be able to make any adjustments you see fit. The outline will be shared with you at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the study. Co-planning will take no longer than one hour prior to the beginning of the learning project. The researcher will ask your permission to make copies of any planning documents from this meeting for use as data. The researcher will observe and audio and/or video record you and participating students working during the class project. If you do not wish to be video-recorded during class, camera angles will be adjusted to ensure you are not in the frame. In addition, the researcher will also ask you to participate in three interviews, each lasting approximately 30-45 minutes, at times and locations convenient for you. During these interviews, we will discuss the details of the project, the reflection process, and your thoughts on how the students are engaging with the

project. All interviews will be audio recorded. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, notes will be taken by hand.

7. Possible Risks and Harms: There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study.

8. Possible Benefits: Participation in this study may help researchers learn more about how students and teachers critically engage with each other and their experiences through music in the classroom.

9. Compensation: You will not be compensated for your participation.

10. Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. You are free to withdraw any portion of their data at any time, but once lesson plans are implemented, those cannot be withdrawn without terminating the study. You do not waive any legal rights by participating in this research study.

11. Confidentiality: The information collected will be used for research purposes only. All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. You will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. A list linking your pseudonym to your name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file. Only de-identified quotes will be used in the dissemination of results from this study. Data will be saved on a computer and hard drive are password protected, and the files will be encrypted. All data will be stored in accordance with Western's University policy (for a minimum of 7 years). Electronic files will be deleted after this time. It is possible that de-identified data may be made available to other journals and/or researchers for replication studies and re-analysis. We will give you any new information that may affect your decision to stay in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this study, please contact the researchers and your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. Representatives of Western University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research

12. Contacts for Further Information: Please contact the researchers (information below) if you have questions or concerns at any time. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Human Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario.

13. Publication: If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Kelly Bylica at the information listed below.

14. Consent: If you agree to participate in this research project and accept the conditions outlined above, please sign and return the attached consent form.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick Schmidt
Kelly Bylica



Consent Form

Project Title: Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities through Soundscape Composition and Critical Reflection

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Patrick Schmidt, Associate Professor, Music Education, Western University

Co-Investigator:

Kelly Bylica, PhD candidate, Music Education, Western University

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

YES NO

I agree to let the researchers make copies of my lesson planning materials for this study.

YES NO

I agree to participate in the following (check all that apply):

INTERVIEWS OBSERVATIONS NEITHER

I agree to be (check all that apply):

Video-Recorded Audio-Recorded Neither audio nor video-recorded

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.

Name of Participant (Printed): _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant above. I have answered all questions.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form – Parents/Guardians

***Note: This LOIC was also translated to Spanish and Polish upon request of the Forest Glen Administration. Both translated copies were approved by Western University Ethics Board before being distributed.**



January 15, 2019

Project Title: Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities through Soundscape Composition and Critical Reflection

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Patrick Schmidt, Associate Professor, Music Education, Western University

Co- Investigator:

Kelly Bylica, PhD candidate, Music Education, Western University

Letter of Information – Parent/Guardian

1. Invitation to Participate: Your student is being invited to participate in a research study that looks at how soundscape composition might help them talk about and reflect on their own experiences in their music class.

2. Purpose of the Letter: The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. Purpose of this Study: The research project aims to explore critical reflection in the context of a soundscape learning project, as well as to explore how teachers and students interact during this project.

4. Inclusion Criteria: Your student is eligible to participate in this study if they are in (insert teacher and class period) music class at (insert school).

5. Exclusion Criteria: Students who are not in (insert teacher and class period) music class at (insert school) are not eligible to participate

6. Study Procedures: If you agree to allow your student to participate, and they also agree to their own participation, most of the study will take place in the context of their regular music class over a period of approximately 15-20 class periods. Their teacher is already planning to incorporate this project as a part of the class and the researcher will be observing and video recording your student participating in this project. If you do not wish your student to be video recorded, they will be left out of the camera frame. Any peripherally captured audio will not be used in analysis. The project will involve composition activities, classroom discussion, and journaling. In addition to participating in the class as normal, your student will be asked to participate in two focus groups, each of which will last approximately 30 minutes. These focus groups will be discussions with their classmates and the researcher about the project and their reflection process. Students will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members

and not share anything said in the focus groups with others. Focus groups will take place during their lunch period while they are eating (or another convenient time), and your student will not miss any class. Focus groups will be video-recorded in order to ensure proper transcription and attribution. If you prefer not to have your student video-recorded, camera angles will be adjusted so that they are not in the frame and your student will be audio recorded only. If you prefer that your student is not audio or video recorded, they will not be able to participate in the focus groups. Your student may also be asked to participate in a 20-minute individual interview with the researcher. These interviews will take place at school in a space where your student feels comfortable. These will also take place during lunch while your student is eating (or another convenient time), and your student will not miss class. Interviews will be audio recorded. If you prefer not to have your student audio recorded, notes will be taken by hand. Finally, the researcher will ask to make a copy of your student's project journal, composition, and composition notes. This study will take place during (insert month) 2019.

7. Possible Risks and Harms: There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study.

8. Possible Benefits: While there are no direct benefits to your student, participation in this study may help researchers learn more about how students and teachers critically engage with each other and their experiences through music in the classroom.

