

Moving from Inclusion to Equity:  
Counterstories of Collegiate Music Students and their Institution's Stories in Dialogue

by

Mallory Afton Alekna

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Margaret Schmidt, Co-Chair  
Sandra Stauffer, Co-Chair  
Liz Lerman  
Jason Thompson

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## ABSTRACT

Institutions, including collegiate schools of music, tell stories about the ways in which they have transformed to include and support diverse students, but what do students say about their institution? Collegiate music students possess powerful and intimate knowledge, and their stories can reveal the lived reality of their experiences of equity and justice within the institution. The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the ways in which music students experience equity and inequity within their school of music and to learn from them how their institution as a system impacts their experiences. The research puzzle comprised, in part, the following questions: In what ways do music students experience equity and inequity?; What institutionalized systems facilitate or hinder their sense of inclusion?; How do their stories bump up against the stories the institution tells itself about equity?

To explore these questions, I engaged in a qualitative study grounded in narrative inquiry that placed the counterstories of music students in dialogue with the story of diversity and inclusion as told by their collegiate institution. Eight university music students who each self-identify as being from a marginalized group participated in conversations and ongoing dialogue with me. As this study was premised on promoting equity, participants collaborated in the writing and selection of their narratives.

Placing the students' stories and the institution's story of equity side by side highlighted the misalignment between the institution's espoused values and the students' experiences. The stories raised further questions, such as: How and when do students feel silenced or empowered to speak? What makes it possible for them to challenge an institution (or not)? How do students want faculty and administrators to engage with

them? In what ways does their engagement in issues of equity and justice make them susceptible to risk, and what is the risk? Through narrative inquiry, I contribute a complex and nuanced understanding of how one institution, including its school of music, perpetuates oppressive practices, opening space for students who live these experiences to lead the interrogation of—and resistance within—this and similar places.

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## CHAPTER 1

### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

College campuses, originally designed to serve an elite, white, male student body, continue to be places where marginalized students face barriers, challenges, and burdens (Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Schaller, 2011; Stewart, 2011). Over time, colleges have responded to calls to include a more diverse student population, eventually taking on initiatives to support these students on their campuses. When collegiate institutions choose to turn their attention to matters of social justice and student support, how do they pursue (or hinder) the aims that they seek, and in what ways do they center (or not center) the voices of students?

Institutions of higher education in the United States, including collegiate schools of music, take on diversity and inclusion initiatives as a part of their attempts to support diverse students (Lehan et al., 2020; Templeton et al., 2016), but what does it actually mean to uphold and further these ideals? To promote social justice, universities and colleges tell stories about the ways in which they have transformed in order to include and support diverse students. These stories are told through promotional and recruitment materials, values and mission statements, and university branding. Scholars have documented, however, that institutions maintain themselves, leaving the underlying structures of oppression and exclusion untouched (Ahmed, 2012, 2017b; Powell et al., 2017; Talbot & Mantie, 2015). Ahmed (2017b) characterizes institutions as walls and describes how the stones or components of an institution can be replaced, but only if they fit. In this way, institutions can make changes, but only changes that fit within the given structure. Institutions always function “as usual” (Ahmed, 2017b).



To this point, scholars assert that implementing initiatives focused on “diversity” and “inclusion” feign institutional change, prohibiting the transformative goals of equity and justice (Stewart, 2017). “Diversity” and “inclusion” are concerned with increasing visible differences and equality of opportunity. Equity and justice, however, are the more meaningful and actionable pursuits. Professor of Education and activist D-L Stewart (2017) demonstrates this distinction, stating:

Diversity asks, “Who’s in the room?” Equity responds: “Who is trying to get in the room but can’t?” Inclusion asks, “Has everyone’s ideas been heard?” Justice responds, “Whose ideas won’t be taken as seriously because they aren’t in the majority?” (p. 9)

Squire (2015) further interrogates the word “diversity,” revealing a historically situated and complex explanation of how diversity and similar words are used in current discourse:

Diversity is praxis and cover up; it is not a language of reparations for past ills. Rather, it is a way to divert attention away from racism, sexism, and other societal oppressions, and a way of dehumanizing/making subject of marginalized populations. Diversity is simply a word with no teeth. This can be seen in the progression of such terms in the field like multiculturalism, diversity, inclusion, and social justice; words that may or can mean different things but which may all have a similar goal. (p. 19)

Part of the harm of these “words with no teeth” is their inability to “be a threat to inequity” (Equity Literacy Institute, 2020a); the words appear in a discourse absent the actions that ensure equity as the outcome. The definitions of these “cover up” words are

always in flux and are dependent upon their context and who is speaking. In this study, the “languages of appeasement,” including diversity and inclusion, should always be considered under scrutiny (Stewart, 2017).

In this study, students from a wide variety of backgrounds chose to collaborate and share their stories about their experiences with “diversity” and “inclusion” at Arizona State University. I name the institution in this study because it is not possible to disguise it while also referencing its language and materials, and I believe this language and materials is a representative case. These students told stories about race regardless of the color of their skin. They told stories related to race regardless of whether or not they used the words race and racism. Because racism is a fundamental problem, which I explain more in Chapter 2, I worked to maintain an awareness of racism and race throughout this study. The students also told stories about other forms of marginalization that they experience, which inevitably intersect with racism, and also stand on their own. In this study, I chose to consider all of the problems that they decided share, while recognizing that racism is a persistent and fundamental problem that we all need to address and disrupt.

Since 2002, the focus of Arizona State University’s story has been inclusivity, that the institution is a place “measured not by whom we exclude, but rather by whom we include and how they succeed” (Arizona State University, 2021b). This story espouses a campus and community where all people can be welcome, but what do the students say about their institution?

Scholars suggest that counterstories, which present different voices than those of institutions or the dominant narrative, can serve as powerful conduits for social change

and personal resilience (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Institutional stories are limited to institutional perspectives, often crafted by those in power, and these stories may be exclusionary even though their stated aims are otherwise. Students possess intimate and powerful knowledge about their experiences within institutions, including experiences within collegiate schools of music. Listening to the stories of marginalized students—to the stories of how *they* believe the institution's story is consistent (or not) with their experiences—can reveal the lived reality of institutions and provide the insight needed to work towards more equitable and just places of higher education. If we listen, what might we learn?

As the call for counter-storytelling in music education grows (Hess, 2018a; 2019), scholars have begun to make space and center the experiences of those in music education who are from marginalized groups. Extant literature that explores the stories of marginalization in music education tends to focus on current K–12 music educators (Castañeda Lechuga & Schmidt, 2018; Robinson & Hendricks, 2018) and higher education scholars (McCall, 2018; Thornton, 2018; Vasil & McCall, 2018) who, in the literature, look back on their personal experiences of school. Other scholars have centered the voices of adult musicians who reflect on the disconnect between their own musical lives and their experiences as youth in formal music education (Bledsoe, 2015; Nichols, 2013). Music teacher educators have also relied on personal experience and involvement with administrative systems to expose the ways in which institutions propagate oppressive practices (Bradley, 2011; Fiorentino, 2019; Koza, 2008). Some scholars have begun to draw attention to the lived experiences of collegiate music students and have made moves to center their voices through research (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014), often

focusing on the experience of a single student (Bartolome & Stanford, 2018; Hendricks, 2018; Kruse, 2013; Schmidt & Smith, 2017). This existing literature is valuable and helps to unpack and make known the lived experience of students in music education; however, there are still many untold and unheard stories across the field that deserve attention.

The prior literature is valuable in that these studies uncover the history and continuing problem of marginalization and exclusion in music and music education structures and systems. These studies are *stories about* the phenomenon of marginalization. In this study, I sought to do something different. I examine the storied conflict between institutions and students, placing the lives of students *in direct dialogue with* the story of an institution. Further, this study presents stories from multiple students, including those who are working to enact change at their institution. These stories are being lived and told by students attending an institution that is striving to tell a story of growth and change. Examining these stories side by side, interweaving the stories of students with those of the institution, contributes to our understanding of the complex ways in which students experience equity and inequity, the complex ways in which institutions impact their experiences, and the complicated, untidy, messy work of striving toward equity when systems and structures tend to function “as usual” (Ahmed, 2017b).

### **Purpose and Research Puzzle**

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the ways in which music students experience equity and inequity within their school of music and to learn from them how their institution as a system impacts students’ experiences. The research puzzle comprised, in part, the following questions: In what ways do music students experience equity and inequity?; What institutionalized systems facilitate or hinder their sense of

inclusion?; How do their stories bump up against the stories the institution tells itself about equity? To explore these questions, I conducted a qualitative study grounded in narrative inquiry that placed the counterstories of music students in dialogue with the story of diversity and inclusion as told by their collegiate institution. Music students from a large, southwestern university who self-identified as being marginalized in some way participated in conversations and ongoing dialogue with me. As this study was premised on promoting equity, participants collaborated in the writing and selection of their narratives. By better understanding the ways in which music students' stories and institutional stories intersect, leaders in the field of music education can change their practices to work towards more just and equitable communities.

### **Why these stories? What might we learn?**

College music students' lives and experiences are complicated and full of contradictions and complexities. Because of this complexity, I was interested in better understanding their experiences. As I spoke with students about the ways in which the institution supports and hinders their attempts to live and make change in their environment, students overflowed with words, stories, experiences, and deeply understood and felt knowledge of the system in which they are situated. They were also a part of an institution that, as a whole, tells a story of striving toward equity. How that story plays out in the School of Music in which these students were enrolled is of particular interest in this study. How that story of institutional change bumps up against student experience matters.

Through their stories, students can provide a clearer picture of whether and how they engage and move through the systems that underpin the school they attend. How and

when is it that students feel silenced or empowered to speak? What makes it possible for them to challenge or not challenge an institution? How do students say they want faculty and administrators to engage with them, and listen to them? What actually happens when students try to get involved or avoid these issues? In what ways does their engagement in issues of equity and justice make them susceptible to risk, and what is the risk? How do their stories intersect with the institutional story—both those of change and those of “institutional as usual?” (Ahmed, 2017b). In this study, I intended to contribute a complex and nuanced understanding of how one institution, including its school of music, perpetuates oppressive practices and policies. I also intended to open space for students who live these experiences to lead the discussion, as well as interrogation of and resistance within, this and similar places.

My research agenda arises from a deep commitment to promoting just and equitable practices within the field of music. I have designed this dissertation to connect with and engage underrepresented communities so that this research can be practical and empowering to individuals who have been marginalized. Engaging with students through narrative inquiry revealed tensions between this institution and these individuals, and raised questions about the ways in which other institutions pursue equity and justice. As a result of my study, collegiate schools of music may be supported in developing strategies to successfully aid marginalized students throughout their pursuit of higher education, especially those who are working to become musicians and music educators. In this way, my research can contribute to more equitable and just practices in both K–12 and collegiate institutions, and turn the attention of music faculty toward more equitable experiences and environments for all students. The findings may provoke thinking among

music faculty specifically and educators broadly regarding the ways in which institutional systems and structures impact students' experiences of equity and inequity.

### **Words**

Words and language carry meaning and have histories. In this research puzzle, the meanings of some words are clear while others are fraught. As we work towards a more equitable society, we must gather and understand a shared vocabulary regarding systems of oppression (Bradley, 2007; Hess, 2017). Scholars recognize that we need to be able to name the problem in order to talk about the problem, and subsequently begin to change the problem. In a recent interview, writer and speaker Ijeoma Oluo states, "It is a tool of the oppressor to deny us language for these [issues], to even begin to move forward" (The Green Space, 2017). By naming problems and their components, we can begin to untangle and interrogate the issues at hand (Oluo, 2019). The following working definitions will be used for this study:

**Inequity.** The Equity Literacy Institute (2020a), founded by Paul Gorski, provides resources and free educational material to help people "learn to be a threat to inequity in [their] spheres of influence." In the course "Understanding Equity and Inequity," Gorski (2020a) defines inequity as "an unfair distribution of material and non-material access and opportunity resulting in outcome and experience differences that are predictable by race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, home language, sexual orientation, religion, and other dimensions of identity."

**Equity.** The Equity Literacy Institute (2020a) asserts that equity is an active and ongoing process: "We define equity as 1) A commitment to action: the process of redistributing access and opportunity to be fair and just (by changing inequitable policies,

practices, institutional cultures, and ideologies), and 2) A way of being: the state of being free of bias, discrimination, and identity-predictable outcomes and experiences” (Equity Literacy Institute, 2020a).

**Marginalization.** Marginalization means “to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group” (Merriam-Webster, 2021b). The Equity Literacy Institute (2020b) emphasizes the importance of recognizing marginalization as the processes and structures that are placed upon and work against people. This definition of marginalization rejects the notion of “deficit ideologies” that would infer that marginalization is stereotypically situated within specific groups and, thus, unpreventable (Equity Literacy Institute, 2020c, p. 9).

**Inclusion.** “To include” is defined as “to take in or comprise as a part of a whole or group” (Merriam-Webster, 2021a). Scholars have questioned inclusion and the extent to which institutions enact this term (Bledsoe, 2015; Stewart, 2017). I align with these scholars and intend for inclusion to go beyond presence. Through the foundational antiracism work of Dei (1996), Hess (2015) defines inclusivity as “1) dealing with equity and justice; 2) having a multiplicity of perspectives; and 3) making instructional practices respond to diversity.”

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

In this chapter, I introduced the research puzzle and purpose of this study. In Chapter 2, I provide a series of essays that unpack the facets of the research puzzle and explore the following topics: institutions as usual, racism as the problem we don’t talk about, and counter-storytelling in music education. In Chapter 3, I outline my inquiry process and offer my perspectives on the ways in which research can be designed and



enacted to promote and pursue equity. Chapter 4 includes an individualized sketch of each of the eight students who contributed to this project. Chapter 5 includes an overview of the institution's story. In Chapter 6, the students' counterstories and the institution's stories are placed in dialogue with one another. In Chapter 7, I offer my reflection on the study, including a summary of the study, and recommendations for practice and further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LIVING THE QUESTIONS

As a reminder, the terms “diversity and inclusion” serve institutions, rather than marginalized people, in that these words can stand in for or feign change while allowing institutions to function as usual (Ahmed, 2012; Stewart, 2017). Words like “diversity and inclusion” mask people’s hesitation—their reluctance—to grapple with the societal oppression, including racism and white supremacy. This “language of appeasement” (Stewart, 2017) and the institutional processes it feeds into are problematic and have an impact on the lived experiences of students, including those in collegiate schools of music. To better understand the experiences of students and the ways in which institutions impact their experience, I have engaged in a qualitative study grounded in narrative inquiry that placed the stories of marginalized music students in dialogue with the story of diversity and inclusion as told by their collegiate institution.

When I first conceived of this project, I wasn’t sure which thread to follow or start with; the issues of institutions, students’ experiences, and equity are like a ball of tangled yarn, full of knots, loose ends, and pieces that have been tied back onto themselves. The research puzzle for this study, like all research puzzles, has many facets. And yet unlike a ball of yarn, these topics cannot ever be untangled or cut apart. These topics are intimately enmeshed, and an exploration of one further complicates another. In this chapter, I share how I am making sense of the issues with which this study is intertwined, and the questions they raise for me.

At the start of this study, I knew that racism was (and is) a persistent and fundamental problem, and one that we often do not talk about. My focus and frame of

reference positioned me to keep racism and race at the forefront of my thinking throughout this study and in my exploration of the literature. At the same time, students in this study shared stories about other forms of marginalization they experienced, and they were not all from marginalized racial groups. Although I believe racism must be centered, I chose to get to know each of the students who showed interest in this study, and to listen to all of their stories. Regardless of the students' racial backgrounds, their stories inevitably intersected with race. In this document, I consider the problems of racism, other forms of societal oppression, and the intersections of those problems. In this study, I work to maintain a focus on racism and race, to talk about the problems we don't talk about.

Further, as I learned about and engaged with the related literature, I sought to disrupt straight cisgender white male hegemony and chose to learn from and rely on scholars who identify as outside of that dominant narrative. Throughout this chapter and document, I resisted the urge to cite "foundational" scholarship simply because the field sees it as foundational. My aim to purposefully learn from women, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ scholars resulted in an exploration of literature from the fields of music education, education broadly, and higher education. This exploration guided my writing into a series of essays regarding the contextual literature and thinking about students' experiences in music and institutions.

In each essay, I place a story that opens a provocation, and that provocation leads into the literature. For some of you, these stories may align closely with experiences that you have had in your life, which may be validating, or may be discomfoting. However you receive these stories, I anticipate (and welcome) that you will think differently than I

do, and that the thinking and framing you do may lead to conversations with those in your community and inspire your own action, personal growth, and change.

These stories are from my life in higher education. Some of the stories have been altered to protect the identities of the storytellers. These stories have provided me an artful and organic way of entering a dialogue about the issues presented. For me, these stories relate to the topics being discussed; however, I do not expect that these stories will necessarily hold the same meaning for you as they do for me. Stories can help enliven our understanding of complex issues and introduce new perspectives into our worldview (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Stauffer, 2014). My intent is that these stories keep the lived experiences of people present in your mind as you consider essays on institutions as usual, racism, and counter-storytelling in music education.

**Interlude: I have a concern.**

*I once attended a faculty search meeting. Students were invited to observe the candidate giving a lecture and then attend a student discussion hour in which students were able to ask questions of the candidate directly. The candidate did fine. That's not the important part of the story.*

*What was most interesting to me was that the faculty search committee decided to sit in on the student discussion hour. I had participated in other faculty searches and never seen faculty be a part of these student meetings. In my home department, the students were always given this time to meet with the candidate on their own, which allowed us to speak comfortably and then give our honest feedback to the faculty committee via a comment survey.*

*During this particular discussion hour, students took turns asking questions and the candidate engaged each of them in conversation. Eventually one student asked something like, "How will you address chamber placements? My studio professor assigns us to play with a different group of students each semester and mixes together different ability levels of players so that we can help each other learn. My friends in other studios get placed based on their symphony auditions and play with the same people every year, which often leads my friends to feeling as though they aren't being challenged to improve. What do you think about this?"*

*Would you make a more uniform policy across the studios for the way chamber ensembles are assigned?”*

*Before the candidate could respond, another faculty member—a white, male faculty member—cut in with an aggressive tone and spoke directly to the student: “Hey! **You** are making a lot of assumptions there. **You** act like this is something **we** knew about. **We** heard about this three days ago and haven’t had any time to respond. Also, **you** are assuming that the way **you** propose is better than the way **we** do it now. **You** don’t know all that goes into the placements and why they are the way they are.” Slowly, winding himself down, he reiterated, “**You** are making a lot of assumptions.”*

*It is quite possible that my mouth was hanging all the way open. I couldn’t believe that a faculty member would usurp the STUDENT discussion hour and make it about them and their practices. As intended, the student clearly felt disciplined and chastised. The candidate eventually gave his response and said that he was open to talking with students about what they would like to see, and that the chamber assignments have always been up to the discretion of studio faculty.*

*After the candidate had plenty of time to speak, I felt obligated to encourage and support the student in front of the group: “Thank you for taking the time to ask that question. It’s okay that you didn’t know the details behind what you were asking, and it is always okay for you to bring up your concerns and have your questions answered.” I felt the situation had been somewhat remedied and the student was validated. The white, male faculty member refused to let it go and added, “Yeah, but **you** still made a lot of assumptions.”*

### **Institutions as Usual**

The story of educational institutions as hegemonic and exclusive is longstanding and has been well documented; schools are structures that maintain social stratification, and institutions are always functioning “as usual” (Ahmed, 2017b). When everything is going “as usual,” it is difficult to see the ways in which the institution is functioning—the ways in which the system privileges some and not others. Structures and systems are hidden in plain sight. The untidy edges of a system become visible when someone or something bumps up against a boundary, barrier, or pathway. This conflict with the system shows up as “trouble” (Ahmed, 2012). Ahmed (2012) proposes that “diversity

work,” which encompasses a broad range of efforts and positions that are geared towards promoting social justice, often creates this kind of trouble. Trouble happens in small, seemingly unimportant ways every day, as well as in larger ripples of conflict. When trouble arises, the institution groans and resists in order to maintain things as they have always been.