9. Compensation: You and your student will not be compensated for your participation.

10. Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You or your student may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. You do not waive any legal rights by participating in this research study. Additionally, choosing not to participate in this study will in no way impact your student's participation or grade in their music class.

11. Confidentiality: The information collected will be used for research purposes only. All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. 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. Your student will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. A list linking their pseudonym to their name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from their study file. Only de-identified quotes will be used in the dissemination of results from this study. Data will be saved on a computer and hard drive are password protected, and the files will be encrypted. All data will be stored in accordance with Western's University policy (for a minimum of 7 years). Electronic files will be deleted after this time. It is possible that de-identified data may be made available to other journals and/or researchers for replication studies and re-analysis. We will give you any new information that may affect your decision to stay in the study. If you choose to withdraw your student from this study, please contact the researchers and their data will be removed and destroyed from our database. Representatives of Western University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research

12. Contacts for Further Information: Please contact the researchers (information below) if you have questions or concerns at any time. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Human Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario.

13. Publication: If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Kelly Bylica at the information listed below.

14. Consent: If you agree to allow your student to participate in this research project and accept the conditions outlined above, please sign and return the attached consent form.

Sincerely,
Dr. Patrick Schmidt
Kelly Bylica

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.



Consent Form

Project Title: Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities through Soundscape
Composition and Critical Reflection

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Patrick Schmidt, Associate Professor, Music Education, Western University

Co- Investigator:

Kelly Bylica, PhD candidate, Music Education, Western University

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to allow my student to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to allow my student to participate in the following (check all that apply):

Interview Focus Groups Observation None of the above

I agree to allow my student to be (check all that apply):

Video-Recorded Audio-Recorded Neither Audio nor Video Recorded

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

YES NO

I agree to allow the researchers to make copies of my student's project classwork for this study.

YES NO

Name of Student Participant: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Name (Print): _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Name (Sign): _____

Date: _____

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant above. I have answered all questions.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C – Assent Form – Students



February 10, 2019

Project Title: Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities through Soundscape Composition and Critical Reflection

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Patrick Schmidt, Associate Professor, Music Education, Western University

Co- Investigator:

Kelly Bylica, PhD candidate, Music Education, Western University

Letter of Assent

1. Why are you receiving this letter? You are being invited to participate in a research study that looks at how soundscape composition might help you talk about and think about your own experiences.

2. Why are they doing this study? Kelly is a music teacher and researcher who wants to study how you talk about and think about your experiences before, during, and after you do this composition project.

3. What will happen? Most of this study will take place in your regular music class. Your teacher is already planning on teaching the composition project with your class of students. If you want to participate in the study, there are a few “extras” that will happen:

1. You may be video or audio recorded while you are participating in class.
2. You will be asked to participate in two focus groups. These are group discussions with some of your classmates and me where you will talk about the project and some of your reflections. These will take place during your lunch period while you are eating. You won't have to miss any class. These will be video recorded. If you do not want to be video recorded, we will adjust the camera so that you are not on film and we will record audio only. If you do not want to be audio recorded, you will not be able to participate in the focus groups. If you participate in the focus groups, you will be asked to respect the privacy of your classmates and not share any comments made during the focus groups with others.
3. You might be asked to participate in a twenty-minute individual interview with me to talk more about your experiences and reflections. These will take place somewhere you are comfortable at school and will also happen during your lunch period while

you are eating. These will be audio recorded. If you would rather not be recorded, I will take notes by hand.

4. I will ask your permission to make a copy of your journals, composition notes, and composition for the research project. You will get to keep the originals.

4. Will there be any tests? No, there will not be any tests or marks from the research portion of this study.

5. How will this help you? You might not directly benefit from the study in the moment, but it might help researchers learn more about how students think critically about their own experiences through music class.

6. What if you have questions? You can contact the researchers or your teacher at any time if you have any questions. The researchers' email addresses and phone numbers are at the bottom of this letter. You can also contact the Western University Office of Research Ethics. Their contact information is also at the bottom of this letter.

7. Do you have to be in the study? No, it is your choice if you would like to participate in the study. If you choose not to participate in the study, it will not impact your participation or grade in music class. Even if you say yes, you would like to participate, you can still change your mind at any time.

8. Will anyone else see what I did or what I said? No, everything you share in this study will be confidential. If things you say or do are included in papers or presentations, the researchers will use a pseudonym (a fake name) and not your actual name.

Thank you,

Sincerely,
Dr. Patrick Schmidt
Kelly Bylica

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.



Assent Form

Project Title: Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities through Soundscape Composition and Critical Reflection

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Patrick Schmidt, Associate Professor, Music Education, Western University

Co- Investigator:

Kelly Bylica, PhD Candidate, Music Education, Western University

I agree to participate in the following (check all that apply):

Interview **Focus Groups** **Observation** **None of the above**

I agree to be (check all that apply):

Video-Recorded **Audio-Recorded** **Neither Audio nor Video Recorded**

I agree to let the researcher's quote me (using a fake name) for this study.

YES **NO**

I agree to allow the researchers to make copies of my project classwork for this study.

YES **NO**

I want to participate in the study.

Name of Participant (Printed):

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Age:

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant above. I have answered all questions.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:

Date:

Appendix D - Learning Project Research Plan

*Please note that final details for this research plan were solidified with the educator in each context during a meeting lasting no longer than one hour prior to the implementation of the learning project. This allowed for the co-construction of the project with the researcher, and also ensured that the project fits with the educator’s curriculum.

*Dates are approximations. Adjustments were made as needed

Days	Activity	Data Collection	Why?
Pre-Study	Regular classroom activities	Observation of students and educator	Familiarization with context
		Interview #1 with Music Educator	Build rapport, explore educator initial thoughts about curriculum, dominant narratives, & community responsiveness, planning of project
Days 1-5	Part 1: Introductory Activities *CO-TAUGHT	Participant Observation of students and educator	Take part in project activities
		Student Artifacts	Observe student reflection and compositional processes
		Student Focus Groups Round 1	Build rapport, Discussion about current curricular experiences and their relationship to dialogue about social and economic distinctions in the class
Days 6-14	Part 2: Soundscape Compositions *CO-TAUGHT	Participant Observation of students and educator	Take part in project activities
		Interview #2 with Music Educator	Discussion of how/in what ways/for whom the project is or is not creating spaces for dialogue through and about difference
		Student Artifacts	Observe student reflection and compositional processes
Days 15-23	Part 3: Musical and Dialogical Encounters *CO-TAUGHT Prompting questions will be used during the dialogue process to facilitate critical reflection are listed below.	Participant Observation of students and educator	Take part in project activities
		Student Artifacts	Observe student reflection and compositional processes
		Student Focus Groups Round 2	Discussion about project and student perception of the project’s impact on creating borderless spaces for students to dialogue about and through

			social and economic distinctions.
Days 24-25	Part 4: Closing Conversations	Participant Observation of students and educator	Take part in project activities
		Interview #3 with Music Educator	Discussion of educator's overall perception of the project, suggestions for future implementation, thoughts on how this experience may impact future curricular/pedagogical choices
		Student Artifacts	Collection of artifacts
		Interviews with select students	Follow-ups based on focus group responses
As needed	Review *Note: No class time needed	Follow-Up Interviews with students and educator	Return to complete any necessary follow-up interviews and/or to clarify any data with participants.

Appendix E: Email Script for Recruitment – Educator/School Participants

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research

Hello,

We are contacting you because you previously expressed interest in participating in a study that we, Dr. Patrick Schmidt & Kelly Bylica, are conducting. This email offers additional information about the study, as well as contact information if you choose to participate in this study. Briefly, the study aims to explore critical reflection in the context of a soundscape learning project, as well as to explore how teachers and students interact during this project. If you choose to participate, this study will take place during a music class of your choosing. We will meet for approximately one hour prior to finalize the details of the learning project, prior to its implementation. The researcher will then observe and audio and/or video record you and participating students working during the class project. In addition, the researcher will also ask you to participate in three interviews, each lasting approximately 30-45 minutes, at times and locations convenient for you. During these interviews, we will discuss the details of the project, the reflection process, and your thoughts on how the students are engaging with the project. With your consent, all interviews will be audio recorded. If you prefer not to be recorded during the interviews, notes will be taken by hand.

A letter of information offering additional information is attached to this email. If you choose to participate, please contact Kelly Bylica at the email below and we will arrange for the letter of consent to be signed in person. If you would like more information on this study please contact the researchers at the contact information given below.

Thank you,

Dr. Patrick Schmidt
Associate Professor, Music Education
Western University

Kelly Bylica
PhD Candidate, Music Education
Western University

Appendix F: In-Person Verbal Script – Students

In-Person Verbal Script

Hello, my name is Kelly Bylica and I am a PhD student at Western University. I am studying music education and I would like to invite you to participate in a study that looks at how soundscape composition might help you talk about and reflect on your own experiences. I am a music teacher and researcher who wants to study how you talk about and reflect on your experiences before, during, and after you do this composition project.

If you choose to participate, most of this study will take place in your regular music class. Your teacher is already planning on teaching the composition project with your class of students. If you want to participate in the study, there are a few “extras” that will happen:

1. You may be video or audio recorded while you are participating in class.
2. You will be asked to participate in two focus groups. These are group discussions with some of your classmates and me where you will talk about the project and some of your reflections. These will take place during your lunch period while you are eating. You won't have to miss any class. These will be video recorded. If you do not want to be video recorded, we will adjust the camera so that you are not on film and we will record audio only. If you do not want to be audio recorded, you will not be able to participate in the focus groups. If you participate in the focus groups, you will be asked to respect the privacy of your classmates and not share any comments made during the focus groups with others.
3. You might be asked to participate in a twenty-minute individual interview with me to talk more about your experiences and reflections. These will take place somewhere you are comfortable at school and will also happen during your lunch period while you are eating. These will be audio recorded. If you would rather not be recorded, I will take notes by hand.
4. I will ask your permission to make a copy of your journals, composition notes, and composition for the research project. You will get to keep the originals.

If you have any questions, you can contact me or your teacher at any time. The letter I am sending home with you has my email address and phone number on it.

This is an optional study. If you choose not to participate in the study, it will not impact your participation or grade in music class. Even if you say yes, you would like to participate, you can still change your mind at any time.

If you are interested in participating, please take the letter of consent home and talk it over with your parent or guardian. Then return both the consent form (signed by your parent or guardian) and the assent form (signed by you) to your teacher. These forms will be returned in a sealed envelope to be picked up by the researcher.

Thank you!