It is in moments of trouble that we can begin to identify and interrogate the oppressive processes of institutions, and it is precisely in these moments of trouble that the stories of marginalized students may be the most important. While Ahmed’s (2012) research centers around diversity practitioners in higher education, university students, particularly those who have been marginalized, also have an intimate understanding of the ways in which institutions impact their lives. Students of majority groups may trouble, or bump into the institutional systems once, or once in a while. For students from marginalized backgrounds, this bumping, or even blocking, can happen many times, and all at once. Students know and live these issues; students often “trouble” the system.

While avenues sometimes exist for students to voice their concerns, their experiences are often treated as individual problems instead of being recognized as structural oppression and institutionally biased processes. Ahmed (2014) reiterates that institutions do not hear complaints as critiques. Instead, they hear complaints as complaints, for “to hear you as complaining is not to hear you at all” (p. 45). Hearing students’ voices as complaints can be seen in the way students’ requests are received and handled. If (to those in power) complaints are too large or too cumbersome, then students are told that institutional change is slow and that the faculty are doing their best to make progress. If (to those in power) complaints are too small, then the students are seen as

bringing up details that are unimportant—too small to bother with and/or distracting from the “real” issues. Further, students are viewed as transient by some faculty and administrators, who may think, “They aren’t here long enough to understand why things are this way and can’t be that way. They won’t be here much longer, so the problem will go away on its own.” As Ahmed (2014) points out, the location of the problem is placed with the complaint—with the student—rather than within the institution.

Ahmed has written extensively on the difficulty of diversity work and the ways in which institutions function as processes (Ahmed, 2012; 2014; 2017b). Ahmed writes from an intersectional feminist and queer perspective. She relies on and agrees with bell hooks, suggesting that if we want to address and end oppression of one variety, such as sexism, it “cannot be separated from racism, from how the present is shaped by colonial histories including slavery, as central to the exploitation of labor under capitalism. Intersectionality is a starting point, the point from which we must proceed if we are to offer an account of how power works” (Ahmed, 2017a, p. 5). First theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality is the idea that different aspects of identity, such as race and gender, compound one another and result in a “framework [that] erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things” (Columbia Law School, 2017). Ahmed challenges scholars, practitioners, faculty, and administrators to view institutions as complicated and contradicting processes that privilege some people while disadvantaging, burdening, and/or blocking others. Ahmed’s body of work serves as guidance and fuel for thinking, questioning, and acting upon/within institutions.

Some scholars have considered Ahmed in relation to the field of music. Boggan, Grzanka, and Bain (2017) have relied on Ahmed’s thinking tools in their evaluation and

refinement of their own queer music therapy model, which serves as a “novel therapeutic approach to affirm and empower LGBTQ+ identity through music” (p. 375). Aligning with Ahmed’s thinking on institutions, Boggan et al. (2017) found that the initial model was limited by its “superficial discussions of diversity and inclusion” (p. 386). Similarly, Susan Wharton Conkling (2016) used Ahmed’s critique of diversity and inclusion to frame her 2015 Symposium on Music Teacher Education (SMTE) conference summary and call to action. Aligning with Ahmed’s (2012) notion of diversity as a convention, Conkling (2016) asked, “What does it mean to say we recruit diverse students into music teaching? Are students diverse in age, ability, gender, social class, race, or musical background? We can carry on conversations about diversity without ever attaching the word to a history of inequity and exclusion” (p. 5). Through Ahmed, Conkling (2016) strongly encourages music teacher educators to embrace the critical questions brought up at the SMTE conferences, and to “take [the conversation] to our universities and schools, our community music organizations, and even to our dinner tables” (p. 6).

Other people have explored power and structure in music education using Foucault, Bourdieu, or Butler. Recognizing that “little seems to have changed” in the field of music education, Bradley (2007) calls for music educators to move beyond surface level diversity tactics, such as “multiculturalism” (p. 132). Through Foucault’s notions of *power as productive*, Bradley (2007) acknowledges the difficulty of institutional change: “[institutions] resist change by exerting pressures—sometimes tacit, sometimes overt—that suppress dissenting voices” (p. 147). In this way, Bradley (2007) asserts that, in order to create real progress towards equity, scholars and teachers must work towards systemic change and ground themselves in the practice of antiracism. In



questioning and complicating notions of democracy, Gould (2007) considers Foucault to elucidate the ways dualisms can create binary hierarchies, which have “material effects [that] are pernicious and damaging” (p. 231). Calling out the ways democracy further reinscribes dominance between teachers and students, Gould (2007) asserts “that unexamined traditional liberal practices and discourses inevitably serve to re-inscribe colonial narratives of salvation,” and encourages music educators to consider and question “democracy’s potential in music education discourses and practices” (p. 229).

Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus* and *cultural capital* have been used to theorize many aspects of music education, including the ways in which collegiate students’ musical backgrounds mis/align with university curriculum (Moore, 2012). Through a qualitative survey, Moore (2012) examined undergraduate music students’ ( $n = 60$ ) prior musical experiences in relation to their experiences in their collegiate music program. Moore (2012) found that students whose musical habitus and cultural capital were outside the dominant ideology (Western classical) were at a disadvantage and were perceived as “lacking relevant cultural capital” (p. 76). Further, while those students with dominant ideology experiences were praised and uplifted, those with different musical backgrounds doubted “their musical ability, in particular, vis-à-vis their theoretical/technical skills” (p. 76). McCall (2015) critiques Bourdieu’s definition of cultural capital, contrasting it with Yosso’s (2005) more inclusive definition of community cultural wealth. In her study of how African American students persevered in their transition between historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly white institutions (PWIs), McCall (2015) found that employing dominant cultural capital while also drawing on personal community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) contributed to the students successfully

maneuvering between institutions. McCall (2015) suggests that HBCUs and PWIs both need to make changes to better support African American students. McCall (2015) also uplifts the agency that students have to help change and improve their experience.

Music education scholars have also relied on Judith Butler's work in order to consider various tensions in music education. Bradley (2011) examined the tensions between state-mandated guidelines and an undergraduate music teacher education program focused on social justice, and found that the state requirements reinscribed the "exclusionary practices within music education" (p. 80). Further, through Butler's notions of Otherness, Bradley (2011) questions the usage of the categories "Western and Non-Western," asserting that these reinforce "totalizing, Orientalist descriptions and [that this] creates a paradoxical erasure of differences" (p. 92). Bradley (2011) attests that music educators must find "resonant spaces" and create a form of music education that includes and supports all people (p. 94).

Abramo (2011) utilizes Butler's thinking on sex and gender to consider the ways in which "students' notions of sexuality and sexual identity affect their participation in the classroom when creating popular music" (p. 466). Abramo (2011) found that students went beyond performing the musical elements of popular music, forming their own identities, and constituting the identities of others through their performances and discussions of music making. Abramo (2011) calls music educators to question the elements of music, and to consider how students may benefit from learning the ways in which musical actions are context dependent and serve in the "forming and maintaining a social identity." (p.475). These authors and philosophers, and their theoretical frameworks, provide great insight and provocations for the field with regards to power.

Other scholars have worked to redress power dynamics in education through their teaching practice. Cook-Sather (2002) aimed to challenge and disrupt power dynamics by positioning high school students as teacher educators for pre-service teachers. Cook-Sather found that pre-service teachers who engaged in this program learned to listen to the high school students and to see them as having valuable knowledge. Ochoa and Pineda (2008) also began examining power dynamics after realizing that an undergraduate course which focused on power, privilege, and exclusion in larger society resulted in the reproduction of these same patterns of oppression within their classroom. Viewing power as a system that functions globally and locally, students began to untangle their understanding of power and privilege and developed greater understanding of how power influenced their learning environment.

By bringing Sara Ahmed's perspectives on institutions and diversity into conversations within collegiate music education, collegiate schools of music can be better understood as nuanced and complicated processes. Ahmed's writing on diversity in higher education is relatively new, and her perspectives support more critical conversations regarding music education and its institutions. I acknowledge the aforementioned work of scholars and philosophers as valuable for understanding the power of institutions and the people in them. For this study, I am choosing to engage primarily with Ahmed in order to consider the lived experience of students in relation to the institution as processes.

### **Interlude: Am I in trouble?**

A play in one act.

Students in an undergraduate music theory class are packing their backpacks and getting ready to leave. Only a few

students are left when Yu-Chen, a graduate teaching assistant and instructor of record for the class, approaches Rachel, an undergraduate student. Yu-Chen has emailed Rachel several times about her attendance in class. Yu-Chen has not received any response from Rachel. Rachel does not participate in class and openly texts while Yu-Chen is teaching. Yu-Chen opens the scene by inviting Rachel, who is texting, to stay and talk after class.

YU-CHEN

Hi, Rachel. I was hoping that we could talk for a few moments before you leave today.

RACHEL does not look up from her phone.

RACHEL

I don't have any time.

YU-CHEN

Okay, when would be a good time for us to meet? It is really important that we find time to talk about your participation and attendance in this class.

RACHEL stiffens her posture and glares at YU-CHEN.

RACHEL

I don't have a problem in this class. There is no problem with my participation and attendance. I WILL be getting an 'A' from you.

RACHEL momentarily pauses, shifts body posture.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

If there is any problem, it's because your English is bad. I can't understand you. Who is your supervisor? I am going to contact them and tell them about how you are not doing a good job of speaking or teaching this class.

RACHEL looks down at her phone and gestures angrily that she is ready to be told the supervisor's contact information.

The scene freezes. YU-CHEN turns to the audience as the stage lights dim.

YU-CHEN

What will my advisor say? Will he believe me when I tell him my side of the story? Will they take away my teaching assistantship? Without my assistantship, my visa status will be in jeopardy. Will I have to leave school? Will I have to return to Taiwan? I was so stupid for thinking that I could teach a class in English. This is too hard, and maybe I should just quit. I don't deserve to be here.

### **Racism: The Problem We Don't Talk About**

Racism is a historic problem. It's a problem of justice. Attempts to address the injustices associated with racism have been labeled in multiple ways, including on college campuses as diversity and inclusion initiatives (Stewart, 2017). At a meeting I attended between administration and students regarding equity agendas on campus, a young, Black, female student shared, "I don't care about any of your [diversity] organizations. I care about what happens to me, in my life, on a daily basis. What are you going to do about that?" (Field notes, preliminary study). This student's experience stands as testament to the misdirection of many "diversity and inclusion" initiatives, which are too often broad gestures that make institutions *appear* equitable but do little to advance equity. Her question refocuses attention on the actual problems institutions should address—racism and white supremacy. In this section, I will unpack the ongoing problem of racism in the United States and in music education, and discuss the role of critical race theory and antiracism education as tools for disrupting and working against racism and white supremacy.

### **Racism: Then and Now**

But race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming "the people" has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy. Difference in hue and hair is old. But the belief in the preeminence

of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible—this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015, p. 7)

Racism is a pervasive problem in the United States; however, many people still struggle to recognize, respond, and redress the ongoing crisis. People regularly avoid talking about racism and race, often because they are uncomfortable (Bradley, 2012) and/or they believe that racism doesn't exist anymore, thus removing the need to talk about it (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). In actuality, the United States was only able to come into existence through the idea that *not* all people are equal. The U.S. constitution, founding, and laws were predicated on the necessity of racism, and the concept of race (Coates, 2015).

At the time of its founding, racism was overt and generally accepted as normal. The United States was dependent upon slave labor and the propagation of slavery to uphold its economic system (Coates, 2014). The three-fifths compromise, which stated that each slave would be counted in the census as three-fifths of a person, along with numerous other oppressive foundational structures and policies used race as a way to establish hierarchies. Even after slavery was abolished, racial categories were used as a way to distinguish who was protected and prosperous under the law, and who was not. This can be seen in the abhorrent practices of sharecropping, redlining, and Jim Crow laws, all of which were designed to disenfranchise people of color (Coates, 2014). Across

all of these historical examples, discriminating against people of color based on racial hierarchies was legal and continued as common practice in daily life.

The election and reelection of President Barack Obama initiated the use of the term “post-racial” to describe the apparent achievement of a racially equitable society and to announce that America’s foundations of racism are a thing of the past. In contrast to this claim, scholars and authors assert that systems of oppression instead have become increasingly more covert and that racism is still alive and well. Bonilla-Silva (2018) interrogates how the undisguised racism of yesteryear is still manifested within our current institutions, policies, and practices. Termed “color-blind racism,” discriminatory systems and actions now work against people of color in ways that hide determinations based on race while maintaining the “contemporary racial order” (2018, p. 26). Although differences amongst people have always existed, racism has made and continues to make a problem out of race (Coates, 2015; Omi & Winant, 2014).

The effects of modern-day racism can be seen in the American workforce, including the field of education. Representation in the teaching workforce reflects the presence of barriers that impede people of color from becoming educators. While 60.7% of the United States population identify as white (United States Census Bureau, 2017), public school educators over-identify as non-Hispanic white, at 83.1% (Ludwig et al., 2010). This trend is consistent in higher education with 78% of full-time and 78.7% of adjunct faculty identifying as white (Ludwig et al., 2010, p. 7).

Further, music education has been found to more drastically display these trends, with 94% of collegiate music teacher educators identifying as white (Hewitt & Thompson, 2006, p. 55). Although many institutions have begun to acknowledge these

disparities, the overwhelming presence of a white teaching workforce remains a testament to the further work needed to create a more equitable field of education.

Beyond numbers, recent events in music education highlight the influence of structural and institutional racism. In 2016, Michael Butera, then-Executive Director of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), made statements in a large meeting of arts educators indicating that the reason fewer people of color than white people become music educators was due to “Blacks and Latinos lack[ing] the keyboard skills needed for this field” and that “music theory is too difficult for them as an area of study” (McCord, 2016). His statements were called out as being indicative of long-held stereotypes that propagate the idea that certain races are more or less suited for specific tasks and careers (2016). In response (and after Butera’s departure from the organization), the NAfME National Executive Board made the commitment “to look at all decisions we face as a Board through an ‘inclusion, diversity, equity, and access lens’” (Poliniak, 2018). Although seemingly well intentioned, this response has been further criticized for its adherence to color-blind racism; if everything is done through a lens of diversity and inclusion, “how will NAfME demonstrate that we are prioritizing equity?” (Salvador et al., 2018). Music education faces pervasive structural racism.

### **Tools for disrupting and challenging racism**

When wanting to disrupt racism, it is important to have strategies and understandings that help guide the work. Where critical race theory provides the tools for



thinking and theorizing about racism, antiracism education encourages scholars and educators to take action and impact social change.

**Critical race theory.** Critical race theory is a “framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact social structures, practices and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Critical race theory was initially developed in response to inequities in the justice system. In the 1970s, American law professionals, scholars, and activists “realized, more or less simultaneously, that the heady advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s had stalled and, in many respects, were being rolled back” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 4). As critical race theory gained prominence and traction in the judicial system, other fields, including education, were able to utilize the tenets of critical race theory to unearth systems of institutional racism undergirding their own practices (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Taylor et al., 2009).

Critical race theory has expanded into different concentrations that address specific areas of concern (e.g., LatCrit, FemCrit, AsianCrit), yet many critical race theory scholars share common foundational tenets. These include racism as ordinary and omnipresent, race as socially constructed, interest convergence, intersectionality and anti-essentialism, and the importance of storytelling and counter-storytelling (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Griffin, 2012; Yosso, 2005).

In order to dismantle racism, the first tenet suggests that people must first comprehend and assert that racism is real and problematic. Acknowledging racism as ordinary and omnipresent asserts that racism is not a fluke or extraordinary occurrence; rather racism is a regular, normal, and daily part of life in the United States. To regard

racism as real, regardless of one's personal experience of it, is to respect the lived reality of people of color.

As a second tenet of critical race theory, scholars assert that race is socially constructed; scientists have found that race has no biological basis. Some critical race theory scholars rightly insist that this assertion be clearly linked to the first tenet, to acknowledge that while race is socially constructed, it has real daily, material effects on the lives of people of color. In this way, race also impacts the daily lives of white people through their material and non-material privilege that often goes unacknowledged. Further, viewing race as merely a social construct fails to condemn the impracticality of colorblindness. The claim, "I don't see color," overlooks the inequities that people of color experience and harmfully attributes their experiences to happenstance or to their own fault. Also, acknowledging the impact and existence of race, despite its social construction, is important as many people of color feel that their race is a valuable and integral part of their identity.

Interest convergence, a third belief of critical race scholars, is the idea that progress towards racial equity has only occurred when social justice initiatives align with the interest of whites (Bell Jr., 1980). For instance, since the majority of positions of authority are held by white individuals, changes to policies and procedures only occur when white people agree to and benefit from the proposed changes. Having an awareness and understanding of the historical function of interest convergence can help those working against racism think about the ways in which the decisions made within institutions might be manipulated to serve the goals of equity.

Intersectionality, a fourth tenet of critical race theory, is the idea that a person's race is only one part of their identity, and further that all the facets of a person's identity compound and impact their experience in overlapping ways (Crenshaw, 1989). Related to intersectionality, anti-essentialism requires that an individual person of color not be interpreted as speaking for their entire race, acknowledging each person for their individual experience, thus calling for stereotyping to be eliminated. When Crenshaw (1989) first discussed intersectionality, she coined it as a critical tool for Black women's liberation, noting the "double bind" of race and gender that black women often experience. As intersectionality has gained prominence in mainstream vocabulary, people have extended the concept to include aspects of identity beyond race and gender. Intersectionality is commonly understood as the idea "that individuals have individual identities that intersect in ways that impact how they are viewed, understood, and treated" (Coaston, 2019).

As a final tenet of critical race theory, scholars assert that storytelling recognizes that people of color have knowledge and insight about their experiences—including experiences with oppression—all of which are a valuable part of global history and human understanding (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical race theory scholars recognize people as the experts of their lives and regard them as such (Crenshaw et al., 1995). The stories and voices of people of color need to be included, heard, heeded, and remembered.

Storytelling is a useful tool that provide solidarity for storytellers and, to listeners, the impetus for change (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Telling one's story can build support within communities:

For stories create their own bonds, represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings. The cohesiveness that stories bring is part of the strength of the outgroup. An outgroup creates its own stories, which circulate within the group as a kind of counter-reality (Delgado, 1989, p. 2412).

These counter-realities, or counterstories, help “subvert” and call into question the dominant, recurring narratives that aim to maintain the status quo. Through the sharing and witnessing of counterstories, alternative perspectives are revealed and hold the power to initiate change: “stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset—the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings against a background of which . . . discourse takes place” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). By better understanding the tenets of critical race theory, scholars and people committed to a more just and equitable society may find shared vocabulary and understanding, strengthening their collective work.

**Antiracism education.** Foundational scholar George Dei (1996) defines antiracism education as “an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (p. 25). Aligning with and utilizing several tenets of critical race theory, antiracism education was developed as a way to change education from being an oppressive hegemonic structure to a place where students learn about the “diversity of human experience” (1996, p. 22). Through antiracism education, educators are empowered to enact change in their classrooms that serves to promote local and global unity and liberation.

Critical race theory and antiracism education overlap in many ways. Recognizing racism as omnipresent, antiracism educators recognize that schools reproduce social

structures and need to be reconceptualized to serve as transformative places (Dei, 1996, p. 34). Antiracism educators further assert that school problems cannot be considered in isolation from the larger communities and societies that they are a part of and influenced by (p. 35). Similar to the idea of counter-storytelling, antiracism educators seek to problematize the marginalization of certain voices (p. 29). In addition to creating space for marginalized people to speak where dominant voices listen, antiracism educators suggest that students be taught to recognize and call out the ways in which some knowledges are held up as valuable while others are wrongly treated as invalid (p. 30).

Antiracism education also pushes educators and students to acknowledge the existence of white privilege and suggests that an “interrogation of Whiteness can, and should be, an entry point for members of dominant groups in society to join the anti-racism debate” (Dei, 1996, p. 28). Related to culturally responsive pedagogy (Lind & McKoy, 2016), antiracism education is also grounded in the understanding that all students have an identity and that this identity needs to be welcomed in school. Culturally responsive pedagogy further stresses the importance of acknowledging and welcoming all students, recognizing that they each come with valuable, unique backgrounds and experiences that make up who they are and impact their daily lives.

All of antiracism education is premised on a reconceptualization of difference, emphasizing that identity includes both being aligned with and distinct from others. Dei (1996) encourages teachers and students to work to see difference as valuable and important in our world, and to learn to see our individuality as it relates back to the collective whole. While we are all different, Dei (1996) asserts:

As a society, we are bound together by a cloth of mutuality and respect for one another. No one is an island unto [them]selves. It is only through the love and sharing and protecting each other that as a society we can sustain the longevity of this cloth. (p. 16)

To work towards this disposition, all people, including teachers and students, must develop self-awareness and learn how to relate to others and the world. By knowing themselves well, people are able to connect to what is going on in the world, and place themselves within a collective consciousness (Dei, 1996, p. 31). In line with Dei's guidance, antiracism education provides an opportunity for educators and students to address our societal problems and think holistically in working to change our world.

### **Research models in music education**

Critical race theory and antiracism education can help inform how music teacher educators and researchers interrogate their own spaces and structures. Each tenet provides an opportunity to consider how our institutions, including schools of music, and their innerworkings contribute to systems of oppression. Several scholars have utilized critical race theory and antiracism education in various combinations to frame and make sense of the phenomena in music education that they are investigating. Their studies can serve as models and provocations for further research.

Using critical race theory and antiracism education as lenses for analysis, Bradley (2011) drew out the conflict between the state department's teacher certification guidelines and a teacher preparation program designed to support social justice initiatives. By recognizing critical race theory and antiracism education tenets, the marginalization of diverse voices, and the presence of multiple ways of knowing, Bradley

found that state-mandated accountability measures reflected a white, Eurocentric “phrase universe” that removed the possibility for other ways of knowing music (p. 89). Hess (2015) applied Dei’s ideas of antiracism education to the field of music education and suggests several ways of disrupting hegemonic structures. Hess (2015) encourages teachers to “understand where students are situated in the matrix of domination (as cited by Collins, 2000) and adjust their teaching and their teaching relationships accordingly” (p. 67). Further, Hess (2015) suggests that music educators need to be open to “multiple epistemologies or ways of knowing the world,” calling into questions the large ensemble model (p. 66). Finally, Hess (2015) calls music educators to take up an equity agenda in their teaching and to welcome courageous conversations in their spaces of learning and teaching.

Critical race theory and antiracism education also provide teachers strategies for considering how music education curriculum can be implemented in their teaching and their classrooms to address systemic racism. While teaching a summer course on world music education, Bradley (2012) found that graduate-level students were uncomfortable and unwilling to discuss the history and context of diverse music, suggesting that to pursue these topics would be perceived as being too “political” (p. 191). However, by using her knowledge of critical race theory and antiracism education, Bradley was able to determine that “political” was a front for avoiding discussions of race (p. 190). Drawing upon antiracism education, Bradley engaged the class in group discussions, working towards the understanding that music can be a powerful tool for social justice. Bradley (2012) addresses her class and the field, stating:

Educators who present sanitized contexts for the music they teach or who avoid contexts altogether contribute to the ongoing devaluation of the arts in education. A people's music holds their histories, their belief systems, their humanity. If teaching is a political act, teaching music is even more so. When music educators can find the courage to adopt empowering pedagogies that take on discussions about even uncomfortable political histories, they harness music's potential to develop deeper understandings about people and cultures. By avoiding the p-word (political), however, they submit to a system driven by the ideology of White supremacy that continues to value particular musics, and particular people, over others. (p. 194)

As Bradley demonstrates, critical race theory and antiracism education impact multiple levels and sectors of our lives as scholars and educators. Bringing critical race theory and antiracism education into our research and teaching practices can facilitate personal growth, and enable us to support preservice teachers in learning to combat structural racism in their own lives and teaching.

It would be easy to assume that the reason equity, racial or otherwise, has yet to be achieved is because people are naive. The ideas of critical race theory and antiracism education have been in circulation for decades, and still racist structures persist. If we wish to enact change and work towards a more equitable society, the roots of the problem, including racism and institutionalized structures, must be addressed within ourselves, our classrooms, and our institutions. As educators, we have the opportunity to face these issues; they are not going away on their own.



### **Interlude: Feeling Silenced**

*When I started college, I did not find [my institution] to be an inclusive environment. I wanted to drop out my freshman year, and many times since then I have felt like I do not belong here, nor that I am wanted here. As someone who is passionate about social justice issues, I don't find it comfortable to speak out about these things. I am being silenced.*

— Christina, senior music education student

### **A Story of Music Education**

Music as a field has a history—a story—of exclusion and hierarchy. The story of who counts as a musician and what counts as music in collegiate schools of music has long been dominated by the overwhelming presence of Western European art music. Collegiate students experience these musical hierarchies throughout their coursework and performing ensembles, as well as in their career choice and musical practices and preferences. Upon entering a school of music, students likely find that their professors and peers discourage musical practices and preferences outside of the Western canon (Hess, 2018b). Musics such as mariachi, gospel choir, or hip hop are sometimes labeled “not real music” or are seen as distractions from “getting serious” about your career. Some faculty may recognize music outside the Western canon, but do not believe these musics belong or should be taught in university settings. Students may find that their instructors and faculty are predominantly white men, and that this overrepresentation of white teachers is more drastic in the field of music than in education broadly (Elpus, 2015; Milner IV et al., 2013). Music students who do not pursue a degree preparing for a performance-focused career (i.e., music education, therapy, history, theory, composition) often experience being “second-class citizens” in a performance-dominated environment

and can find navigating their program more difficult than those in performance degrees (Bond, 2018; Brewer, 2014; Kruse, 2013).

Complicating this issue further, who will eventually major in music may be determined years before students ever apply to college. As a school of music professor, Koza (2008) has witnessed the “pipeline” that narrows as pre-college students get closer to applying for and attending a school of music. The process of exclusion starts early in a child’s music education with the system favoring those who can afford to take private lessons and purchase instruments, those who live in school districts that have more opportunities and knowledgeable teachers, and those with families who understand how to prepare for and navigate the performance-oriented school of music application and audition process. Even more insidious, although the auditions in her school were blind, Koza (2008) found that music students’ bodies are raced throughout the entrance audition process, which incentivizes musical “sounds of whiteness” while rejecting and discrediting those perceived as non-white. Other scholars have also critiqued how faculty in schools of music reproduce the Western classical tradition and further reinscribe who is successful in music and who becomes music teachers and performers (Talbot & Mantie, 2015). While this exclusive narrative continues to dominate music education, counterstories can help reveal the lived reality of those within it while also shedding light on the ways in which people resist these structures.

### **Counter-Storytelling in Music Education**

Scholars in the field of music education have begun to engage in counter-storytelling, centering the experiences of those from marginalized groups (Hess, 2018a; 2019). Existing literature that focuses on marginalization in music education has focused

on current K–12 music educators (Castañeda Lechuga & Schmidt, 2018; Robinson & Hendricks, 2018) and higher education scholars (McCall, 2018; Thornton, 2018; Vasil & McCall, 2018) who, through the research, examine their personal experiences of school. For example, Castañeda Lechuga and Schmidt (2018) explored Castañeda Lechuga’s experience of “cultural straddling” as a music educator to engage in both his own cultural practices of mariachi and the traditions of formal music education. Also focused on personal experience, Robinson and Hendricks (2018) centered Robinson’s story, including his experiences of double-consciousness and how he came to understand his “legitimacy in music education” (p. 32). Highlighting the voices of adult musicians, Bledsoe (2015) and Nichols (2013) demonstrated some of the ways in which formal music education has not created a welcoming place for all young people. Looking back on their high school experiences, participants in Bledsoe’s (2015) study revealed the ways in which they felt left out of their school music programs. Other scholars have investigated administrative systems with which they were personally involved to reveal the ways in which institutions further oppression (Bradley, 2011; Fiorentino, 2019; Koza, 2008). For example, Koza (2008) detailed the ways in which collegiate music auditions are one segment of a pipelines that reinforces exclusionary practices in music education. Several scholars have started to center the experiences of collegiate music students from marginalized groups (Bartolome & Stanford, 2018; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Hendricks, 2018; Kruse, 2013; Schmidt & Smith, 2017). For instance, Kruse (2013) centered Gabriella’s story and found that “social capital and successful academic models” impacted how she successfully navigated and overcame barriers in her academic career (p. 25). This body of literature focused on centering unheard stories is worthwhile;

however, there are many more people and stories in the field of music education that need to be centered and heard.

### **Puzzle Pieces**

In this chapter, I have highlighted the literature related to my research puzzle through essays and provocations centered on power and structure, racism, and counter-storytelling in music education. In power and structure, Ahmed's (2012) understandings of institutions as processes may help music educators consider the ways in which institutions are always functioning "as usual." The second section regarding the problem we don't talk about includes an overview of the historic problem of racism in the United States, as well as an overview of tools and theory for interrogating racism. I close the chapter with an overview of counter-storytelling in music education, recognizing that while the field is showing more openness to the voices of marginalized people, there are still many stories to listen to and learn from.

The remainder of the dissertation includes Chapters 3–7. In Chapter 3, I give an overview of my inquiry process. In Chapter 4, I introduce each of the eight students through their own individual sketch. Similarly, in Chapter 5, I present the institution's story. In Chapter 6, I place the students' stories in dialogue with those of the institution. In Chapter 7, I give an overview of what I learned from and am still thinking about after the completion of this document.

## CHAPTER 3

### INQUIRY PROCESS

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the ways in which music students experience equity and inequity within their school of music and to learn from them how their institution as a system impacts students' experiences. The research puzzle comprised, in part, the following questions: In what ways do music students experience equity and inequity?; What institutionalized systems facilitate or hinder their sense of inclusion?; How do their stories bump up against the stories the institution tells itself about equity? To address these questions, I conducted a qualitative study through a process of narrative inquiry. The students were all attending Arizona State University. I name the institution in this study because it is not possible to disguise it while also referencing its language and materials. This chapter provides an explanation of my inquiry process, including the underpinning epistemological considerations for the study. I also discuss the place, people, data generation, interpretation, reflexivity, and trustworthiness.

#### **Why inquiry process?**

Many dissertations include a chapter labeled "methodology." This chapter is going by another name. While some might question if the change in title is necessary or impactful, our language shapes how we think (Boroditsky, 2011). Using different vocabulary to shape and guide my choices was one of many gestures taken up throughout this study in an attempt to change what is known to unknown, to open space for new ways of thinking about and engaging in research, and to always look for opportunities to do research differently (Bhattacharya, 2009; Richerme, 2015).

Methodology is typically considered how researchers theoretically underpin and conduct a study in order to learn more about the specific questions they are exploring. Instead, at the onset of this study, I acknowledged that what I hoped to learn was unspecified and that I aimed to place importance on the process, experiences, and meaning gained from engaging with people throughout this study. It therefore became important for me to reconceptualize the way I moved through this research. I recognized out loud that research was just that—a process. Research, for me, became a process of inquiry where questions are shaped, changed, and understood, only again to become misunderstood in light of shifting contexts, surprises, and unknowns. As expected, I did not know everything that I would do during this study; I made decisions along the way that informed my next steps and necessitated changes in direction. While many scholars have attempted to work within our current research structures, my choice to step away from methodology and embrace inquiry process allowed for recursiveness to take precedence over strict procedures, to favor complexity over simplicity.

I believe it is crucial to have an awareness of the historical and epistemological underpinnings of research in order to question ourselves and our research, and to conduct both ethically. No decision is neutral; every decision we make in designing and enacting research is an opportunity to promote or hinder equity (Zuberi, 2001; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). I will now highlight the connections between narrative inquiry and the epistemological foundations that contributed to my thinking for this study. These include narrative inquiry, critical race theory, collaboration, complicating, place philosophy, listening, and intersectionality.

## **Why narrative inquiry?**

Narrative inquiry is based on the idea that people live storied lives, that they make sense of and tell about their lives through story. I rely on Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) understandings of narrative when they state that, "Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which his or her experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (p. 477). By engaging in narrative inquiry, people and their stories are centered. Further, narrative inquirers seek to make meaning, to think deeply, to consider multiple points of view, and to inspire "growth and change" (Stauffer, 2014, p. 172). In this way, I see narrative inquiry as inextricably linked with the pursuit of equity and justice. Engaging with narrative as a means of inquiry sets the expectation that the research will unearth deeper understandings and new perspectives, and raise new questions and curiosities about the hard and overdue work of equity that can ultimately inspire people to take action.

Understanding someone's experience, their story—in any line of work—starts from relationships. For me, narrative inquiry allows for relationships to matter, to be the foundation for learning. I wanted to better understand the experiences of people within institutions. I wanted to put people first and, through hearing their stories, begin to imagine and bring to life ways of doing and being in higher education that empower people and disrupt systems of inequity. In this study, narrative inquiry provided the opportunity for this kind of relational work.

Narrative inquiry, as an inquiry process, is not just one method or strategy for conducting research. Narrative inquiry can be considered a way of being in research. Narrative inquiry as a process creates a means for engaging with people in respectful and

equitable ways and opens space for thinking about who knows and what can be known. Narrative inquiry can inform our decision making along the way, providing structure while also freeing the inquirer to take new paths. It allows us the flexibility to make decisions that become right for us as researchers and for the people we are learning with. Narrative inquiry is still forming, deforming, and transitioning into different and contradicting forms. What does it mean to be a defined “method” or “process” that is up for interpretation and alteration? I have learned, and will continue learning about narrative inquiry as I engage with/do narrative inquiry.

### **Why critical race theory?**

Relying on critical race theory as an epistemological foundation helps me to set this study upon firm ground for treating all people with respect and dignity. Aligning with the ethos of narrative inquiry, critical race theory scholars assert that people, those living and breathing their experiences, are the experts of their lives and should be hallowed as such (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Counter-storytelling—telling stories that stand in complication or contradiction of dominant narratives—can allow people to find solidarity with those who have had similar experiences and can reveal alternate perspectives of a situation, and who have the power to initiate paradigm shifts and lead to change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Since this study is concerned with the stories of institutions and the counter-stories of marginalized students, critical race theory offers uniquely effective means for exploring my research puzzle while foregrounding a research agenda committed to equitable practices.

Further, critical race theory is based on the idea that telling and hearing untold and unheard stories allows for critical reflection and change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).



First and foremost, storytelling is about owning one's voice. Storytelling benefits the storyteller in creating space to be heard and for the act of owning one's story. Storytelling can also benefit those who listen, if they choose to think, learn, grow, and change.

Recognizing the importance of storytelling can help us consider our places, communities, and institutions, asking, "In this space, who is being welcomed to share their story, their knowledge, their life? Who is not?" By prioritizing the voices of those most impacted by the institution—students—over the systems and happenings of the institution, we initiate the opportunity to create more equitable practices, systems, and institutions. My intent and goal for this research was to create open space for students' stories to be heard, considered, and acted upon.

### **Why collaborate?**

Some qualitative researchers engage in research as a way of collecting the lives of others in order to tell it back to them, "capturing the voices of people" (Smith, 1999, p. 107). In narrative inquiry, contributors and/or co-authors are not seen as subjects who are subjected to our will, methods, and treatments (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Nichols, 2013; 2016). Instead, similar to critical race theory scholars, narrative inquirers assert that people know their lives best. People who agree to share their stories, their knowledge, should be embraced with gratitude for opening their lives and experiences to us, and we should recognize that from their experience we have much to learn, to be grateful for, and to consider. Narrative inquiry can be a conduit for honoring and respecting the participants and collaborators who contribute to this study as a way of learning from, rather than learning about; researching with, rather than researching on.

### **Why complicate?**

Since narrative inquiry focuses on really listening to people, we can understand their lives and stories with greater nuance and complexity. This complicating is necessary to see others as fully human (Saad, 2018; 2020). Humanizing people who have been cast as less than serves to counteract white supremacy, and can help more people work against our oppressive systems while favoring empathy, acceptance, and equity for all (Saad, 2018). Qualitative research through narrative inquiry allows for stories to be told, and for humanization and compassion to grow.

### **Why place philosophy?**

Place philosophy suggests that place is made up of three components: time, space, and experience (Stauffer, 2012). While I can describe what this place, Arizona State University, is to me, this setting—this place—cannot be one thing for all people. Through multiple and differently situated experiences, my intent was to create a description of this place that allowed it to be seen as the multifaceted and contradictory environment it is. Rather than describing the setting from a single point of view, I intended to collaborate with participants to describe this place from a narrative perspective, allowing the participants to contribute their understanding of this place and what this place means to them. And in many ways this is what occurred.

While I had intended to co-author the institution's story alongside students, factors including the pandemic, student interest, and time constraints led me to curate the institution's story on my own. This story of the place grew into Chapter 5. However, can anyone really write anything alone? Throughout this study, my advisors talked with me and encouraged me to think in different directions. The students told me about their lives

and experiences within the university, and what I learned and heard contributed to the construction of the institution's narrative. Further, the institution's own language and branding provided the fullest and most direct line of data. All of these perspectives were influencing me as I wrote Chapter 5, and the subsequent dialogue between the students' and institution's story in Chapter 6.

### **Why did I listen to students?**

In my experience, music students have a lot to say about the ways in which their school of music promotes and hinders equity and justice. Further, each student invests several years and many thousands of dollars to obtain a credential that represents the preparation and expertise which they intend to bring into their lives and careers. And at the risk of speaking too generally, despite having a lot of stake in their programs, students are not often consulted about what they want from the program, what is working, and what they think needs to change. Instead, students are most often expected to fit neatly into the established procedures and curriculum of the institution. So, yes, we do need to listen and respond to students, which is what I did through this research. I listened to their stories, and validate that these are not tantrums or temporary annoyances. These are the voices of those higher education is supposed to be serving. Their contributions are important. Their voices need to be centered.

### **Why intersectionality?**

Including and listening to students from a wide spectrum of backgrounds is important if we are to learn about their experiences in a large school of music. This diversity includes (but is not limited to) diversity of race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, age, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status, as well as

musicianship. Acknowledging that all people are an amalgamation of multifaceted and complex backgrounds and experiences, any students who expressed interest in sharing their stories were welcomed into this study and were encouraged and given space to consider how they identify personally and how they wished to be described in the public sphere.

Relying on notions of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and of being multiply marginalized (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004) reveals the impracticality (and danger) of approaching diversity work as counting and categorizing each person by a single facet of their identity. Thinking with intersectionality and multiple marginalization helps avoid the pitfalls of diversity work, such as selecting participants solely based on visible differences or on our own biased belief and determination that someone “counts” or “doesn’t count” as being diverse. Instead of trying to check boxes and guarantee that I (problematically) include “one of each kind of diversity,” my intent was to welcome students into the study and have them express their own identity through their own words. This was done throughout the data generation process described below. During the study, students had the opportunity to consider how they identify, how they describe themselves, and how they wish to be described.

### **Data Generation**

In this study, data generation was first and foremost about building relationships, and giving choice, direction, and leadership over to the participants. This study—this collaboration—was about engaging students in ways that were complementary to their busy and challenging lives as students. I welcomed their input, collaboration, and enthusiasm to the extent that they wished to be a part of this research. It is difficult to talk

about the people, data generation, analysis, “producing the account,” any piece of this study without considering what it means to build relationships and collaborate with participants as much as possible, and as much as they prefer.