Appendix G: Participant Observation Protocol

Note: Observations on the left served as descriptors of what was observed. Observations on the right included my own reflections. Pseudonyms were used and notes were not be taken on non-participating/non-consenting individuals.

Date: _____ Period: _____

School Pseudonym: _____

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
General: (what is happening):	
Observations about verbal interactions between teacher & students:	
Observations about non-verbal interactions between teacher & students:	
Observations about verbal interactions between students:	
Observations about non-verbal interactions between students:	
Observations about activities (Are activities prompting students to engage critically?):	

Observations about Power Dynamics:	
Observations about Class Participation (who was engaged and how was that determined?):	
Observations about researcher activities (How did I engage with the students/educator/process today):	
Observations about participant engagement with/response to researcher activities (How did students and educators interact with or respond to me today):	

Space for sketches of context, classroom layout, and/or participants:

Appendix H: Student Focus Group Schedule - Semi-Structured

The goal of these focus groups was to encourage the students to have a dialogue about the project and their reflection processes. Thus, these were only guiding questions to encourage conversation. The order in which they were asked, as well as how many of them were asked, depended on the way the conversation progressed. In addition to the listed questions, students were prompted to respond to or discuss other media, including songs, that come up in relation to the project.

Focus Group #1

Questions to be chosen from the following:

Opening

1. I want to remind you that everything we say in this focus group should not be repeated once we leave. That will help us make sure everyone feels comfortable to share.

Music Class Experiences

2. Can you tell me about your music class?
 - a. Do you feel like you do projects or activities in your class that connect to who you are outside of school?
3. What do you think of when you think about reflection? What might reflection look like?
4. We have started to talk about how our experiences and histories, or positionalities, impact how we see the world. What do you think about that so far?

Other

5. Do you have anything else you want to add?
6. Do you have any questions for me?

Focus Group #2

Note that this focus group took place after a period of observation. Therefore, many questions were based on observations or experiences during the study. The following are sample questions, but I also chose several instances from the observation period to discuss in light of the research questions.

Questions to be chosen from the following:

Opening

1. Just like last time, I want to remind you that everything we say in this focus group should not be repeated once we leave. That will help us make sure everyone feels comfortable to share.

About the project

2. I'm interested in hearing your reactions to this learning project. What did you think about this experience?
 - a. What might you take away from this experience?
 - b. What surprised you?
3. Tell me about someone else's composition. How was it meaningful to you? How did it make you feel?
4. Did you learn anything about yourself during this project that you feel comfortable sharing with the group?
5. Did you learn anything about your classmates or your teacher or me during this project that you feel comfortable sharing with the group?
6. Did your observations and interpretations differ from those of others? How? Is this important to you? Why?
7. Does anyone want to share a reflection that you had (either from the dialogue or from your journal) that was particularly meaningful for you?
8. How did this project compare with other projects or activities you've done in music class?
9. Are there ethical / moral / wider social issues that you would want to explore based on our discussions, what you heard, or an experience you had during the project?

Other

10. Do you have anything else you want to add?
11. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix I: Student Semi-Structured One-on-One Interview Schedule

Note: These interviews took place at the conclusion of the study after a period of observation and following the focus group. Therefore, many questions were also based on observations or experiences during the study or focus group. The following are sample questions, but I also chose several instances from the observation period to discuss in light of the research questions.

1. How might you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?
2. Tell me your thoughts about this particular project.
 - a. What did you enjoy most?
 - b. Was there anything that surprised you?
 - c. What did you learn about yourself during this project that you feel comfortable sharing?
 - d. Did you learn anything about anyone else during this project?
 - e. Tell me about your composition process
 - i. What were your thoughts on your final product? What was most meaningful to you?
 - ii. Are there any questions you wished someone had asked you about your composition?
 - f. Was this project different or similar to other projects you've done in school? In what ways?
 - g. Were you able to connect what you heard in anyone else's project to your own personal experiences? How?
3. Is there anything else you would like to share?
4. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix J: Educator Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Questions were chosen from the following prompts.

INTERVIEW #1

About you

1. Tell me about your path to becoming a music teacher.
2. How long have you been teaching at this school? What led you to teach here?
3. Tell me about the community this school serves. What is your connection to this community?

About your teaching

1. Do you consider yourself a critical educator? What does that mean to you?
2. Tell me about your goals for students in this class
3. Tell me about how you understand your role as an educator in this class.
4. Tell me about your connection with the students in this class.

About the project

1. Having reviewed the outline of the project, what are your initial thoughts?
2. What adaptations would you like to make to the project to best fit the context of this class?

Other

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

INTERVIEW #2

Note that this second interview took place midway through the project. Therefore, many questions were based on observations or experiences during the study. The following are sample questions, but I also chose several instances from the observation period to discuss in light of the research questions.

About the project

1. Tell me about how you think the project is going so far.
2. Have you noticed anything that you find interesting about the students' compositional processes?
 - a. Has anyone surprised you so far? How? Why?
 - b. *Likely a spot to bring up any observations I/we have made about student participants during the compositional process.
3. Tell me your thoughts about the reflection portion of the study.
 - a. Has anyone surprised you so far? How? Why?
 - b. *Likely a spot to bring up any observations I/we have made about student participants during the reflection process.

4. How do you feel about the next steps in the project?
 - a. Are there any changes you would like to make?

Other

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

INTERVIEW #3:

Note that this third interview took place at the conclusion of the project. Therefore, many questions were based on observations or experiences during the study. The following were sample questions, but I also chose several instances from the observation period to discuss in light of the research questions.

About the project

1. What were your overall thoughts about this project?
2. How was this project similar to or different than other projects you have done with your students?
3. Would you describe this project as promoting critical engagement in your classroom? For whom? Why or why not?
4. Tell me about your perception of the students' reactions to the project
5. What do you think are the most interesting issues that arose during student discussions and/or reflections?
6. Would you repeat this project? Why? Would you change anything?

About you

1. Thinking back to your original thoughts about criticality from our first interview (refer back to earlier response), has anything changed for you? In what ways?
2. How do you think your own positionality and/or my positionality as the researcher impacted student engagement in this project?
3. Did you learn anything about yourself during this project that you would like to share?
4. Did you learn anything new about your students or the neighborhood during this project that you would like to share?
5. Do you think any part of this experience impact any future pedagogical or curricular choices you make? In what ways?

Other

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix K – Edgewood Middle School Project Plan

DAY	ACTIVITY
PART 1 – Introductory Activities	
1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>What does it mean to listen? Group Conversation</p> <p>One Chicago Listening session (audio only), followed by partner Listening Conversations</p>
2	<p>Reflection on previous day’s listening activities</p> <p>One Chicago Soundscape Listening Session</p> <p>Small Group Listening Conversations (w/ same listening guidelines as previous day)</p> <p>Full Class Sharing Conversation</p>
3	<p>Listening Examples from Urban Remix and Previous Students</p> <p>Small Group Listening Conversations (w/ same listening guidelines as previous day)</p>
4	<p>Listening Examples from Urban Remix and Previous Students</p> <p>Small Group Listening Conversations (w/ same listening guidelines as previous day)</p>
5	<p>“What is music?” Conversation</p> <p>Short Group Compositions</p> <p>*These compositions went into Day 6 to allow adequate time for students to share and to help transition into the first day of working on individual soundscape compositions.</p>
PART 2 – Soundscape Composing	
6	<p>Class review of the basics of WeVideo (digital editing platform used at Edgewood)</p> <p>Supplementary Web Tutorial by Ms. Smith and Kelly made available to students</p> <p>Discussion about compositional processes and questioning</p> <p>Students begin their compositional processes independently – some develop sound lists, some generate storyboards, some start playing with the tools on WeVideo, some want to talk with Ms. Smith and Kelly one-on-one to talk about ideas.</p>
7-8	<p>Student independent composing time on individual Chromebooks</p> <p>Students are free to check-in with their classmates or teachers (and many do), but it is not required at this point</p>
9-13	<p>Creative Process Check-Ins begin – while students are working, they begin to meet with me or Ms. Smith in one-on-one settings to share their process.</p>
14	<p>Final day for student composing</p>
PART 3 – Musical and Dialogical Encounters	
15	<p>Large Group Listening and Dialogue – Ms. Smith and Kelly lead conversations on the first soundscapes to be shared</p>
16-19	<p>Small Group Listening and Dialogue – In response to low participation in the large group, Ms. Smith and Kelly break students into smaller groups (10-15 students) and lead discussions</p>
20-23	<p>Large Group Listening & Dialogue – Return to larger group sharing sessions; Listening Walk for students to respond to final soundscapes in small groups of 3-4</p>
PART 4 – Closing Conversations	
24	<p>What is the role of an artist activity? – Students explore and journal about roles and responsibilities of artists and musicians with media platforms, as well as what might happen if their soundscapes “went viral”</p>
25	<p>Final Day, Reflections, Feedback</p>

Appendix L – Forest Glen Junior High Project Plan

DAY	ACTIVITY
PART 1 – Introductory Activities	
1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>What does it mean to listen? Group Conversation</p> <p>What is music? Playlist and Small Group Conversations (w/ listening guidelines)</p>
2	<p>Reflection on previous day’s listening activities</p> <p>Continuation of What is music? Playlist</p> <p>Music as Purposeful Full Class Conversation</p> <p>Listening examples from Urban Remix and Previous Students</p>
3	<p>Listening Examples from Urban Remix and Previous Students</p> <p>Small Group Listening Conversations (w/ same listening guidelines as previous day)</p>
4	<p>Assumptions and Biases Activity w/ small and large group conversations (w/ same listening guidelines as previous day)</p>
5	<p>Short Group Compositions</p>
PART 2 – Soundscape Composing	
6	<p>Class on the basics of SoundTrap (digital editing platform used at Forest Glen)</p> <p>Supplementary Web Tutorial by Ms. Green and Kelly made available to students</p> <p>Discussion about compositional processes and questioning</p> <p>Students begin their compositional processes independently – some develop sound lists, some generate storyboards, some start playing with the tools on SoundTrap, some want to talk with Ms. Green and Kelly one-on-one to talk about ideas.</p>
7-8	<p>Student independent composing time on individual Chromebooks</p> <p>Students are free to check-in with their classmates or teachers (and many do), but it is not required at this point</p>
9-13	<p>Creative Process Check-Ins begin – while students are working, they begin to meet with me or Ms. Green in one-on-one settings to share their process.</p>
14	<p>Final day for student composing</p>
PART 3 – Musical and Dialogical Encounters	
15	<p>Students generate “Guidelines for Listening” – First day of Ms. Green and Kelly leading large group listening and dialogue sessions on first soundscapes to be shared</p>
16-21	<p>Large Group Listening & Dialogue sessions – students respond in small groups or independent journaling and then return to the large group to discuss each soundscape</p>
22-23	<p>Large Group Listening & Dialogue continues; Listening Walks for students to respond to final soundscapes in groups of 3-4 are added</p>
PART 4 – Closing Conversations	
24	<p>Whose Voice Matters? Conversation, Activity, and Journal Entry – Students explore the role of voice and activism in class and consider how they might encourage more opportunities for student experience to be included in class</p>
25	<p>Final Day, Reflections, Feedback</p>