Data for this study were intended to be generated through group discussions, individual and group conversations, my journal, and the construction of storied narratives. The study, as expected, went differently than I had planned. At the onset of the study, and prior to the pandemic, I hosted three open group conversation hours for interested students to share and discuss their stories of diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice broadly within their School of Music. I invited students to participate via the School of Music email listserv, by asking some professors to email their classes, and through in-person visits to numerous classes and student organizations. The group conversation hours were scheduled at a variety of days and times in order to encourage as many different students to participate. However, when the time arose for the group conversation hours, only two students attended, and each at a different session. These two students provided my first one-on-one conversations with people who eventually agreed to continue talking and take part in the study.

One-on-one interactions ended up being the primary way of connecting with students. I invited several students through individual emails, and when they weren't available for the group conversation hours I inquired about possibly scheduling an individual meeting another time. Many of those students took me up on that offer, and some decided they did not have the time to participate. Further, a few faculty members sent me names of students who they thought were interested in these topics. I reached out to them individually and made some contacts that way as well.

While I had intended to perhaps work with five students, I ended up talking with eight students for the duration of the study. While I could have made the decision to limit who participated, I chose to include any student who was willing to share.

The original plan was to speak with each person for three to five individual conversations, and two additional group discussions. As planned, I envisioned the individual interviews as “conversations” as described by Chase (2003). The word “interviews” carries the connotation of an interrogation which serves the needs of the researcher. “Conversations” promoted more free and equitable dialogue and centered the students and their stories. The idea of conversations also proved useful when the study was impacted by the pandemic.

The pandemic started impacting the study during the Spring 2020 semester and was an ongoing issue for the remainder of this study. For this reason, the group discussions were not completed as they were too burdensome and inconvenient for the students. The students and I agreed that we would have three conversations, each for about an hour, and that I would follow-up as necessary. After the initial three conversations, each student and I met several times to review my writing and share about our current lives. With the students’ approval, I remained in contact with them throughout the study, including texting, email communications, and Zoom calls. Throughout the study, the students helped me in thinking through their stories and data, which I will describe in more detail in the analysis section.

To further base the study in equitable practices, I considered the students as collaborators and gave them the freedom to determine the level of partnership that they wished to have in the study (Nichols, 2013; 2016). My intent was that through genuine

relationship building and trust, students would feel welcomed and excited to engage in this opportunity for self-reflection and academic research.

While I had intended for the students and I to work together to co-construct their stories in a way that made sense and was of use to them, the pandemic increased everyone's stress and availability. Initially, I imagined that the students and I would explore their stories through fictionalized or non-fiction vignettes, poetry, comic strips, imagined futures, and/or their music mediums, however, the stress of the pandemic made simple storytelling a useful and practical choice.

As the collaborators and I learned from one another to write their stories, I also gathered data in order to compile and curate the story of the institution. This data came from promotional and recruitment materials, information from institution and department websites, print materials, including concert programs, and admission and course registration information.

At the onset of this study, I considered, "When will I know that the students and I have gathered enough data; what is the right amount of data?" Bhattacharya (2009) gives a beautiful and self-aware description of her struggle to forgo "data saturation," and embrace uncertainty:

Transnational feminist methodologies acknowledge that this research is never complete. I do not have complete access to the participants' lives, making this research only a frozen frame of collective moments. As a transnational feminist, I was data-hungry and could not turn off my researcher self during any interaction with the participants. Using conversations as a form of inquiry, all interactions became data to me. Sensing such hunger, Neerada, one of the participants,

cautioned me: “You would never finish your dissertation, because the subjects are still speaking.” Thus, conceding that the data are never real, true, complete, or holistic despite my attempts to “capture ‘em all,” this research is a negotiation of my effort to abandon authority and privilege participants’ critical agencies and voices, all the while recognizing the inevitable failure. (p. 109)

Recognizing the limits and exceptionalities of thinking narratively, no one is capable of fully understanding the experiences of another human being. This does not have to stop narrative inquirers from attempting to know the experiences of others well, nor should it force them to undermine the meaning made from engaging in/with their studies. Instead, people and researchers might celebrate that life is too complicated to wrap up into any one story. Rather than trying to determine if I had “enough” data or the “right” amount of interviews, the collaborators and I worked to share stories, to share our life experiences with one another, and through talking and writing, created a representation of what they/I/we learned from our engagement with this study—this way of thinking and being. At the start of this project, I wondered, “How will I know when I am done?” The story “simply stops at some point or moment when the authors, and their most intimate readers, say, enough is enough, at least for now” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 187).

### **Interpretation**

Rather than the thematic analysis or coding more common in qualitative research, I utilized several interpretation techniques informed by de/colonizing methodologies and approaches. Reiterating that no space or action is neutral, Bhattacharya (2009) states, “There is no purist decolonizing space devoid of imperialism but spaces where multiple



colonizing and resisting discourses exist and interact simultaneously” (p. 105).

Bhattacharya (2009) uses the term *de/colonizing* to further emphasize this point.

To engage in de/colonizing approaches, Bhattacharya (2009) suggests that we must find ways to recognize and uphold multiple forms of knowledge as worthwhile and valid. She states that in order to view the data from multiple perspectives, researchers need to break out of their comfortable habits and engage the data in as many ways as possible. For instance, spending time analyzing data through electronic devices, handwritten notes, embodied movement, and/or various art forms, such as drama, can all enliven and open up new meaning within the data (Bhattacharya, 2009; Lerman, 2019).

In this way, I chose to see every different way of approaching the data as a *thinking tool*. Thinking tools can take the form of interacting with the data in various embodied ways. Thinking tools can also be engaging the data with/through other people’s ideas and scholarship (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011). I will now highlight some of the tools that I was using throughout my analysis and engagement with this study.

### **Writing as analysis**

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) assert that meaning is created through writing, that we learn and make sense through the action of writing. Beginning with stories generated as conversations, the students and I worked together to write, rewrite, think, question, write and rewrite again in order to arrive at a piece of writing, a statement of what they experienced and learned. Recognizing that no text is final (Barthes, 2001; Stauffer, 2014), the narratives served as a way of questioning our current practices and shed light on stories that were not being heard in this School of Music.

I see writing as analysis as enmeshed in narrative inquiry in that both approaches revolve around the idea that through our stories and writing/telling, we make meaning. The meaning is not floating in space or contained in an emergent theme. Instead, the moment the pen touches paper, when we try to work out and make sense, when we cut, copy, delete, and paste, this is where meaning is made and realized. Writing as analysis goes beyond journaling and beyond writing. Writing as analysis means that you come back to your words, think deeply about what you are saying, and make sure that what you have said is what you mean; writing as analysis is an act of recursiveness.

### **Atlas of Creative Tools**

Created and developed by Liz Lerman (2019), the Atlas of Creative Tools is a set of tools that can help shape, guide, stretch, and push our thinking into deeper and different directions. The authors offer their own set of tools to learn, experience, practice, and experiment with. Most notably, the authors encourage us to notice, name, and expand on our own personal tools, and to combine and transform the tools into strategies that help us each approach and move through our work. Some of the tools I engaged with were thinking grids, body annotation, dancing, and convergent and divergent thinking activities. I see the Atlas of Creative Tools as a way of complicating and playing with the data; these tools and the creation of my own tools helped me to engage with the research in unfamiliar and deeper ways.

### **Reference list as disruption**

In this study, I have worked to disrupt straight cisgender white male hegemony throughout my dissertation by utilizing and relying on the scholarship of brilliant women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ scholars, and others who identify as outside of the dominant

narrative. When looking for scholarship and thinking related to this project, I have pushed myself to seek out knowledge from people whose voices are not always centered and to resist the urge to cite what the field sees as foundational simply because the field sees it as foundational.

### **What did I do with narrative inquiry?**

As described throughout this chapter, narrative inquiry is not a single method or strategy, but rather a way of being in research. Narrative inquiry, therefore, can result in many different forms that adapt to the context of and meaning made from the project. At the start of this project, I realized that many dissertations include specific headings, sections, or chapters. Instead, I purposefully chose to leave the structure of this dissertation open to the possibility of change throughout the inquiry process.

For instance, I originally considered having one chapter where the students' and institution's stories would be presented. However, as I started writing, I had a realization. The students' stories in dialogue with the institution's stories only made sense if—and only if—you knew each student well. Simultaneously, my writing had taken the form of individualized sketches that helped organize each students' background and their stories. It became clear that a chapter solely focused on getting to know the students was an important part of this project. Similarly, I realized that a chapter that introduced the institution's story as it was currently told would help the reader have more context before entering the storied dialogue. By leaving the form open, I was able to craft the dissertation in a way that made sense for this particular study.

Stauffer (2014) describes how narrative inquiry also allows the researcher to weave back and forth between voices, stating:

Other structures are also common in the narrative literature, including forms in which storied passages are supported by essay or essay-like writing designed to engage the reader in questioning. Such accounts include the voices of participants and researcher, as well as connections to the literature and theorizing moves, though not necessarily in any anticipated ordering or imposed structure. (p. 179)

In this study, essay-like writing and question posing helped me write in a way that felt true to who I am as a scholar. Especially in Chapter 6, I felt free to move between my voice, students' stories, the institution's story, and related literature and scholarship. This allowed me to think through ideas in the moment, revealing to the reader the questions that arose in my mind as I made sense of these stories.

Further, Stauffer (2014) suggests that the interpretation and construction of narrative writing can be done alongside participants. Throughout this process, I shared and discussed the stories with the students, my advisors, and my peers. With their help, I reflected, wrote, questioned, rewrote, organized, and shifted this document time and time again.

By staying open to the form and regularly questioning the organization of this document, the dissertation eventually took shape. Had I predetermined that this dissertation would be a specific number of chapters, pages, words, or themes I would have greatly limited the potential of this project. Since narrative inquiry as a field, process, and way of being is still (and likely always will be) in flux, this project serves as one contribution and example of my ongoing process of narrative inquiry.

## **Reflexivity & Trustworthiness**

Narrative inquirers are committed to reflexivity and trustworthiness as means for confirming a study's credibility (Stauffer, 2014). The process of situating myself within the research, reflecting on my impact on the study and my interactions with the participants, is reflexivity. In setting up and enacting this study, I made choices that were influenced by my culturally and theoretically influenced knowledge (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Whether I chose to acknowledge my role in this study or not, my presence would still be there. It would be unethical and impossible to bracket or set aside who I am/was in the midst of this research. This study, and the meaning garnered from it, could only be done and learned by me. This study, taken up and framed by me, does not exist outside of my influence. If it did, it would be someone else's project. To engage in a practice of reflexivity, I regularly reflected on who I am, what I believe, and how I impact and influence every aspect of this research. Journaling throughout the study allowed me to document my experiences and thinking across the course of the study, and served both as a way of reflecting on the research process and as a document to reflect upon. Maintaining a reflexive state of mind throughout the research process aided me in continuously examining and questioning my role and impact on the study. In this way, reflexivity was an ongoing and recursive process.

Trustworthiness in narrative inquiry is related to making the inquiry process transparent to the reader, and to presenting stories that allow the reader to take on a different vantage point, "to see what we see" as researchers (Peshkin, 1982, p. 62). In this way, I have worked both to share the stories as they are through thick descriptions, and to

give commentary and insight when appropriate to help explain the nuanced ways in which the students were thinking about their experiences.

In order to establish trustworthiness with the reader, I have attempted to display rigor throughout my inquiry process. I have engaged in ongoing and in-depth discussions with students about their experiences, shared my writing, and worked to make numerous changes and revisions to ensure that their stories were being told as they wished them to be told. I would regularly remind them that, “It’s important to me that your story be right. It’s your story. Is there anything I can change to make this align even better with your experience?” I collaborated with students to ensure that their stories are told in the ways that they believe align with their lived experience.

#### **A pause**

In this chapter, I gave an overview of my inquiry process, including the underpinning epistemological considerations for the study. I discussed the place, people, data generation, interpretation, reflexivity, and trustworthiness. In the following chapters, I introduce the students through individualized sketches (Chapter 4), introduce the institution’s story (Chapter 5), place the students’ and institution’s stories in dialogue (Chapter 6), and discuss implications and recommendations based on what I learned (Chapter 7).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE STUDENTS' STORIES

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the ways in which music students experience equity and inequity within their school of music and to learn from them how their institution as a system impacts students' experiences. In any situation, I believe those who are most impacted by a situation should be centered in conversations, and their voices and contribution should be hallowed as expert insight. By centering students' stories, we can learn about institutions from the vantage point of those who are most vulnerable and who have the most at stake.

In this chapter, I will introduce each of the eight students through an individualized sketch. The purpose of each sketch is to help give the reader a sense of who the students are, how they see themselves, and to give some context prior to approaching the stories in chapter six. Having a sense of each student is crucial in making sense of this study. By better understanding the students—knowing them well—it can become harder to look away or brush off their experiences.

Throughout this chapter and the entire document, names and personally identifying details have been altered to protect the confidentiality of the students. As we altered details, the students and I worked to maintain the integrity of their experiences and the representation of their interactions in connection to the institution.

Each of the students are different and their sketches are different. Students contributed in different ways to this project, and their sketches reflect this. Some sketches are long and some are short. Some are personal—and painful. Some are jovial and are a look back at the amazing things that were happening prior to the pandemic. I welcome

the reader to engage with these stories in any order you choose and in any way you can imagine. The stories in and of themselves might offer a glimpse of the variety of experiences students are having as they attend Arizona State University.

### **Anayeli**

I first met Anayeli, a senior at the time of this project, when she was a freshman in an Introduction to Music Education class. The course was team taught, and I was a doctoral student intern for the class. Early on in the semester, students were asked to bring in a song, any song they knew, and teach it to a small group of their peers. The only real parameter was that they couldn't use written music to assist them. It was an enjoyable activity that allowed students to showcase their ideas about teaching and led to some thoughtful discussions.

Anayeli made a memorable contribution to class that day. She taught the heck out of a silly camp song about pizza, or maybe it was watermelon. We were all laughing and smiling. Anayeli beamed as she sang the pizza-watermelon song from start to finish and demonstrated with joy the accompanying motions and dance moves. While keeping the experience playful, Anayeli taught with poise and clarity. She had a keen sense of how to break the song into smaller pieces, how to echo each line back and forth until we remembered it, and when to add the motions. Anayeli's presentation was exciting, fun, and clear. As a first-year music education major, she came into the program with a strong understanding of what teaching meant to her: to help others have fun and feel successful. As a senior at the time of this study, she still carries these qualities.

Anayeli has earned a reputation as being a fiercely exceptional musician. Peers in the percussion studio look up to Anayeli and admire her musicianship. Anayeli works



hard, is diligent with her practicing, and puts considerable time and energy into her musical and academic life. She has learned that this is the way to grow and reach her goals. While some percussionists spend lots of time discussing which mallets to use or how you really should try twelve different triangle beaters before you decide on which is best, Anayeli would rather spend time talking about what she can do differently with her own two hands:

*There's just a lot of elitism. A lot of it will come from some of the grad students. The way the [weekly] percussion studio [class] works is we do whatever general topic my studio professor wants to do, and then the last half of the class people can perform. And after the performances, we are able to give comments to people. There was this one TA who would always kind of bash on students for their mallet choice or their stick choice. And it becomes a whole conversation. My professor obviously feeds it. And every time that happens, you know, I raise my hand and I'm like, "Well, not all of us can afford to have a dozen different mallets, or whatever. I'm sorry you didn't like this performance, but these are the mallets that I have. And this is what I'm going to play with at my recital."*

Anayeli has a holistic and interdisciplinary view of music and sees music education as one of many ways to work to improve the world. From her perspective, the focus of her job as an educator isn't to tell students the correct drumstick to buy. Instead, it is her job to support each student in meeting their individual goals and to help them improve upon their personal best, day after day. And, further, Anayeli believes that being a musician/educator is an opportunity to learn about yourself and the world, and to help students do the same.

Anayeli sees the benefit that comes from learning about cultures outside her own. She has taken it upon herself to ensure that she experiences a wide variety of musical practices before she graduates. She played jazz drum set—not something she normally does—for a whole semester just to improve her skills and knowledge in preparation for being a better teacher. Anayeli believes that, especially as a music education major, seeking out as many different musical experiences as possible makes you an all-around better musician and teacher. This is not always something that her studio faculty and ensemble directors agreed upon or understood—but more on that later.

Similar to other percussionists, Anayeli has a well-established network of teaching and performing gigs across the valley. Unlike many percussionists in her age group, Anayeli has already achieved this as an undergraduate. At the time of this study, Anayeli was the percussion coordinator for one of the top collegiate-level indoor percussion groups in Arizona. In this role, she oversaw coordination between the drumline and front ensemble, organized rehearsals, supervised other staff members, and instructed the front ensemble. She composed “parking lot jams” and various warm-ups for the group. On Facebook, videos of the group playing her jams result in compliments and shout outs. The consensus is, “Her writing is legit.”

Anayeli is deeply aware of how her race and gender impact her life and education. Anayeli identifies as brown, a woman of color, and Hispanic (her words). She has worked to gain success in the male-dominated field of percussion. Anayeli uses her confidence and ability as a leader to speak up about the inequities she witnesses and lives on a daily basis. In her school of music, these conversations are sometimes validated. In her classes, Anayeli appreciates when her professors open space for the kinds of

conversations that she thinks really matter, such as conversations about race and sexuality, and whether or not music education really is for everyone. Other times, she watches with disappointment as some of her faculty and peers reify oppressive procedures and norms. Despite having the awareness that the world works for some and against others, Anayeli remains hopeful. She makes space for people to change. She continues to question the way things have always been done, and she manages to approach dialogues with her peers and professors with grace and in ways that maintain their attention and keep the conversation going. She also has a keen sense of when to walk away.

### **Sadie**

Sadie knows herself well. Her meticulously curated dorm room is the perfect place, just for her. Vines and ficuses, crystals, soft tapestries, small pieces of art from friends, a station for her Chemex and coffee supplies, all purposefully arranged to create a space uniquely suited for one creative and self-reflective college student. A yoga studio, a practice room, a library, a study, a place to be active, and a place to rest. The flexibility and function of the space are a testament to the artful and independent person that Sadie is, and, perhaps, aspires to be.

*I like being alone in my dorm room all day. I love it. I can practice in here. It's kind of weird, but it's just my space. I feel like that's what school should be, like, that's why we came to college. That's why we're paying to live on campus is to get that experience.*

In her own space, by herself, Sadie is in her element. She can tailor her living quarters to her own evolving preferences and is free to do what she wants, when she wants.

Spending a lot of time alone might not be as comfortable or fulfilling to someone who doesn't have a strong sense of themselves. Sadie, however, is confident, self-aware, and decisive. When she moved away from her home in another state to attend college, she recognized the opportunity to think about and identify what was important to her—her values, likes, and style. And, similar to the way she enjoys curating her environment, Sadie is equally interested in looking how she wants, when she wants. Sadie is, and rejoices in, being a chameleon. Sometimes old Hollywood, sometimes bohemian, but always herself.

As a third-year music education student and low brass player, Sadie knows she is growing and changing and that she will continue to grow and change. She fully acknowledges her youth, welcoming the idea that she will make mistakes—an attitude she conveys without underselling her abilities or worth. Her sense of her ongoing growth and change gives her a maturity that few people her age can project. Sadie knows what she wants, and sometimes what she wants is the space to figure out what she wants. The space and time to be young, to be the age she is, to make mistakes without having them define her, and, better yet, to make choices that are understood by her alone—not to be judged by her boss, her faculty, or her peers.

At her university, Sadie is seen as responsible and a leader among her peers. Her peers often tell her that they appreciate the bold and progressive views she brings into their classroom discussions. Some of her peers describe her in admiration as “someone who doesn't care what other people think of her” and who is “always, totally herself.” And while Sadie understands why people might see her this way, again, her self-awareness kicks in: “Of course I care—a lot—about what other people think of me. I

regularly question who I am... but I feel secure in having full ownership of that process. I know what I like. Making decisions comes easily to me.”