Curriculum Vitae - Kelly Bylica

ACADEMIC DEGREES

Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education In Progress

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada

Dissertation: Critical Border Crossing: Exploring Positionalities through
Soundscapes and Critical Reflection in the Middle School General Music Classroom

Supervisor: Dr. Patrick Schmidt; Second Reader: Dr. Cathy Benedict

- Ontario Trillium Scholarship Holder
- Faculty of Music Entrance Award Recipient

Master of Music in Music Education 2014

Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, USA

Capstone Project: Exploring Interdisciplinary Connections & Composition in Choral Music
Education

Supervisor: Dr. Maud Hickey

- Departmental Honors

Bachelor of Music Education & Humanities 2010

Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN, USA

- Double degree in Music Education and Humanities Studies
- Christ College Scholar
- *magna cum laude*

AREAS OF SCHOLARLY/PROFESSIONAL INTEREST

Music Teacher Education; Curriculum Development and Policy; Critical Pedagogy; Reflective Practice; Middle-Level General and Choral Music; Composing in the Classroom; Project-Based Learning

TEACHING RELATED EXPERIENCE - HIGHER EDUCATION

Western University, London, Ontario Canada

Instructor (2019-2020)

EDUC 5237: Curriculum and Pedagogy in Music (Vocal) for the Senior Grades

- Methods course for music education certification
- Facilitated participatory classes on teaching and learning vocal and choral music in Grades 4-12 related to pedagogy, curriculum design, assessment, resources and repertoire, and preparation for individual practicum placements

Teaching Assistant (2018-2020)

MUS 4586/9586: Curriculum and Policy in Schools (Dr. Patrick Schmidt & Dr. Cathy Benedict)

- Undergraduate and graduate hybrid course exploring the place and enactment of curriculum and policy in JK-12 schooling
- Led discussion with undergraduate students; provided feedback on written and media-based work

MUS 4812: Music Education in Action (Dr. Cathy Benedict)

- Fieldwork and community placement course for upper-level music education students
- Observed music education student placements; worked collaboratively and communicated with community placements; responded to weekly critical reflections; facilitated group work

MUS 3858: Creating Music in the Classroom (Dr. Ruth Wright)

- Informal learning, creative practices, popular music methods course elective for upper-level music education students
- Co-planned class; prepared online OWL course site; facilitated discussion and reading groups; marked student work; prepared and facilitated several lessons

Guest Lecturer (2016-2019)

Theories of Learning and Pedagogy (Graduate)

Teaching and Learning in High Diversity (Undergraduate/Graduate)

Choral Literature Techniques (Undergraduate)

Choral Conducting Foundations (Undergraduate)

Introduction to Music Education (Undergraduate)

Philosophy of Music Education (Undergraduate)

Teaching and Learning Music (Undergraduate)

TEACHING RELATED EXPERIENCE – K-12 EDUCATION

Westchester Middle School

2012-2016

Westchester, Illinois, USA

- Developed, implemented and taught 6-8th grade general music curriculum
- Developed and led curricular choral program of five ensembles
- Annual Musical Theatre Production Director & Co-Chair of Bi-annual Fine Arts Festival
- Participated in several committees, extra-curricular activities, overnight trips, and school initiatives

Providence Englewood Charter School

2011-2012

Chicago, Illinois, USA

- Taught K-8 General Music
- Developed and led Middle School Drumming Ensemble and Two Choral Ensembles
- Parent/Guardian Saturday Program Team Leader

Tall Oaks Christian School 2009-2010
Valparaiso, Indiana, USA
• Developed and implemented Grade 1-3 music curriculum

Hilltop Neighborhood House 2009-2010
Valparaiso, Indiana, USA
• Early Childhood Music Educator for Ages 3-5

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Articles- Refereed Journals

Bylica, K. (2020). Hearing my world: Negotiating borders, porosity, and relationality through cultural production in middle school music classes. *Music Education Research*.

Butler, A., **Bylica, K.**, & Wright R. (in press). Informal learning of popular music: Gender monoglossia and heteroglossia. *British Journal of Music Education*.

Bylica, K., Butler, A., & Wright, R. (2019). Transgressive or just unexpected? Heteroglossic gender performance & informal popular music learning. *Journal of Popular Music Education*, 3(3), 379-398.

Bylica, K. (2017). Critical pedagogy for the music educator: Preparing future teachers. *TIPS: Teaching Innovation Project Journal*, 7(1).

Articles- Practitioner/Trade Journals

Bylica, K. (2016). The child's voice: Art, poetry and music from the Terezin Concentration Camp for the music classroom. *InForm: Indiana Music Education Journal*, 71(1), 12-16.