Sadie is driven and wants to develop her abilities as an educator and musician in order to be as prepared as possible when she enters the teaching field. To achieve this, she actively pursues leadership and teaching experiences to supplement her assigned curriculum, going above and beyond her required coursework. Sadie learns something from each of the opportunities that she seeks out and takes on, but, unfortunately, what she hopes to gain is often far from the expected or intended experience. In what ways is Sadie supported and challenged by her coursework and professors? In what ways is Sadie disappointed, and sometimes exploited, by her mentors and colleagues? Sadly, these are experiences she’s come to know all too well, as she’ll soon tell.

The roots of Sadie’s responsibility and confident leadership grow out of the musical experiences that she participated in throughout her childhood. Growing up in a neighboring southwestern state, Sadie is thankful to have had, mostly, music teachers who are women—an experience that, looking back, she now realizes is the exception rather than the norm. Sadie grew up playing piano, and she was excited when it was time to join band in middle school. She talks enthusiastically about the amazing role models she had in her band director and assistant director who were both women and brass players, one on tuba and the other on trumpet. Having strong female role models in her music programs, however, didn’t shield Sadie from experiences that many women share.

*I remember my band director said, “You should play trombone because we need trombone players.” And my dad owned a trombone from when he played it in high school, college marching maybe? I remember my mom being like, “If you*

*play a brass instrument you'll get to hang out with all the guys all the time.” And little sixth grade me was like, “Ooh, I want to hang out with boys.” As a fully-grown woman who has been a brass player, I look back on that, and I'm a little bit horrified that that was such a motivator for me. . . because of the experiences that I've had [in high school and college].*

Sadie grew her musical abilities in high school, learning lots of new instruments: “I switched every year between jazz piano and jazz trombone. It was pretty much just whatever my band director needed. I would fill that role.” She even picked up baritone horn so she could play in marching band. She eventually took on the responsibility of being drum major. Even though she was helpful and a leader within the program, Sadie felt that her high school band director (male) didn't like her at all. She remembers thinking, “He hates me. My band director doesn't like me.” It wasn't until Sadie was an adult that she started recognizing and naming her experience as sexism.

Sadie recalls the way her “bro-y” band director interacted with each of her parents differently. Her mother— “who's done so much for that organization”—was on the band board and was “very organized, very vocal.” Sadie's “six-foot-three firefighter dad” was less involved with the music program, yet somehow “[the band director] had more say to [my dad] than my mother. . . . I felt that [disparity] as a student.” Sadie also felt that disparity as a female student, even in situations where she believes other music teachers might have supported her:

*I was in a female leadership position, and people were sexually harassing me and [the band director] didn't have my back at all. I felt ashamed to share these things with him because I knew he didn't care. He didn't understand or it was as if I*

*shouldn't . . . it was my responsibility that it was happening. I was dating people in band, but that's not a reason to be sexually harassed at all. For instance, we'd be on the field, I was conducting, and the drumline would shout something vulgar about me. And I would stop the band. I'd call out, "Okay. Reset." And [the band director] would be like, "Why did you reset?" And I was like, "They just screamed 'Sadie's a slut.'" And he's like, "We don't have time for this. Right? Okay." And it sounds very dramatic as I'm saying it, but it was so, like, swept under the rug, super casual.*

It was hard for Sadie to get away from these uncomfortable and unsupportive experiences; her band director taught all of the music classes at her school. When Sadie wanted to take AP Theory, it started out well, but then due to budget cuts the class was cancelled. This created two different, but related problems.

*Seven weeks into the class, they told my band director that he would not be paid overtime for the additional courses he was teaching. And so he stopped teaching [AP Music Theory]. And [by that point in the semester] I couldn't sign up for it at a university. So I ended up taking it at another high school. Across town. So on Tuesday/Thursday, I would get down from the podium, the other drum major would come up, and I would drive 30 minutes to this other high school. I took that class there and then I would drive back and be late for English. They accommodated me, but that was really frustrating to me. That was a huge conflict with my academic success.*

This situation also contributed to the more personal and uncomfortable exchanges with Sadie's band director, which Sadie felt regularly placed her in a "maternal role":

*[The band director] literally cried in front of me one day because we were talking about [the class being cancelled]. And he was like, "They're not paying me overtime anymore. I don't know how I'm gonna feed my family." And I was, like, "I'm 17 years old. I'm your drum major. I don't think this is appropriate." And I can't say what his financial situation was like. He talked a lot about how he was in student debt. But I know that his wife was an engineer and his kids were in dance, Boy Scouts. As a minor, it was really strange to see an adult behave that way because my parents would never talk about their finances. And for my 40-year-old band director that was so inappropriate. Like, he didn't like me—but he was telling me intimate details about his life. Or complaining about other students to me. Talking shit about my friends to me because they were misbehaving. And he somehow wanted me to take care of it? Not appropriate.*

Sadie felt similarly unsupported and that she was treated differently in jazz band, too. Sadie witnessed her male peers, even ones with behavior issues, receive praise and opportunity. However, Sadie didn't realize how inequitable her jazz education was until she had performance experiences outside of her school community.

*And the whole time that I was in [high school] jazz band, I never learned about voicings on piano. I didn't really get a method to improvise. I didn't learn about jazz. And I made high school All State for jazz band my senior year, and I remember I went and I was playing piano and comping. The director stopped us, and he was like, "Can you comp better? Like, don't use the pedal and play better voicings?" And I was like, "I don't know what that is." My senior year of playing jazz in front of this whole ensemble. And I realized at that conference, there was*



*so much that I just didn't know. And that I didn't know I didn't know. So that was tough.*

Even when Sadie decided to apply to college and become a music teacher, her director didn't support her in the ways she expected or hoped for:

*So then I was applying for college. [The high school band director] never helped me with my music ed. stuff. He didn't really care. He didn't really want to hear it. And I conducted the Wind Ensemble in a concert. I was arranging stuff and I was really active [in the music program]. Then recently, my dad was [talking with the band director], and [the director] was talking about old students that he had, and my dad was like, "How was Sadie?" [The director] was like, "She was a good student, but she kind of gave up during her last semester." Yes, I was out because I was sick for weeks at a time. That's true. But I was also auditioning at five schools, on two instruments, and interviewing for music ed., and taking AP tests and I conducted your wind ensemble, and was drum major. So if that was what [the director] took from my whole high school—"Oh, she was a good student, but she kind of gave up her last semester"—because I had pneumonia? Yeah, frustrating.*

And then there was college . . .

### **Dylan**

*Dylan loves game day. He looks around at his bandmates knowing that each one of them is ready to put on a great show. Cannons blast, illuminating the night sky with a rain of fireworks. The crowd, a sea of maroon and gold, roars as the Sun*

*Devils take the lead going into halftime. Standing on the sidelines, the Sun Devil Marching Band prepares to take the field.*

Dylan has loved marching band for a long time. Growing up in southern marching band culture, Dylan knew early on in his middle school band program that he wanted nothing more than to be in the high school marching band. When he made the decision to attend college and become a music educator, he was excited to create similar memorable experiences for his own students. But who is this student, this marching band junkie?

Picture a super involved, highly responsible college student. You might know the kind. They take on leadership roles in multiple campus organizations. President of a club, Co-Chair of a committee. They volunteer with a local non-profit related to their field. They serve as a community assistant (C.A.) in one of the dorms, helping fellow students adjust to college life, sometimes supporting them through what can be some of life's most vulnerable moments. In all times and in all places, they are reliable and trustworthy.

Picture a super cool and approachable college student who is friends with just about everyone and gets around campus on a longboard. He sports an incredibly current haircut that, somehow, simultaneously registers as 1994. Think Fresh Prince of Bel-Air meets Tyler the Creator. In between classes, you can find him hanging out with his friends in the School of Music courtyard having "random" conversations about life's big and not-so-big questions.

While Dylan might sound like he could be the most boisterous of marching-band-loving, Boba-drinking, longboard-riding, largest-collegiate-institution-and-party-capital-in-the-country-attending college student, in actuality Dylan is understated, kind, and somewhat quiet. When I asked Dylan to describe himself and edit his story, he

commented, “I probably wouldn’t say soft spoken but I understand what you are getting at.” Dylan really, truly, is interested in other people’s perspectives and wants to hear what they have to say. He never interjects or steps on people’s toes during a conversation. His silence creates a space for them to talk and for him to listen and learn. But that silence doesn’t mean Dylan isn’t thinking. In every class, he is right there, listening, considering. When his teachers call on him, he is happy to share his ideas. Dylan describes himself as “really upfront” with everyone in his life and comments that it isn’t hard for him to say how he feels. When he is leading or helping to organize a group, he is patient and diplomatic. He always speaks at a comfortable pace, never flustered or rushed. He shares his thoughts clearly and doesn’t reiterate his points.

At the time of this study, Dylan was a third-year music education major. While Dylan’s primary instrument is trumpet, he can play a tune on almost any instrument. He plays tuba regularly, and, in high school, learned to play the horn and trombone. He listens to and plays all kinds of music, including classical, trad Jazz, and Dixieland. Dylan says, “You can just say ‘all’. I listen to everything from prog-rock to electronic to jazz to classical to etc.”

In marching band, he serves as a section leader. For Dylan, marching band is a place where he enjoys performing musically and physically at a high level. He also enjoys the closeness and dynamic he has built with his peers. Dylan explains, “There are feelings of teamwork. In my section, it is very family-like, which has been increasing from year to year. From section to section, it is more teamwork-like.” Dylan describes having “a good relationship” with the director of the marching band. “We can rely on each other for things,” he explains. “He knows me by name and we communicate often

about various things. We often talk about arranging and he actually knew me before I even joined due to his connection to my former band director in high school.”

The marching band director is not the only faculty mentor in Dylan’s college life. In World Harmony Choir, Dylan works closely with the director, who was also on the music education faculty. Participating in World Harmony Choir was one of the first times, definitely the first memorable time, that Dylan had a faculty member that he said, “looked like me.” Dylan met this professor on campus at his audition and interview day. Since then, Dylan and the professor have gotten together for meals, sometimes one-on-one, sometimes with other students. These meals have been good times to check in about how school is going, how life is. When the professor took on a new role at a different institution, they continued to talk on the phone once a week or so. The professor even called and jokingly said, “Why haven’t you called me?” This relationship, this kind of individual care and attention, seems valuable and appreciated by Dylan. He also likes “the family aspect created in both” World Harmony Choir and marching band. When I asked Dylan whether he would recommend these groups to other students, he commented, “Yes. I would recommend both, but the marching band could be overwhelming at first and trying to connect with everyone is significantly harder to do than in the choir. Also, in choir you can jump right in easier.”

Dylan also sees his trumpet studio like a family. When asked what he would tell a high school trumpet student about his studio, Dylan replied, “We are a very caring and welcoming set of people. We all get along well and enjoy seeing each other. We are also very encouraging and give each other feedback on studio performances in a positive manner.”

Dylan's leadership experiences extend beyond playing. For the last several years, Dylan has been involved in the School of Music's student-led diversity and inclusion committee. The student committee was initiated by the faculty diversity and inclusion committee. Students were encouraged to make the group into what they wanted and to bring ideas and information back to the faculty about how the students would like to see the School of Music change. At the time of this study, Dylan and the other students had trouble getting consistent support from the faculty committee: "We receive advice from the faculty and they do what they can to help, when possible. I wish we had more active support from all members of the faculty committee."

Dylan was having so many amazing experiences that I was hesitant to ask whether he had any experiences at the school or the university that, perhaps, landed somewhere outside of feeling included. I even said, "Remember, it's okay if I ask you something and the answer is no, and you should always correct me to make sure I understand you accurately. But I am going to ask, have you ever had any experiences where you felt excluded, like you weren't accepted?"

Dylan paused for a long time. Eventually, I reiterated that he didn't have to search for something to fit that question, but if he happened to think of something, would he share? And after pausing for a moment more, Dylan realized that he couldn't think of any experiences like that. In that moment, he also realized that he had never really asked himself why he didn't have any of those excluding experiences. He wondered out loud if there was some connection or relationship between his abundance of inclusionary experiences and his lack of exclusionary experiences. I asked if he wanted to spend some time thinking about this idea that didn't really have a name yet. Hyper-inclusive?

Working against, or preempting exclusion? He didn't know what his thoughts meant yet, but he was on board to think more about these ideas before we met again. And when we did meet again, what Dylan told me was both surprising and sobering.

### **Sam**

*I think being able to think about the why—the why, the reason, the goal behind what you are doing—that's a super important part of who I am. I don't want any type of situation that I go through to ruin me. I always want to build from it in some way, even if it's not what I initially planned. Like, what is the one variable that I can change in this instance?*

*I can't change what happened, but I can change the way that I react to it. And how can I build off of that and still keep going? By focusing on why. If you filter it through that, when you have a negative experience, you can still spin it into some way that's still achieving your main goal.*

Sam was a first-year music education student at the time of his study. I met him on the first day of a strings lab I was teaching. Sam arrived early, smiling and organized. He was dressed neatly and looked hip, which I later found out aligned perfectly with his prior long-term stint as an employee at Apple. Sam was very comfortable making eye contact and small talk as I introduced myself. I later learned that his familiarity with new people was highly tailored by Apple's employee training and company values. Not to say that Sam didn't emote friendliness of his own accord, but Apple had certainly reinforced that there were better and worse ways to make connections with other humans.

At 27, Sam knew that he wanted to live out his core values, his purpose, his “why,” everyday. He aimed toward earning certification, teaching in the public schools, and, eventually, graduate work and teaching at the collegiate level. But his habit of reflecting on his main goals in life and using these as the driving force for his actions and decision-making wasn’t something Sam learned early in his life.

Years earlier, fresh out of high school and living in Oklahoma City, 18-year-old Sam was excited to attend college and pursue a piano performance degree. He had grown up playing piano and dabbled in violin under the tutelage of his grandmother, a piano professor at a large institution for over 35 years.

*So I knew and she knew that I was going to go to [college] for piano performance. It was all excitement and confidence. There was no question or hesitation about that. It was after experiencing it for the first semester where things started to go wrong, and I had a lot of doubt about doing [a music degree].*

Although he entered the semester with a lot of confidence, Sam felt disconnected, lacked a peer group that he could relate to, and felt totally unsure of what to do when his professors said, “Practice more.” Practice more? Practice *how*? Sam didn’t realize it at the time, but looking back now, he knows that he didn’t have the skills and support systems that he needed to be successful. Sam failed many of his classes, so he made the decision to drop out of school at the end of his first semester.

Sam started the next semester half-heartedly, attending a slightly smaller college to pursue a marketing degree with a minor in piano. He stayed in that program for about a

year, and during that time Sam started working for Apple. While his enthusiasm for his undergraduate degree waned, his excitement and support at Apple grew.

Sam didn't know that Apple would be a huge influence and turning point in his life; he just knew he liked current technology and the vibe of being an Apple employee. Right away Apple gave Sam things he never knew he was missing. Problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, and public speaking/presentation skills. Sam spent eight-and-a-half years receiving onsite mentorship and training, regular progress check-ins, and tools and strategies to help think through almost any problem. Sam truly thrived at Apple.

After three years, Sam had worked his way through the hierarchy and became an Apple trainer himself. His job was to support other people in developing dispositions and skills. His job was to teach, and he loved it. After leading his first few training sessions Sam had a moment of realization:

*I began to see the light bulbs go off from the participants. They were learning and I was teaching them. The reason why I dropped out of college was because I thought I didn't like teaching. But here I am, teaching and enjoying it. Maybe I should give music another shot.*

As Sam thought about his own career trajectory, he realized this might be the perfect time to pursue his dreams and to follow a career that he now really believed in. Right after high school, music education and teaching had felt like the totally wrong fit, but now Sam knew himself, his goals, and had adopted an attitude of "follow your passion."

So Sam returned to community college and started taking piano lessons again with the intent of eventually returning to a larger university in Houston. Also, while at Apple, Sam met and fell in love with another Apple employee. They knew they wanted to



get married, and when Sam's husband was offered a promotion with Apple that would move them to Phoenix, they decided to make the move. They knew this would be a good career move for Sam's spouse, but what would this mean for Sam's music degree plans?

Ready to return as a so-called non-traditional adult student, Sam began researching which institutions were available to him in Phoenix. To his surprise, one of the largest collegiate institutions in the country just happened to be down the street from his new apartment and, lo and behold, they also had a nationally recognized music school. At his interview, the music education professors beamed and were overjoyed to welcome such a thoughtful, organized, self-motivated, and kind individual into their profession and community.

*I've realized that music education is so much more than just learning and performing music. It's about community and inclusion, bringing people together, and helping suppressed voices be heard.*

Like most stories, however, there were some bumps along the way. Things haven't always been easy for this self-assured and confident adult undergraduate student starting down a new career path.

### **Jack**

When asked to describe himself, Jack points out that he is often seen as someone who is difficult to describe. Jack says that a lot of his friends have told him this. One of them, an artist, commented that she could never quite draw Jack in a way that captured who he was to her liking. Jack's personality covers a wide range of attributes, so he knows that a few fast details won't be enough to give you a sense of his identity.

Most of the time, Jack likes it this way. He expects people to get to know him over time and says, “I know I hold my cards pretty close to my chest,” at least until he gets to know someone well. Jack values loyalty and trust by the company he keeps. His college roommate is his best friend—whom he met in kindergarten! Having grown up in a small town, Jack stays in touch with his high school friends, and many of their memories—programs, ticket stubs, Polaroids, part of a Girl Scout cookie box—messily adorn the bulletin board in his room. All small reminders of the close relationships he has built and kept over a long time.

That is who Jack is. Someone who really values people who take their time to get to know him. Someone that you can’t know everything about just by looking at them.

But Jack also has some instances when he realizes it might be helpful for people to get to know him more quickly. Remember the show *Survivor*? Yes, the one where a bunch of random people get left on a remote island with minimal, if any, supplies and compete in a variety of jungle-themed contests in order to earn the title of “Survivor” and win a million bucks. Jack wants to be on that show. He loves the show and has watched it regularly for years. He is so serious about being on that show that he has even started studying and learning from past contestants about how to make a convincing audition video. The biggest, seemingly most effective piece of advice: show the casting team your most authentic self.

*“Hello and welcome to the General Music Methods Game Show! I’m your host, Jack Borden! Today we will be playing several rounds of Poison Solfege and Poison Rhythms. Sounds scary, huh?!”*

Jack was presenting his final: a teaching demonstration for his classmates. Dressed in a full-blown game show host outfit complete with microphone and a sound system set-up, Jack had his classmates—his audience—giggling and smiling as they sang, clapped, and learned together. During his third year as a music education major, this particular class really helped him realize how excited he is to be a music educator. He finally felt as though he grasped how fun and important teaching can be. And for Jack, fun is the most important part: “My teaching philosophy, actually my human philosophy, is that laughter is a way of connecting with people. I guess as a teacher I prioritize what’s enjoyable over what is considered effective.”

Jack often eases into his silliness and openness until he really gets to know someone: “I don’t want to just throw that at someone. They likely have no time or interest for my antics.” For his *Survivor* audition tape, Jack has considered that maybe he needs to include some clips of his gameshow teaching episode. At least from his perspective, that is one way to quickly get at the heart of who he is, or at least who he hopes you will get to know, eventually.

Some of the first things you might learn from Jack are about where he grew up and his family. Jack is from a small town in Arizona. It’s not far from the United States border with Mexico. His parents separated when Jack was in seventh grade, but they both still live in the area. Jack gets along pretty well with his older sister. She is two years older and has had many similar experiences. She is also a musician, played in marching band, served as drum major, and she started college as a music education major although she switched to another degree. Unlike his sister, Jack primarily plays jazz guitar. In high

school, Jack was a member of a premiere ensemble in the Tucson area that regularly went on national tours.

Jack describes himself as Hispanic, but said that not many people notice or think about that when they look at him. Jack is often seen as a white guitar jazz guy. And Jack was actually made fun of and bullied in high school for looking white. Now, in college, Jack doesn't get bullied for his light skin. However, he remembers what it was like in high school to not be sure how to make sense of your own identity. As Jack was reading his transcript, he told me:

*It would be correct in saying that the identity of being Hispanic and other [people] not being aware does not bother me now. This is something I have been putting a lot of thought into lately, though. With the current social movements going on with BLM and America's magnifying glass on important topics of discrimination, I have been reflecting a lot on my life in the Hispanic community. I think it would be safe to say that all, if not the vast majority of people I knew in high school, were Hispanic or at least had Hispanic heritage. Many of the people I knew ate all of the same food as me and followed similar traditions—celebrating Mother's Day on May 10th, even if it doesn't fall on a Sunday, having quinceañeras, making tamales around the winter holiday season, etc. We watched the same Mexican TV Channels, and other things.*

Since he's been in college, Jack feels comfortable most everywhere he goes. However, he has wondered if life would be different if people knew about, or were at least more aware of his background: "I don't have any problem identifying as Hispanic on paper, but I don't know if that is something I feel comfortable outwardly telling people in person

nowadays. I have really been questioning whether or not I'm a minority, because it doesn't feel like I am discriminated against in a way that many minorities might encounter."

### **Margaret**

Early on in this project, I wanted to find a way to make this study open and available to any and all School of Music students, not only the ones I knew or friends of friends. So, I hosted three open conversation hours and advertised them as an opportunity for students to discuss issues such as diversity, inclusion, access, and equity in relation to their experiences in the school. Most importantly, I advertised that there would be plenty of "awesome, free snacks."

I suppose I assumed that at least five or so students would show up to each of the three different sessions. I had helped organize events in the past and usually at least a few interested people would attend. Well, not in this case. No one showed up. Not the first day. Not the second. As I waited outside the door of the meeting room on the second day, the hour nearly over, I began talking with a doctoral student colleague whose office happened to be next door. I was bored and trying hard not to be disappointed, so I appreciated the small talk and the company.

At this point Margaret arrived and shyly peeked down the hallway. Essentially tiptoeing towards my colleague and I, timidly, as if she didn't want to interrupt, Margaret said, "Hi. Is this where the diversity conversations are happening?" Suddenly filled with new enthusiasm, I said goodbye to my colleague, and Margaret and I greeted one another as we headed into the meeting room.

Margaret asked if anyone else had arrived to be a part of the conversation hour, “Is it weird for just the two of us to talk?” I assured her that it was not weird, that I was interested in whatever she had to say, and that we could talk for as long as she liked, about as much or as little as she liked, and about anything and everything she wanted. Although Margaret kept asking for permission to stay and talk, and wondering out loud if it was okay for her “to take up my time,” she simultaneously grabbed a plate of snacks from the table, made herself comfortable in a chair, and, tucking her feet underneath her, jumped into dialogue. And once she started, Margaret didn’t stop talking.

Margaret talks quickly, and a lot, about a lot, all at once. And speaking quickly makes a lot of sense. Margaret has a lot to say about many different aspects of her experience within and outside the school of music.

*And, [my one music education professor’s] class, in that class, like, I definitely feel included. And we talk a lot about . . . they give us lots of ideas, but at the same time, they ask us to bring our own. Like, “Oh, try to start thinking of how you would teach in a classroom,” like, “What would you do to change this rehearsal up?” And some of the things they’ve added to tuning [our ensemble]—I wish that sometimes our rehearsals—our regular rehearsals for our regular ensembles—were a little bit more innovative because it’s the same way it’s always been done: prepare your parts, come in, play them, meld them together so everyone’s thinking the same thing. And then go back and practice your parts more. And then come back. And then we keep rehearsing. Yes, a rehearsal, rather than, like, an experimental learning situation.*

At the time of this study, Margaret had just finished her third year as a music education major at Arizona State University. Margaret, primarily an oboe player, also plays trombone as a secondary instrument. In addition to being a full-time music education student, Margaret is a manager at a fast-food restaurant in the neighboring town. She has worked full time for this same restaurant since she was about sixteen. Since she started working full time, Margaret has been responsible for all of her own expenses: housing, food, bills, car, gas, insurance, tuition, and so on. Somewhat recently, Margaret was promoted to being a manager. In this position, Margaret makes \$13 an hour, and her full-time status, which comes with benefit options, requires her to work between thirty and forty hours every week. Margaret doesn't mind, though, because she knows she needs to work exactly that much in order to pay for all her bills and living expenses: "I am painfully aware of what I need to be financially stable."

As a working music education student, Margaret drives between her apartment on the east side, her required internship on the west side, her full-time job on the south side, and her classes in central Tempe almost every day. She starts her internship early in the morning, attends classes during the day, and heads to work in late afternoon. She works the last shift and closes up the restaurant most nights, which means she gets off of work at 12:45 am on weekdays and 1:45 am on the weekend. This puts Margaret home sometimes as late as 2:15 am, and then she is up at 5:00 am and out the door heading to her internship by 7:00 am to do it all again.

This schedule and workload burdens Margaret and is dangerous at times. Margaret recently fell asleep at the wheel while driving home from work. She rear-ended a car, which then rear-ended the next car in line. Luckily, no one was seriously injured in

the accident. Margaret, and possibly the other drivers, had aches and pains for the next few days and weeks. Adding to the stress of the experience, Margaret totaled the car she was driving.

Margaret was emotionally impacted by the accident in several ways, and the entirety of the experience impacted the start of her school semester. The worry of figuring out how to pay for the totaled car and feeling that she wasn't doing well in her major led her to consider dropping out of school. Her family and friends questioned her, and when she brought up the idea of dropping out, they encouraged her to stick it out, saying that she would figure out other ways to alleviate her problems.

Margaret's love of teaching and her desire to reach her goal of becoming a teacher helped her to persevere in the program. However, Margaret is often unsure if she has what it takes to be a great music educator:

*I don't believe I am unsure about becoming a teacher. I want to somehow be able to share my experiences with others, which they can learn from and build off of. I am unsure of myself for sure. I'm worried. I hope that I can meet the standard and be a good teacher. I don't just want to be a good teacher either, that teaches the boring basics. I want to reach people. I want to be meaningful, and I want to see students' eyes light up when they discover things for themselves. I want to be the above and beyond person for my students so they, too, will and can go above and beyond.*

And while Margaret isn't sure she is ready to be the "above and beyond" person for her students, she has had a few above and beyond experiences in her own education. Like many students, Margaret experienced the impact of the pandemic on her university



courses. In some of her classes, new opportunities and projects emerged that really inspired Margaret and gave her the space to be creative.

For example, Margaret's oboe studio shifted from their typical semester plans and chose to put together a joint Zoom recital. Students were asked by their studio professor to memorize and record themselves playing a piece that they were working on. Then all the videos were to be spliced together into a full-length recital that would then be shared "live" via Zoom and posted for friends, family, and community members to see. Students were also encouraged to incorporate a secondary artform, something they created, into the piece, like a drawing or a poem. Margaret said most people drew a picture, displayed it at the start of the recording, and then simply played their piece. Margaret, however, did something different. She was visibly energized and talking quickly as she shared the details that made her video performance unique.

Margaret's video opened with the image of her living room. She had taken the time to move all of her furniture out of view, organized and tidied her belongings, and turned her living room into a blank canvas. She draped soft white holiday lights all around the perimeter of the space. The space appeared curated and special. In the center of the room, Margaret had set her oboe on its stand, waiting, motionless. After a few quiet, still moments, Margaret entered the space reverently, wearing a flowing (really incredible) gown. Although she looked like she was giving a typical, formal recital, there was nothing typical about this performance.

Margaret had chosen to play a contemporary piece that showcases lyrical melodies and creates a trance-like soundscape. Margaret's ethereal sound ebbed and flowed, and she similarly swayed and dipped as she crafted each note. As Margaret began

playing, a second video image of a large painting appeared at the top left of the screen. Only a portion of the painting was visible, and it continued to rotate slowly revealing other angles and portions of the art.

But there was still more. As Margaret played and the art rotated, a voice began to speak over the music—a poem read in a calm voice. Whose story, whose poem was this?

*The glimmer of the morning sun - rises as we pull our sail with the wind.*

*I am once again pulled back.*

*Drifting on the waves,*

*Hypnotized by the depths of the sea.*

The day before this project was due Margaret had already finished recording her performance video. But then she had all these ideas and found herself caught up in what she was doing. From dusk until dawn, Margaret created the artwork and wrote the poem. As we spoke, she still had the many pages of notes from editing and revising her poem. She created and then filmed the art she made, a landscape image that reflected the piece. The poem similarly captured Margaret’s vision of waves and oceans that went on and on. That night she recorded herself reading the poem and taught herself how to overlay the performance video, art image, and vocal recording into one file. As the project drew to a close, Margaret was so proud of what she created that she shared her project on her personal social media pages.

Margaret felt at ease putting herself out there in front of everyone and especially her oboe studio. Margaret says that the eighteen students in the oboe studio are close and kind of “family/friendly.” Even during the pandemic, she found a way to see at least one person from the studio each week. Margaret said studios can be competitive places, but

that hers isn't like that. Her studio has a "different vibe." In the ASU studio, it's less about what place, chair, or ensemble you get. Instead, she said it's about playing what you want to play and being supported by your studio community. Margaret reiterated some of the ways she and her studio peers talk to one another: "Oh, okay, you want to play [different genres and techniques]? Okay, let's figure it out. What is that and how do you do it? Show us [the technique] so we can learn, too. Do you want to play in band, in orchestra? That orchestra audition is gonna be rough, but we can work together and help each other prepare for it." From her perspective, Margaret might feel as though she doesn't know how to be an incredible teacher that is there for her students. However, from my perspective, she seems to know a lot about what it means to give and receive support in musical communities.

### **Christina**

*Glancing at her phone, Christina realizes it's time to "suit up." Her mariachi group is playing for an anniversary party today. She carefully lays out each piece of her traje on her bed: skirt, blouse, shoes, jacket. She smiles. She doesn't always get to wear her favorite—deep navy fabric with extra silver botonaduras lining the seams. Christina uses her comb to create a strong part in her hair, just off center. She slicks her normally curly, voluminous locks into a tight ponytail that lays neatly down the center of her shoulders. She takes her time applying her makeup. It's important to look your best for each and every performance. After fastening the last snap, Christina touches up her lipstick. A final detail that always makes her feel special and reminds her of the reverence she holds for each performance.*

*Anytime Christina gets ready for a gig, she can't help but reflect on the meaning mariachi holds in her own life and the impact the music has on others: "It's an honor to 'suit up,' to go out and share the music with everyone. To be a musician, sing as a group. It's hard work, and people recognize that in our culture. No matter how many years of schooling you have as a professional classical musician, you won't get the same reactions as if you go on stage and sing a song that will bring so much emotion out of a person."*

*As she drives to the gig, Christina thinks about what is about to happen, what is recreated each time her mariachi ensemble performs. Waiting silently in the front yard, they keep their presence a surprise. The person who hired them, maybe an uncle, comes out of the house, greets and thanks them for their labor. He says they're almost ready for them. Everything is in place. Everyone looks polished. He gives the signal, and the mariachi erupt with sound and flood into the backyard. As the musicians play, dozens of people, generations of young and old, are all smiling and holding each other, and some begin to sing along. Christina and her fellow mariachi play the same songs that they've played and that the audience has listened to for years, an aural testament to their culture and family.*

*It's happened before and it will happen again; Christina's passion and reverence for her culture always shows up when it's time to suit up. As a Mexican-American, Christina loves how this musical space feels like home.*

Senior year. A time to celebrate, to finish strong, to look ahead. Christina started the 2019–2020 school year focused on passing her classes, giving a memorable recital, and successfully completing her student teaching. A music education major and violinist, Christina juggles rehearsals, gigs, practice, and homework. And that's just her academic

life. Like many college students, Christina navigates the stresses of personal life while simultaneously trying to earn her degree.

Christina lives the reality that the categories of life—personal, school, and work—are inherently intertwined, and difficult to keep separated. Stop by the music building courtyard on any given day and you are likely to find Christina taking a break from her practice session or relaxing between classes. As you get to know her—build trust with her—she will often share the layers of the current day’s challenges and stresses. While practicing scales or orchestra excerpts, Christina might also be worrying about the fight she had with her best friend and/or the upcoming theory quiz that she hasn’t found time to study for yet. From an outsider’s perspective, Christina seems to be doing well and is on track for a successful senior year. For Christina, it often feels like she is barely keeping her head above water, though you might not realize this by looking at her.

On campus, Christina usually looks very put together. As a music education major, she regularly attends her internship at a local school, so it isn’t uncommon for her to look her best on those days. However, unlike students who throw on hoodies, leggings, and flip flops as they rush to class, Christina always comes to campus looking like a young professional. Whether in teaching attire or a casual outfit, Christina’s status as a soon-to-be-graduating-senior-who-is-ready-to-enter-the-classroom shows. When complimented on this, Christina reveals that her appearance is one of the few things she can keep in order when the rest of her world feels hectic and stressful. “Hi, Christina. You look really nice. Having a good day?” “I guess, but there is so much going on. Too

much. It is what it is.” “Well, I think you look really put together.” “Ha! I don’t feel put together. But that’s good, I guess.”

Christina is the first in her family to attend college. Over the last four years, she has never felt sure that she was going to make it: “With everything that’s happened in the past four years, I never knew I would make it this far in anything. I never planned for after college because I wasn’t sure if I would even make it to that point.” The stresses of school and life can feel extra intense when compounded by the uncertainty that comes with doing something you have never done before, let alone something that no one in your immediate family has done before. Even though Christina feels like she can’t handle all the responsibilities and pressures of college life, the reality is that she is handling it all, although it hasn’t been until recently that Christina has been able to see this about herself: “With every accomplishment I achieve, I realize I’m stronger than I thought.”

While Christina’s schedule is strained by the demands of school and life, she still finds joy and devotes time to her passion—mariachi music and performance. Christina didn’t grow up playing mariachi, but when she had the opportunity to start in high school, she knew she loved it right away. Throughout high school and now in college, Christina has continued to play in several mariachi groups. They rehearse and gig regularly, making money by playing at special events and parties. Through mariachi, Christina discovered a way to more deeply connect with her culture and heritage. And because of her involvement in and passion for mariachi, Christina has inadvertently started to grow her role as an activist and mariachi advocate.

At one point, Christina put in a request for rehearsal space on campus so that she and her mariachi group would have a place to practice once a week. Days later, Christina

and her friends were denied any rehearsal space. In order to be given space, Christina and her friends would have to pay a fee and all register for a community mariachi class on campus. Christina and her friends already knew this group existed and didn't want to join this class because her group likes to lead themselves and move at a pace that they feel suits their ability level. They also didn't want to have to pay a fee. This situation really bothered Christina. Other students and ensembles get space and time to rehearse. Why couldn't she? Why not student-led mariachi groups? Christina understood that the policy in place only granted space to ASU students and sponsored groups, and that some of the people in her group weren't students. But this felt different, like the School of Music was not supporting her and her culture. This felt like a problem that shouldn't be happening, so Christina set off to find a solution.

For Christina, this denial and barrier was the straw that broke the camel's back. Christina had been thinking about how mariachi was never really present or included during her academic life. She started questioning and wondering why only certain ensembles, usually from European classical traditions, were considered "core," while all others were deemed "elective." She was motivated and ready to speak up. And she wasn't starting somewhere small.

Christina decided to go straight to the top and set up a meeting with the director of the School of Music. She began putting together an ambitious presentation that included not only her experience of feeling excluded and voiceless within the School of Music, but also her recommendations and ideas for how the School of Music could develop an entire mariachi curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Christina got feedback from her friends and talked with some of her professors and graduate TAs to

help improve her presentation. One of the biggest changes was being told that her presentation was unrealistic—that the director of the School of Music would likely not listen to the over 65 slides she had prepared. Christina was encouraged to cut down her presentation and focus on what she knew best: her own experience and story. She agreed that the presentation needed to be cut down and finalized her message and presentation.

When she met with the director and assistant director, Christina said she felt like they didn't really understand the importance of the problem. She left the meeting without any real or tangible commitments for change, and since then the situation had basically fizzled out. While Christina may have grown through the experience, it came to an end without much notice or event. She was glad she followed through on her idea and made the presentation, but as the fall semester rolled into spring, she didn't hear back from the director. Disappointing. And that wasn't the only point of frustration or disappointment that would occur before graduation.

Christina had looked forward to student teaching in the spring. She wasn't sure how it would turn out—maybe she would do well, maybe not—but she knew this was an important final step in her degree. Early on, Christina noticed small details about student teaching that started to wear away at her expectations. Her mentor teacher at the local high school—her own first orchestra teacher from middle school—didn't end up being the positive figure she remembered from just a few years prior. When they talked privately, Christina was disappointed to hear her mentor talk negatively about students. This deficit perspective, which was bad enough, was worsened by the fact that the mentor critiqued not only students' playing abilities but also personal characteristics such as physical appearance. Cue Christina's deep, exasperated exhale.



A few weeks into the spring, Christina expected that her formal observations would be some of the most important aspects of her student teaching experience. She prepared and organized her lessons, and felt nervous when the day arrived for her first observation. As always, she looked like a teacher, too. Her hair neatly pinned back, close-toed dress shoes, black slacks, a dressy top, and matching cardigan—all made complete by her school lanyard displaying her ID badge. But when the university supervisor arrived, he was dressed so casually that Christina’s mentor pointed out that she thought he could have been a student, *at the high school*. “This is supposed to be a big deal. It’s my student teaching, and he can’t even show up and look professional,” Christina lamented as she retold this story sitting outside a coffee shop next to the School of Music. “It’s kind of embarrassing.” The image of Christina’s professionalism side by side with her supervisor’s blue jeans, t-shirt, and tennis shoes. Another deep exhale.

While much of this might have not been exactly what Christina expected, she was coping. And then the pandemic happened. Over spring break, Christina’s university transitioned to remote learning and the last eight weeks of the semester were done completely via video conference. For Christina, this meant that student teaching no longer included going into a physical classroom, working with students, collaborating with a mentor, or being observed by a supervisor from the university. An already semi-disappointing experience turned into a scenario in which she had no motivation. She kept up with her lesson plans and met the requirements she was given; however, any semblance of special-ness with which she had envisioned student teaching had now totally eroded.

The pandemic also directly impacted Christina's senior recital. At ASU, the accomplishment of a recital is often celebrated with friends and family in the audience with many families throwing small receptions with food afterwards. Christina was looking forward to her recital because she intended to showcase her growth as a classical *and* mariachi musician. Christina planned on giving the required 30-minute classical recital that she and her studio professor discussed. Then, after intermission, a full mariachi ensemble would appear and Christina would proudly showcase her culture and passion. Asserting herself as an advocate, she was going to include the mariachi second half without telling her professor about any of it. And why should she? Her professor hadn't been very supportive or kind during the last four years. Christina was meeting the requirements and adding her own flare at the end. It's her recital, and she should be able to decide what it looks like.

Christina's recital was scheduled to take place the first day after spring break, exactly the same day that the university transitioned to pandemic protocols. So Christina's recital went from being one of the many spring performances, to the first given under COVID-19 conditions. Instead of an audience full of friends and family, Christina could only have seven people in attendance: six attendees of her choice, plus her violin professor. Usually students would host a celebratory reception afterwards, but this was no longer an option. Because of the pandemic, Christina's friends couldn't get together to rehearse, so the entire second half of the recital—the mariachi half—was cut. With one thing after another changed, Christina felt as though all of the parts of the senior year that she was looking forward to, was working towards, were falling through.