Bylica, K. (2015). Composition in the choral classroom: An unorthodox approach. *InForm: Indiana Music Education Journal*, 70(2).

Bylica, K. (2015). The child's voice: Art, poetry and music from the Terezin Concentration Camp for the Canadian music classroom. *Canadian Music Educator Journal*, 56(3), 24-27.

Book Chapters

Bylica, K. (in press). Listening for Meaningful Relationships through Music. Guest chapter in C. Benedict, *Music and Social Justice in Elementary Education: Music as a Way of Knowing*. New York: Routledge.

Bylica, K., & Wright, R. (2019). *Gender and Popular Music Education in North America: We Need to Talk*. In C. Strong and S. Raine (Eds.), *Gender and the Music Industry*. London: Bloomsbury.

Bylica, K. (2019). *Cultivating collective ownership: Leadership at the undergraduate level*. In D. Bennett, J. Rowley, and P. Schmidt (Eds.), *Leadership and Musician Development in Higher Music Education* (pp. 184-189). London: Routledge.

Upcoming and Recent Peer Reviewed Conference Presentations

Bylica, K. (2020, November). *Critical Mis-Listening: A Vision for General Music Education*. Paper Presentation. National Association for Music Education Conference, Orlando, FL.

Bylica, K. (2020, August). *Consumers, Producers, and Authors: Critical Learning Projects in the Music Classroom*. Paper Presentation. International Society for Music Education World Conference, Helsinki, Finland. (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19).

Benjamins, L., **Bylica, K.**, & Roland, S. (2020, August). *Creating Connections across Settings: Transfer and Application of Skills for Post-Secondary Music Students and Teachers*. Roundtable Presentation. International Society for Music Education World Conference, Helsinki, Finland. (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19).

Berger, M., Bernard, C., & **Bylica, K.** (2020, August). *Reconsidering Cultural Hybridity in Choral Music Education: International Perspectives*. Roundtable Presentation. International Society for Music Education World Conference, Helsinki, Finland. (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19).

Benjamins, L., **Bylica, K.**, & Roland, S. (2020, June). *Creating Connections through Interdisciplinary Collaborations: Reflective Practice and Skills Transfer for Music Students*. Paper Presentation. MusCan Canadian University Music Society, London, ON, Canada. (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19).

Bylica, K., Benjamins, L., & Roland, S. (2020, June). *The Role of the Broker in Interdisciplinary Work Between Music Performance and Music Education*. Paper Presentation. Congress of the Social Sciences & Humanities, London, ON, Canada. (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19).

Bylica, K., Benjamins, L., & Roland, S. (2020, April). *Brokering Reflective Spaces in Experiential Learning: Interdisciplinary Engagements in a Summer Opera Program*. Paper Presentation. College Music Society Great Lakes Conference, Rochester, MI. (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19).

Bylica, K., & Schmidt, P. (2020, April). *Practicing Border Crossing Pedagogy: Policy, Inquiry and Action in Collaborative Research*. Roundtable Presentation. American Educational Research Association Conference, San Francisco, CA. (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19).

- Bylica, K.** & Gruben, A. (2020, January). *Hearing Student Voices: Composition and Conversation in the General Music Classroom*. Workshop. Illinois Music Educators Conference, Peoria, IL.
- Bylica, K. (2019, September). *Situating Methods Courses as Critical Project-Based Learning*. Paper Presentation. Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.
- Bylica, K. (2019, May). *Shaping the Future*. Invited member of panel. Mountain Lake Colloquium for Teachers of General Music Methods, Pembroke, VA.
- Bylica, K. (2019, May). *Critical Border Crossing: Negotiating Contact Zones Through Soundscape Composition*. Poster Presentation, Pembroke, VA.
- Bylica, K. (2019, April). *Critical Border Crossing: Soundscape Composition and Reflection as Critical Pedagogies*. Paper Presentation. Research in Music Education Conference, Bath, UK.
- Bylica, K. (2019, November). *Exploring Sociocultural Differences Through Soundscapes*. Workshop. Ontario Music Educators Association Conference, Hamilton, ON, Canada.
- Bylica, K. (2018, June). *Subversive Rabble Rousing: Interrupting School Silence*. Paper Presentation. MayDay Colloquium 30, London, ON, Canada.
- Butler, A., & **Bylica, K.** (2018, June). *Interrupting Democracy: Mean Girls, Leftover Boys, and the Struggle for Power in a Popular Music Education Classroom*. Paper Presentation. Progressive Methods in Popular Music Education Symposium, London, ON, Canada.
- Bylica, K. (2018, April). *Creative Trouble: Using Soundscapes to Challenge School Silence*. Paper Presentation. Western University Graduate Research Forum, London, ON, Canada.
- Benedict, C., **Bylica, K.**, Musgrove, K., Ocadiz, G., Schmidt, P. (2018, March). *Connected Insularity: On the Potentials and Limitations of Intercultural Events*. Paper Presentation. National Association for Music Education Research and Teacher Education Conference, Atlanta, GA.
- Bylica, K. (2018, March). *Creative Trouble: Using Soundscapes to Challenge School Silence*. Poster Presentation. National Association for Music Education Research and Teacher Education Conference, Atlanta, GA.
- Bylica, K. (2017, October). *Self-as-Creator: Exploring Composition and Self-Identity in Choral Music*. Paper Presentation. International MusiChildren Conference, Aveiro, Portugal.
- Bylica, K.**, & Ocadiz, G. (2017, June). *Reading Popular Music: Musicking and Thinking Critically*. Paper Presentation. International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education, London, UK.