Shortly after her courses were “re-envisioned” and as she passed her recital, other changes continued to chip away at the expectations she held for her senior year. Especially as a first-generation college student, graduating and receiving a college degree was something Christina had been dedicated to and working towards for years. For the last four years, she had observed her older cohort members walk across the graduation stage and receive their diplomas. Each May, her Facebook feed explodes with smiling graduates donning their caps and gowns, posing with the desert campus beauty of mountains and cacti, relishing in their much-deserved achievement. Christina was looking forward to her own graduation, to finally know that *she* did it, and to celebrating this accomplishment with family and friends. But for Christina, and many other college seniors, the pandemic not only disrupted classes, but also caused graduation ceremonies to be held remotely. Christina understands that this was for everyone’s safety, but it’s still her grief and her loss. She hopes that someday she will likely be able to attend the graduation ceremony and walk across the stage. She knows her family will still gather and prepare festive foods and throw her a proper party. But it’s not now, not when she expected, and not happening in *this* moment of her graduation. Right now, it doesn’t feel like it should. A final disappointment in a disappointing year.

### **Edward**

*Mallory: In three words, describe yourself to someone who has never met you.*

*Edward: Quiet, humble, but confident.*

Through my Zoom screen, Edward, a third year DMA performance major, looks like his usual self, but his setting is far from usual. “How is everything in Fresno?” I ask. “I hear the weather is wonderful right now. Maybe you can get a couple of good walks

in?” “Yes,” Edward says, “the weather is great, and you’d think that I would be outside, but my aunt is making me stay inside for the next week or so. This week is going to be a peak for the virus here.” If Edward and I had been speaking prior to March 9, 2020, we would have likely enjoyed a stroll across campus, picked up a coffee or Boba, and talked about his experience in the School of Music underneath the shade of several palm trees. Instead, through our screens, we confirmed that we were still in the same time zone and dealt with shoddy internet—sometimes mine, sometimes his—in order to share and learn about his experience in the ASU School of Music.

Edward is a wonderfully skilled and dedicated viola performance major who aspires to be a university studio professor. As I watched the recording of his doctoral recital, which was live streamed due to the pandemic, his kind, optimistic, and fun-loving personality faded and a ferocious and passionate musician who played with both clarity and wildness emerged. The energy and labor of his performance resonated even through my laptop screen.

As testament to his expertise, Edward was chosen to be a member of a prestigious small chamber ensemble named for one of the institution’s donors. The selected recipients serve in this role for their first two years of their graduate work. Each student in the ensemble receives tuition remission, a teaching assistantship, and a monthly stipend to cover their living expenses. They perform regularly in the community and are the ensemble of choice for large alumni and donor events across campus. This honor recognizes Edward’s high level of musicianship while simultaneously providing him a resume line and title that will set him apart in the performance and university teaching

world. And for his first two years, Edward felt well supported in his degree pursuits. At the time of this study, Edward was in his third year, and the support felt different.

Edward is also an international student from a country in Southeast Asia. He grew up in the capital, a bustling, modern city, where his parents and most of his family still reside. Edward started playing string instruments when he was seven years old. During his childhood, he visited his “grandaunts” who were living in Florida: “They taught me simple tunes on the piano and inspired me to take up the instrument. Our house at the time could not fit an upright piano, so my mom recommended learning a string instrument instead.” Going back and forth between his home country and the U.S. has been a familiar experience for Edward. Visiting his aunt who lived in California and going to Disneyland are some of his most cherished memories. However, he had never been to the rural Midwest prior to grad school. More on that later.

Edward has enjoyed going to school and living in the United States because he gets to be himself. As a gay man in his home country, Edward grew up well aware of the ways in which you could or couldn’t be in order to be accepted by society at large. Edward explained that there is a hierarchy placed upon LGBTQIA+ people in his home country. The closer you are to male and straight, the less harshly you are treated. Edward says that bisexual men who dress masculinely are at the top, while hyper-feminine transwomen are placed at the bottom and are more often subjected to danger and violence. Edward said that when he was growing up he told his parents that he was bi (bisexual). His dad, emulating the feelings of many parents of LGBTQIA+ children in the country, responded, “Well, it’s good that you at least like girls.” Edward knew that saying he was bi was a way to eventually ease his parents into hopefully accepting that he was

gay. Now, as an adult, Edward realizes that he and his parents have come a long way: “My parents experienced growth through the years and now are more proud and open-minded about me living my life as a gay man.” Edward sees that his parents are different from many parents in his home country, and he is grateful that they accept him and love him.

Edward is generally positive about life. Even when something difficult or stressful is impacting his day or week, Edward often tries to look on the bright side. When pointing out the latest absurdity or stressor in his life, he is light-hearted and often funny. Simultaneously, he is realistic about the challenges that he and his peers face.

Edward was one of the first students to get involved in the student diversity and inclusion committee at ASU. He heard about the group through an email invitation and started attending their weekly gatherings. He has continued being an active member and participated in the group regularly over the last two years.

Edward has a lot of energy for diversity work and has expressed that he is still learning and asking questions about the topics and problems that come up. Edward knows that being active in the diversity and inclusion committee will likely help in his job search and that social justice is something that he wants to pursue throughout his life. Despite his passion and personal experience, Edward doesn't feel like he has the background or training to handle many of the questions or situations that will inevitably arise. He is proud of what the committee has accomplished, while simultaneously wishing that the committee could actually “do something big.”

Edward feels ill-equipped for activism compared to his music education counterparts. He feels that music education students have coursework and professors that

can help them learn to be activist-educators. As a performance major, Edward feels that his path is limited to a “traditional, classical music degree,” and he wishes that he had more access to the types of knowledge and skills that would align more with his social justice values and interests.

*One of my fears is when I go out into the real world and apply for jobs, and they see on my resume that I was active in this kind of organization, maybe they would hire me as a professor. Because aside from being an expert on the viola, I also have knowledge with diversity and inclusion [work]. When in fact, I don't know. I just supported this organization, and that's it. I don't know the theories. I don't know all those things.*

Edward is trying to improve his own practice, community, and field, while also navigating and learning about all these topics that now have labels and concepts and theories tied to them. Although Edward doesn't give himself much credit, the thinking and questioning he is doing is right on track with what many students and progressive scholars are asking of their institutions. Edward helped write questions they wanted to ask a recent visiting scholar. He and the other student committee members wonder:

- *What can be done to empower and mobilize a student organization (that advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion) that operates within an increasingly hectic and result-driven environment of a university school of music?*
- *The word “diversity” feels like a buzzword that is treated as a box that needs to be ticked off from a list of what an institution needs to do. What are the ways that the institution (and its students) can add more meaning, relevance, and power to the word (and related words such as inclusion and equity)?*

- *Most students here at the School of Music will become teachers someday. How can they build a music studio that can foster social justice, equity, and empathy?*
- *Social Justice, diversity, equality, etc., are some words that can automatically make some people uncomfortable. How do we address this barrier which can stifle meaningful conversations between various people?*

Edward thinks a lot about the challenges and injustice he sees in his community, local and global, and has continued to push himself to find ways to speak up and contribute to changing the situation. He wants to make a difference, recognizes this isn't easy, but tries anyway.

### **A pause**

Together these sketches serve as an introduction to the people who contributed their stories and experiences to this project. Each person's sketch is useful to keep in mind when delving into Chapter 6. In Chapter 5, I present a similar sketch of Arizona State University to help the reader have a sense of this place where all these stories came into dialogue. In Chapter 6, the students' and institutions' stories are placed side by side so that we can consider the ways in which the institution's narrative is lived out and experienced. Considering these stories, of the students, the institution, and the collision between them, can help us to think deeply about the ways in which students feel supported, or not, and welcome, or not, within these places.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE INSTITUTION'S STORY

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the ways in which music students experience equity and inequity within their school of music and to learn from them how their institution as a system impacts students' experiences. In chapter 4, I gave an overview of each of the eight people who contributed to this project. In this chapter, I will introduce the institution and give an overview of the institution's story. In chapter 6, I place the institution's and students' stories side by side. In this way, we can consider what the institution espouses in direct dialogue with what is lived out and experienced by the students.

#### **Arizona State University**

This study is situated within Arizona State University (ASU), an institution that, for the last two decades, has been working to tell a new story of “access, excellence, and impact” (ASU, n.d.-a). Through a combination of language, video and photographic imagery, and highly sophisticated branding, including a powerful online presence, the “New American University” (ASU, n.d.-e) tells a story of innovation and a commitment to inclusivity.

ASU is a large, collegiate institution in the southwestern United States. With its four campuses spanning the Valley of the Sun, ASU currently enrolls 119,979 graduate and undergraduate students (ASU, n.d.-d). Of those students, approximately 30,000 attend ASU through their asynchronous online learning platform (ASU, n.d.-b; n.d.-c). Despite being spread across multiple locations and modalities, ASU considers itself “one university in many places” (Office of the President, 2004). This slogan and concept is one

of the many strategies implemented to maintain unified values across the institution amidst surging growth and progressive change. To put this growth in perspective, the university had “only” 76,771 students as recently as 2013.

The current story of ASU begins in 2002, when the university took on its sixteenth president. An expert in public administration and science and technology policy, Michael Crow has led the institution to be consistently named by the *U.S. News and World Report* as the most innovative university in the United States (Greguska, 2020). Michael Crow has achieved a litany of notable goals and changes within and outside the institution. Through personal publications and university branding and documents (ASU, n.d.-ab), the president has described the ways in which this institution can be an exemplar for how universities might survive, thrive, and expand amidst unforeseeable and turbulent changes in society. The president has been working to redefine the culture of the institution and to implement a cohesive set of values—a cohesive story.

The first iteration of these institutional values was Michael Crow’s call to action and the implementation of the “New American University.” In his inaugural address (Crow, 2002), Michael Crow called for “enduring institutions” of higher education to evolve beyond their historic forms, based on serving the elite, and to take on models that support growth in this time and in this place (pg. 2). Further, Crow (2002) formally called on institutions to prioritize “the new gold standard”:

*The new American university would cultivate excellence in teaching, research, and public service, providing the best possible education to the broadest possible spectrum of society. The new American university would embrace the educational*

*needs of the entire population—not only a select group, and not only the verbally or mathematically gifted. The success of the new American university will be measured not by who the university excludes, but rather by who the university includes, and from this inclusion will come its contributions to the advancement of society. (p.2)*

This is one of the first times that Michael Crow, or perhaps any leader in a top tier institution of higher education, formally called for a place that values inclusion over exclusion.

Many of the changes that President Crow called for were large-scale shifts in culture, policy, and priorities. He believed that the success of the institution was predicated on the ability to “initiate [these changes] as rapidly as possible” (2002, p. 10). Crow believes that this is possible and can be expected since “universities are complex organisms capable of marked regional variation and change over time” (p. 10). Crow has continued to profess his own commitment to a swift velocity of change (Beschloss, 2017), and insists upon an institution that does the same. For the almost 20 years since Crow assumed his role as president, this velocity, this overwhelming newness, is readily apparent (and still ongoing) across the institution.

This constant onslaught of change and growth has occurred in a plethora of forms, including new campuses, new donors, new initiatives, and new students. For example, in just his first two years as president, Michael Crow oversaw the establishment of the Downtown Phoenix campus (Callahan, 2014), partnered with the largest health care system in the valley (ASU, n.d.-j), and retained the largest single-donor gift in ASU history (Padgett, 2003).

All these changes require funds, so the president led (and continues to lead) the university in seeking out new donors, business partners, and students. Across just seven years of Crow’s appointment, “the total number of minority students enrolled at ASU [had] nearly doubled (11,487 to 21,060)” (ASU, n.d.-ab). During this time, enrollment also increased by another 30,000 students with the implementation of ASU Online (ASU, n.d.-t). In 2014, ASU began its partnership with Starbucks, which meant that “every benefits-eligible U.S. [Starbucks employee] working part- or full-time receives 100% tuition coverage for a first-time bachelor’s degree through Arizona State University’s online program” (Starbucks, n.d.). The signs of change and new growth at Arizona State go on and on, from large-scale academic reorganizing (Robbins, 2009), to global collaborations (Keeler, 2013), from hosting President Barack Obama and the creation of the Obama Scholars Program (ASU, 2009), to being named the most innovative college in the United States (Faller, 2015).

To perhaps codify Arizona State as having transitioned into the dynamic, inclusive New American University, a new charter was adopted by the institution in 2014, Crow’s twelfth year:

*ASU is a comprehensive public research university, measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed; advancing research and discovery of public value; and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves. (ASU, 2021b)*

The charter established the new foundation and ongoing intentions of the university, and is accompanied by detailed mission statements and goals that further communicate and exemplify the broader university charter.

The charter is accompanied by a video that portrays the charter's values in a lived way (Crow, 2019a). The charter video shows many aspects of campus life, such as students working together in class and young children participating in science activities, as well as off-campus happenings like students volunteering in the community and presenting at conferences. The video is narrated by a visually diverse group of faculty that represent departments from across the institution, including the president, athletic director, advisor on American Indian Affairs, and others. The administrators and faculty emulate and embody the positive and inclusive message of the charter, sharing, in a human voice, the ways in which the charter infuses and underpins the place that is the institution.

Notably, the charter video is accompanied by a series of "Charter Stories," in which every image included in the video is extracted and expanded to show the ways in which it emulates the charter. For instance, in the video, there is an image of a young woman using tools to examine and work on computer chips. She is wearing protective glasses and a blue hazmat-style lab coat. When you click on "Learn more," you discover that the person in the blue lab coat is undergraduate student Jessica, a "future innovator who is thriving" at the university. Her charter story explains that by coming to ASU, Jessica has had the opportunity to work with her professor, who is one of the first women to lead a NASA deep space mission. Each charter story highlights the vast, reputable opportunities and possibilities that await students at ASU.

Since its publishing, the ASU charter has continued to be fleshed out, updated, and refined into values, goals, and targets that further define the inner workings of the New American University. The versions cited here were current in late spring 2021. The charter’s recently renovated mission and four overarching goals encompass an additional eighteen measures of how the institution intends to live up to its values (ASU, n.d.-k). The charter, mission, and goals are accompanied by statements regarding the ways in which ASU promotes “a new environment,” “a new community,” and “a new objective” (ASU, n.d.-y; ASU, n.d.-x; ASU, n.d.-z). The refined mission, goals, and statements have then been funneled into eight Design Aspirations that “guide the ongoing evolution of ASU as a New American University” (ASU, n.d.-o). While much has changed at Arizona State over the course of almost 20 years, these institutional objectives are integrated in innovative ways throughout the university to achieve the same simple goals stated back in 2002: “excellence, access and impact” (ASU, n.d.-o).

### **Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts**

*The Herberger Institute is more than a design and arts college: It’s a creative city of over 6,000 people, with more designers and artists than work in the city of St. Louis or in metropolitan Atlanta. Throughout history, the commingling of creative people in a dense, open, collaborative environment has been the source of great innovation. Herberger Institute is one of those sources. — Dean Steven Tepper, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts (Tepper, 2019)*

Within ASU, the departments and schools emulate the broad institutional goals and communicate the ways in which their unique disciplines support and embody the values of the institution. Narrowing towards the focus of this study, the Herberger

Institute for Design and the Arts was divided into the following six entities: the School of Film, Dance, and Theater; the Design School; the School of Art; the School of Arts, Media, and Engineering; the ASU Art Museum; and the School of Music. The schools and museum are all located within walking distance of one another and, within the square mile or so of property, there are said to be as many faculty and student artists, creators, and makers as there are within the entire city of St. Louis. The Herberger Institute's mission is “to position designers, artists, scholars and educators at the center of public life and prepare them to use their creative capacities to advance culture, build community and imaginatively address today’s most pressing challenges” (ASU, n.d.-i). The close connection to the university’s mission and overarching values can be seen in the Institute’s vision statement and subsequent values:

*Vision: To advance the New American University by embedding designers, artists and arts-based inquiry at its core and throughout the communities it serves locally, nationally and internationally.*

*Values:*

- *Creativity as a core 21st-century competency*
- *Design and the arts as critical resources for transforming our society*
- *Innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship*
- *Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration and research*
- *Social embeddedness*
- *Projecting all voices, Excellence (ASU, n.d.-i)*

After data collection had ended—but further adding to the story of constant churning and updating of the institution—HIDA reorganized the five schools. The

reorganization resulted in the School of Music, Dance, and Theater, and the newly dedicated Sidney Poitier New American Film School (Faller, 2021). This change to the School of Music also included adding a new building to the downtown campus—with a state of the art recording studio—to house the new Bachelor of Arts degree in Popular Music (ASU, n.d.-w), fashion design, and additional programs. A new building in Los Angeles was established to develop internships and other opportunities for students and faculty on the west coast (Leingang, 2019). Further, the university designated the Roden Crater (ASU, n.d.-l) as an art-making space. All of these were announced between 2019–2021. While these changes and subsequent impact on the institution is relevant to the ongoing change and growth of the institution, this study focuses on the happenings and standing of the institution prior to Fall 2020.

### **School of Music**

The School of Music (SoM) further delineates and reinforces the broader university mission. The SoM at ASU is one of the largest in the country with an average of over 750 students enrolled each year. Half are undergraduate, and half are graduate, with an even split between those pursuing master’s and doctoral degrees. The website lists 88 tenure and tenure-track faculty (ASU, n.d.-r). Faculty regularly receive university and nation-wide recognition for their scholarly and musical contributions. The SoM is considered the top music school in the state and consistently holds a reputation as a strong school across the country.

Under the directives of the ASU Charter, the SoM has worked to shape its mission and to forward projects that center diversity and inclusion. At the time of this study, the SoM mission statement was “to inspire and empower students to become



creative leaders who transform society through music” (ASU, n.d.-g). Their values were as follows:

- *Engaging students with a broad range of musical thought, expression and experiences*
- *Building upon rich traditional foundations*
- *Advancing innovative musical practices*
- *Fostering creative enterprise*
- *Promoting all forms of creative contributions to the field of music*
- *Cultivating socially embedded practices* (ASU, n.d.-g)

Recent initiatives forwarded by the Herberger Institute, such as Projecting All Voices (ASU, n.d.-aa), have encouraged and supported the School of Music in bringing BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) artists, scholars, and educators to campus in order to work with and engage students. The School of Music has recently spearheaded projects like “Towards A More Perfect Union” (Borst, 2019). This interdisciplinary concert was showcased in the university's largest performance hall. The student orchestra played alongside professional artists, musicians, and poets of color, all performing brand new compositions written by BIPOC composers, most of whom were in attendance or performers themselves. In the printed program notes, this collaborative event was heralded as “a unique, poignant, powerful, and hopeful project. . . . Through the power of music these composers will share their own experience, struggles, and challenges in how we all work towards a more perfect union” (ASU Symphony Orchestra, 2019).

Some students in this study participated in the concert, and were excited to be a part of what felt like an important event. However, they also noticed some issues. While

the concert included the top orchestra, there were no additional connections to the School of Music or opportunities for other interested students to get involved. One student in this study said that, “it was exhilarating to perform works for living women/BIPOC/queer composers, but my only gripe was that after that concert we went back to regular concert programming with new works being on the sideline.”

### **Music Education Program**

*If you have ever wondered why people make music, how people learn music or what are the best ways to help people be successful making music they want to make, then the BMus program is for you. You will develop the ability to think deeply about such questions. — Music education program (ASU, n.d.-n)*

Seven of the eight students who contributed to this project happened to be music education majors and told stories about their experiences within the program. Therefore, I chose to explore and share the institutional story of the music education degree program.

Within the School of Music, students can pursue a variety of degrees, including performance, composition, music therapy, and music learning and teaching. The music learning and teaching degree is the equivalent of music education at other institutions. The music learning and teaching faculty renovated their curriculum in 2014 in order to encompass a more holistic and inclusive view of music education. The faculty saw this name change as one of the final formal gestures of the renovation for the program.

In Spring of 2020, just before the pandemic shut down campus, and in the middle of data collection, the music education program got its new name. While the name change had been initiated by faculty several years prior, it took a long time to be finalized by upper administration and the state Board of Regents. Without warning, the name

change occurred and suddenly the music education degrees had new names. All music education undergraduates and graduates were now pursuing a degree in Music Learning and Teaching.