Bylica, K. (2017, February). *Creating a Community of Composers*. Paper Presentation. Desert Skies Music Education Research Symposium. Tempe, AZ.

Bylica, K. (2017, January). *Approaches to a Composition Based Choral Curriculum*. Poster Presentation. Indiana Music Educators Conference. Fort Wayne, IN.

Grant Funded Research Assistantships – Western University

Policy as Concept and Practice: A Guide for Music Educators with Dr. Patrick Schmidt	2019-2020
Experiential Learning through <i>Accademia Europea dell'Opera</i> with Dr. Sophie Roland	2018-2020
Canadian Popular Music Education Network with Dr. Ruth Wright	2017-2018
Where Them Girls At? Gender, Popular Music, and Informal Learning with Dr. Ruth Wright	2016-2018
Culturally Relevant Teaching in Music: Impact of Short-Term Study Abroad on Pre-Service Music Educators – Guatemala Study Abroad Program with Dr. Cathy Benedict & Dr. Patrick Schmidt	2017-2018

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Conference Organization

International Society for Music Education Helsinki, Finland	2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Member of Inaugural Student Chapter Planning Committee○ <i>**Conference cancelled due to COVID-19</i>	
MusCan (Canadian University Music Society) National Conference Western University, London, Ontario, Canada	2019-2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Assisted with program committee○ <i>**Conference cancelled due to COVID-19</i>	
Western University Graduate Symposium on Music Western University, London, Ontario, Canada	2017-2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Selection Committee○ Session Chair	
Symposium for the International Society on the Philosophy of Music Education Western University, London, Ontario, Canada	2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Session Chair○ Assisted with site organization and logistics	

MayDay Group Colloquium 30 Western University, London, Ontario, Canada	2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assisted with conference planning, scheduling and logistics ○ Facilitated communication with presenters and attendees 	
Progressive Methods in Popular Music Education Symposium Western University, London, Ontario, Canada	2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assisted with conference planning, scheduling and logistics ○ Facilitated communication with presenters and attendees 	
FIMULAW – Faculties of Information & Media Studies, Music, & Law Graduate-Led Interdisciplinary Research Day Western University, London, Ontario, Canada	2016-2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Served as a co-chair of the inaugural committee ○ Collaboratively organized, planned, and facilitated two day-long research days involving over 30 panel, lightning talk, and poster presentations ○ Worked collaboratively with three deans and two vice-provosts on budgets, space allocation, and interdisciplinary themes 	

Journal Review Boards

TIPS: Teaching Innovation Project Journal	2018-Present
Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education	2018-Present

Conference Review Committees

American Educational Research Association	
Social Context of Education	2020
Middle Level Education	2020
Music Education	2020
Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences	
Education and Curriculum Development Stream	2018, 2020
Education and Social Justice Stream	2018, 2020
International Society for Music Education (ISME)	
Curriculum Studies and Pedagogies	2020

Invited Workshops

Choral Clinic	2019
Pekin High School, Pekin, IL	
Workshop with secondary school choral students on repertoire and musical expression.	
Action Research: Constructing the Reflective Teacher	2017
Co-Presented with Dr. Patrick Schmidt & Dr. Cathy Benedict	
Workshop at Universidad del Valle, Guatemala City	

Community Teaching

- El Sistema Aeolian 2018-2020
London, Ontario, Canada
- Senior Choir Director (Grades 6-12)
 - Festival Choir Co-Director (Grades 1-12)
 - Pre-Service Teacher Mentor
- Montessori Academy of London, Ontario 2017-2018
- Volunteer Music Circles Guest Teacher (Grades 1-3)
- Anima Young Singers of Greater Chicago 2012-2013
Glen Ellyn, Illinois, USA
- Volunteer teacher for community outreach program in local after-school programs
 - Co-Teacher of KidSingers (Age 5-7)
 - Guest conductor for Treble Chorus (Age 8-12)

Educational Leadership

- Teaching Assistant Training Program Instructor 2018-2020
Western University Centre for Teaching & Learning, London, Ontario
- Responsibilities (Instructor): Facilitated hands-on, three-day long interdisciplinary sessions designed to help prepare new TAs from across the Western University campus (~35 TAs per session).
 - Assisted in the design of programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion; designing online courses; and negotiating difficult topics
 - Led campus-wide professional development on facilitating effective discussions for TA Day (~300 graduate student participants)
 - Led Workshops on Lesson Design, Interpersonal Communication; Facilitating Effective Discussions.
 - Assisted with campus outreach and educational leadership programs

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Educational Consulting

- National University Precision Institute 2020
- Assisted in the development of a large-scale online foundations of music learning course for adult students.

Personal Professional Development

- Western University, London, Ontario
Certificate in University Teaching and Learning 2019
- Completion of a multi-component program that included 20-hour course on active learning, assessment, and building classroom community,

10-hour interdisciplinary mentorship program, 15+ professional development hours, and two written projects.

Soundtrap Educator Certification	2020
Apple Educator Certification	2019
Google Educator Certification	2019
Little Kids Rock/Modern Band Training, Chicago, IL	2019
Training in Kodaly Methodology Level I - DePaul University, Chicago, IL	2018