Some of the students in this study discovered the change when they accessed their online accounts and saw that their listed degree program had been altered overnight. Students felt confused, worried, and frustrated. They didn't understand why the change had been made, and some were worried that they would have difficulty finding a job without a "music education degree." Their anger was directed at their faculty, who the students believed made the change without consulting them first. However, the faculty were also caught off guard and were frustrated that they didn't get to formally announce the change to the students, most of whom entered the program after the faculty submitted the request, prior to its implementation. The unanticipated, overnight name change, coupled with the shutdown for the pandemic, took away the faculty's ability to answer questions and handle the situation with care.

### **A pause**

This institutional story provides a sense of the ongoing newness and velocity of change that is the place that is Arizona State University. This background of the institution, and its stated priorities, help to provide context and a sense of a place prior to engaging with Chapter 6. In Chapter 6, the students' and institution's stories interface directly with one another. What happens when these stories are told side by side? By considering both the stated stories of the institution and the lived experiences of students, what might we learn?

## CHAPTER 6

### STUDENTS' AND INSTITUTION'S STORIES IN DIALOGUE

*I was analyzing the Arizona State University mission statement, like, what does it say our students are doing? Innovation? And I'm thinking, "Hmm. Are we being innovative?" I mean, some things are changing, but, like, is that on the student side? Are we going out and doing things? Are we just being told what to do and shown this is how things get done? That's a lot of what I've seen. What I see sometimes is, "Oh, this is how you run a rehearsal." Like, wait . . . so how are we going to change that? What are we doing to expand our own thoughts and our own belief system?*

*—Margaret, junior, music education student*

The purpose of this study is to place students' stories in dialogue with those of the institution. Institutions craft stories, or narratives, that allow the institution to market itself and project its espoused values. Words such as "diversity," "inclusion," and other languages of appeasement (Stewart, 2017) are placed into these institutional narratives to project an institution that is, for example, innovative, admirable, or just. But do institutions achieve their espoused values or at least come close? What is really going on? What is the lived reality of these stated values? Contemplating students' stories alongside the institutional narrative opens spaces to consider the complicated in-between as experienced by those with an intimate understanding of how the institution functions—students.

As discussed in chapter 2, institutions, including universities, function to maintain themselves and are exclusive by design (Ahmed, 2017b). Institutions function “as usual,” which makes it difficult to see their inner workings. This problematic, hidden-in-plain-sight system only becomes visible when someone troubles the institution (Ahmed, 2012). Collegiate students—those who live the reality of the institution from a vulnerable and intimate position—bump into the edges of the system. Students trouble the system (and the system troubles the students). Students’ stories and experiences open opportunities to observe the ways in which institutions burden some and uplift others, which pathways are blocked, and which are made smooth.

The following stories have been curated to reflect both students’ experiences and the related institutional narrative. These stories have been gathered into three main sections related to, and diverging from, seeking your own opportunities, inclusion, and institutions during crisis. At the start of each large section, I introduce the topic and offer some provocations. These provocations lead into several stories from the students. Throughout the chapter, I intersperse the institution’s story.

The stories presented in this chapter make it possible to consider the students’ lived realities in the School of Music (SoM) and at Arizona State University (ASU), and perhaps allow the reader to consider the ways in which their own institutions impact students. These stories make me wonder. I hope they make you wonder, too.

### **Seeking Your Own Opportunities**

This first large section is about seeking your own opportunities. I introduce the topic and then layout stories regarding opportunity and leadership, exploitation, finishing

what you started, seeking opportunities elsewhere, playing what you want to play, and playing your music.

One of the grand narratives about education, especially higher education, is that a college degree can lift anyone out of poverty and toward the career, goals, and passions of the individual. The president of Arizona State University, Michael Crow, regularly discusses and promotes this idea. In a *Washington Post* opinion piece, Crow stated that “a college education is a reliable and consistent catalyst for social mobility, the bedrock of the American dream” (Crow, 2019b).

At Arizona State University, this grand narrative has been refined into a new, forward-thinking sub narrative that is student-centered; not only can this degree take you places, here, at ASU, you can design and manipulate your education to suit your individual goals. On its Student Success web page, Arizona State University is described as an institution that is “nimble and responsive” to student needs (ASU, n.d.-ac). This hint at nimbleness and flexibility deviates from the traditional narrative of “we have a plan for you,” and instead communicates a plethora of opportunities: you have options, and you can make choices.

Grand narratives emanate from structures. So what happens when a grand narrative, even an updated one, is placed against the students’ experiences? In what ways do students still come up against the old narrative of “we have a plan for you”? Through the students’ stories, the ruptures between the sub-narratives of the institution and the students’ lived experiences become visible.

In this study, I encountered and will now present multiple stories about seeking your own opportunities. Some stories were about asking for an opportunity and getting it.

Some were about asking for an opportunity, getting it, and then being exploited. Some were about simply wanting the opportunity to attend college, while others were about wanting to make a certain kind of music and being denied. The students' stories demonstrate the ways in which the institution creates barriers that are easier for some students to navigate and harder for others. Who gets what they want, who gets more than they bargained for, and who is left wanting?

### **Opportunity as leadership (or not)**

*Helping students to thrive should be the driving mission of higher learning. ASU is advancing a student-centric, adaptive design that is nimble and responsive to the needs of learners and the imaginations of faculty and leadership.*

— Arizona State University, Office of the President, Student Success web page  
(n.d.-ac)

Arizona State University's story of "helping students to thrive" reinforces the narrative that this institution is a place for opportunity. The institutional narrative gives the impression that students will be able to pursue the experiences they desire. On its "A New Environment" web page, Arizona State University asserts that:

*ASU students have the flexibility to control their learning clock-speed and pursue knowledge in unprecedented ways. ASU has forged groundbreaking academic and discovery partnerships across education, industry, government and the community, which provide valuable opportunities for learners of all ages. (ASU, n.d.-y)*

At Arizona State University, an entire certificate program includes the word opportunity in its title (e.g., The Sustainability Opportunity [n.d.-h]). Arizona State University's literature and many websites tell a story of opportunity. Students come to college for opportunity—the opportunity to learn, to change their prospects, and to have new experiences, and at Arizona State University the opportunities are available. However, they are not always obvious to students. Sometimes students have to find, or ask, for the opportunities they seek.

One of the most memorable educational experiences in Jack's undergraduate college career in music education occurred when the director of jazz studies gave him the opportunity to lead the university jazz band. Jack ran the group for an entire semester and even led a concert. The director attended rehearsals, but Jack did the majority of the rehearsing. This opportunity came about because the professor had a hearing loss or ear issue at the time, and having a strong musician like Jack lead rehearsals helped fill in the listening needed to clean up the ensemble's sound. The director also saw (and still sees) Jack as an asset to the jazz education community in Arizona and hopes that after graduation Jack will continue to be a strong leader and teacher in the state. Both the director and Jack thought leading the jazz ensemble would be a good way—an opportunity—for Jack to gain experience related to his career goals.

However, this opportunity did not just fall into Jack's lap. Jack got to conduct the jazz ensemble for a semester not just because he is capable and his professors trust him. He made this opportunity happen:

*The chance to direct the jazz band wouldn't have happened if I didn't ask [my professor] for help to go to the jazz band director academy. That is something*



*that I came across on my own time, outside of the School of Music. And I think that a lot of the opportunities that I've had, I've had to just sort of ask, or build some sort of trust with teachers, and stuff like that. . . . I've sort of had to go, like, "Is it okay if I do this?"*

After rehearsals Jack and the director would meet to reflect on the experience. Jack appreciated the director's support and was glad for the opportunity to both gain teaching experience and discuss it with a knowledgeable mentor. Jack remembers some really good advice from those conversations. For example, the director shared a quote by Malcolm X about how you can't expect people to be at the same place in their journey as you are in yours. Jack sees this as directly related to his teaching: you can't be mad at students for being where they are in their journey. Jack has learned that it's important to work with students starting from where they are in their own lives, musical and otherwise.

But, when Jack started leading the university jazz band, the students in the ensemble had no idea why Jack was in front of them and giving them feedback. They disliked what was going on, were confused about the situation, and complained to one another. Jack didn't find out about their frustrations until the following semester when he spoke with a friend who had overheard someone complaining about him. Looking back, Jack thinks it might have been different if his professor had talked to the group and explained that "this is a learning experience for Jack." If he could do it all again, Jack would have wanted his peers to know what was going on and why. He would have told them that he wanted their feedback and comments, and that he would have been receptive and used this information. Still, all in all, Jack is glad that he had this opportunity.

Jack found the experience of leading the jazz band to be extremely valuable to his growth as a musician and educator, and he knows that this opportunity was unique. Overall, when Jack asked for what he wanted, he got it. While there may have been some minor discomfort in leading his peers, Jack sees it as an integral chapter of his undergraduate experience.

**Exploitation: Assistant Conductor for Women’s Chorus (or not)**

*ASU Mission & Goals*

*Meet the needs of 21st-century learners by empowering 21st-century learners through the university learner initiative by increasing individual success through personalized learning pathways and promoting adaptability to all accelerated social-technical changes.*

— *Arizona State University, Charter, Mission and Goals web page (n.d.-k)*

The Charter, Mission and Goals web page describes Arizona State University as a place where students’ needs will be met and where students can adapt their experiences and degree paths toward their individualized interests. Sadie, a music education junior, realized that she wanted to personalize her learning experience. The institution says it is possible, and she had good reason for wanting to pursue additional opportunities.

Specifically, Sadie wanted more conducting and leadership experiences than her degree program offered. She took the required basic conducting course, but she was left wanting more experience and mentorship. She worried that without more experience, she would not be prepared for student teaching and her career. So, Sadie registered for an extra choral conducting class taught by a DMA student, Martha, whom she admired.

During the semester, Martha saw that Sadie was capable and organized, so she asked Sadie to serve as the assistant conductor for Women's Chorus the following semester: "And I was like, 'Hell, yeah!'" Once Sadie stepped into this role, however, she didn't get what she expected.

In this position, Sadie thought she would learn how and be allowed to conduct a few pieces during a concert. And while Sadie did not have any prior experience teaching choir, including tasks such as leading vocal warmups or running rehearsals, she agreed to this opportunity because she thought she would be taught to do some of these things. Instead, Martha often gave Sadie tasks without realizing that Sadie had little idea of how to execute them:

*I think she had high expectations for me because I had clear ideas for what I wanted to do. And she is super, super capable. So I think she just expected that I knew how to do all this stuff. And she never pointed out what I was doing wrong. She just blasted over it and, like, accomplished it herself in place of me when I couldn't do it. [She would say,], "Okay, you do this," and then when I couldn't, she just did it for me.*

Sadie didn't get the experience she expected, especially for someone holding the title of "assistant conductor." Early in the semester, Sadie was given the task of being "alto section leader," in which she felt both inadequate and belittled. She didn't know how to run vocal sectionals or warmups. Also, the altos were notorious for wanting to socialize and not focusing on rehearsing, so Sadie experienced disrespect from her peers. She was disheartened when she didn't know how to improve the sectional productivity and experience. Further, Sadie's main responsibility in this role was to take attendance each

day. Sadie was willing to help with attendance, however, as the days went on, it became clear that she wasn't getting the conducting experience she expected. Even though Martha might have been trying to give Sadie leadership experience, Sadie felt like Martha was just giving her the work she didn't want to do.

Sadie tried to be proactive and asked Martha directly to allow her to get involved in rehearsals. For example, Sadie asked if she could contribute a short lecture on some aspect of theory or another topic for the class, and Martha would agree. Sadie prepared her lesson and showed up to rehearsal ready to present, but then Martha would abruptly change the amount of time she had. Sometimes Martha would forget to stop the rehearsal to include Sadie's mini lecture. Sadie wasn't comfortable interrupting Martha, so she just let the situation go.

Eventually, Sadie was able to lead full group warmups occasionally, but she was never given a full piece to prepare for a concert—what she really wanted from the experience. The only times Sadie was allowed to conduct repertoire were on “lab choir” days—times when students from the choral conducting class took turns rehearsing the ensemble as a part of their midterm and final, which was the same experience Sadie had had the year prior when she took Martha's conducting class. Sadie was confused. As “assistant conductor” she expected to rehearse or conduct actual pieces, and instead she took attendance, led warmups now and then, and spent lots of time preparing lessons that didn't happen or that were cut short. Despite Martha giving her the title of assistant conductor when she invited Sadie into the role, Sadie didn't receive any recognition; her name wasn't listed as assistant conductor in the program and she never got to conduct during a concert.

Sadie thought that she might actually get to conduct performances if she worked with a different choir the following semester. So when Martha asked, Sadie agreed to be the co-director for the more prominent Chamber Chorus.

At first, Sadie was given some leadership. Prior to the start of the semester, Martha tasked Sadie with selecting music and told her that she would be conducting the pieces she selected in a concert. She gave Sadie one of the two weekly rehearsal days to rehearse her portion of the concert. This felt like progress.

Sadie still felt new and unsure of herself, but she was determined for the choir concert to be a success. She had never programmed for a choir before and did not know where to start, so she chose pieces that she thought would work based on what she had seen Martha select in previous semesters. She also had never experienced rehearsing a choir, but she made a rehearsal schedule and prepared to emulate the teaching style and procedures that she had seen Martha use in previous semesters. The semester started, rehearsals began, and while challenging, Sadie was managing.

When Sadie stepped into this additional role with the choral department, she was busy! Her senior recital was scheduled for the end of the semester. By choice, Sadie had decided to overload her class schedule and take twenty-one credits that included lessons on secondary instruments and classes such as jazz theory—experiences that would help make her a more well-rounded and flexible musician. As a high achieving student, she thought she was making reasonable and measured choices for herself while also setting limits for herself. Although the choir rehearsed twice a week, Sadie committed to attending and helping to run rehearsals with Martha only once a week. Even as Martha

began asking for more, Sadie still felt as though she was maintaining her boundaries and taking on only what she could handle, albeit challenging.

However, in choir, Sadie's boundaries kept being pushed, little by little, which made it difficult to notice that these changes were more than she bargained for. A few weeks into the semester, Martha decided to have the choir perform an opera reading, which at first sounded like a low key, manageable situation. Although the opera called for limited personnel, Martha chose to scale it up for one of her DMA requirements and included a full choir, orchestra, and dancers. Martha suggested that the Chamber Chorus should serve as the opera choir. Sadie knew that this would make Martha's life easier, so she agreed and kept doing her best, even though the change had a significant impact on her experience.

The addition of the opera led to half of Sadie's concert rehearsal time being repurposed to work on the opera. When Martha casually suggested that all concert prep happen on Mondays and all opera prep happen on Wednesdays, Sadie obliged, knowing that Martha would need part of the Monday time for rehearsing the concert music that she (Martha) was to conduct for the concert. The schedule change led to Sadie "doing twice as much work [for the concert] in half of the time."

As if losing half of her rehearsal time was not frustrating and overwhelming enough, Martha then asked Sadie to be the pianist for the opera. Sadie didn't normally attend rehearsals on Wednesdays, so she agreed to play, but only when the other pianist could not be there. Martha sent Sadie an electronic copy of the score. Sadie needed a bounded hard copy. The opera was hundreds of pages long and Sadie couldn't afford to print the score herself. She asked Martha, who was a TA with access to printing from the

music office, to get a copy. Martha agreed, but did not send the printed score to Sadie until three days before the rehearsal. Sadie was overwhelmed and confused. The opera was atonal and difficult music to play. Fine. Fine. Sadie would make it work.

Sadie reached out to Martha again because she would have to miss the first rehearsal to attend a previously scheduled music theory conference, and she wanted to let Martha know well in advance:

*And [Martha's] like, "Well, we need to find another pianist. Here's some other people I know. If you could contact them and schedule with them for me." So I contact the other pianist. She couldn't do it. She had appointments. I contact this other lady. I'm like, "Could you sub-in for me?" She's like, "Yeah. What's the pay?" I was like, "There is none, [exasperated] but whatever your hourly rate is." So I paid someone \$60 to sub for me for an unpaid gig, for which I was supposed to be chorus master, which I was not. I was the pianist. And, yeah, someone else was the chorus master.*

As the rehearsal weeks went on, Sadie realized she couldn't attend the concert opera dress rehearsal because it coincided with her wind ensemble concert—one of her own course responsibilities. Martha talked to Sadie's ensemble director and helped figure out a way for Sadie to attend both the concert and the rehearsal. However, this plan meant Sadie had to dash between the two gigs (carrying her large brass instrument), which left her with no time to warm up for her own concert. The whole experience was "so freaking stressful."

Sadie thought that was the end of it, but then Martha asked Sadie to play piano for the final recording. “And I was like, ‘Okay, this is the last thing I’m like ever going to do.’”

*And then it fell on the last Saturday of spring break, and I needed to go tour grad schools, and I got a free voucher from [an airline] last minute. And I was like, “Look, I can't do this. Like, I was only partially covering for [the other pianist], could she just do this?” [Martha's] like, “No.” So I, again, had to find someone and pay them to sub and then it ended up that [original pianist] could do it. So multiple times, I had to pay someone just to sub for an unpaid gig. For me... yeah, hmm [Sadie shakes her head looks straight into the Zoom call camera, as if to say, ‘Ugh.’]*

Months after this story, Sadie has reflected and has a better sense of what happened to her. Sadie did not want to let anyone down and often felt as though she could not say no. She was technically assistant conductor in these situations, and it felt as though it was her responsibility to make sure everything went well, while simultaneously feeling unprepared for the tasks she was given. Summing up her experience, Sadie commented, “Martha is really good at taking advantage of students, but making them feel like she is doing them a favor.”

It would be easy (and victim blaming) to say that this whole situation happened because of Sadie, that she should have opted out when the situation got to be too much and when she first felt taken advantage of. However, Sadie didn’t feel she could say no or that if she did, she would have been seen as unappreciative or irresponsible. If this situation was not the kind of opportunity that Arizona State University intends for its



students, what should Sadie have done differently? What options were available to her? How does the institution help students find the (safe, supportive) opportunities they desire? And, if something goes wrong, what support systems are available to students?

Who are Sadie's advisors and support systems on campus? Which faculty or staff mentors check in with her and how often do they check in? Sadie took a course overload, gave a recital, sought out an extra opportunity that came with commitment (but no credit), had a weekly internship placement at a local school as part of her music education degree, and was a community assistant (CA) for an entire dorm floor on campus—all in the same semester. This is a lot of responsibility for one student. Who provides guidance for this "I can do it all person"? Sadie is high achieving and receives praise in each of these responsibilities in her life. Who helps advise students like Sadie so that they don't feel overworked or unbalanced in their lives? Or is it that Sadie is seen as so competent that her advisors overlook her? Does anyone provide cautions to students who may be stretching themselves too thin?

And what about the student leaders on campus, such as Martha, who are teaching courses and conducting ensembles across campus? Where does the responsibility lie to ensure that Martha is leading or teaching in ways that are ethical and supportive of those in vulnerable positions? Has anyone ever observed Martha teach, or supervised and consulted with Martha regarding her teaching assignments? What kind of core values or ethics is Martha encouraged to base her teaching, conducting, and interactions with students upon?

## **I want the opportunity to finish what I started**

*ASU's Vision of Future: Learning Across Lifespan — Anytime, Anywhere, Any*

*Age*

*As change accelerates, ASU must be a place where people return again and again to build the skills for multiple, shifting careers.*

*— Arizona State University, Interview with President Michael Crow (Faller, 2018)*

In Michael Crow's pursuit of an institution that prioritizes inclusion over exclusion, he has set Arizona State University on a path to pursue and open up every possible pathway of access to a university education. Having an institution that is accessible to a vast array of people makes for an institution that is, perhaps, inclusive, and certainly well populated. Under Crow's tenure the student population has grown from around 58,000 in 2004 to just under 129,000 in 2020 (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2015; 2021). One demographic that Michael Crow wants to include and welcome into Arizona State University are those people that have attempted to earn college degrees and due to life circumstances were unable to finish. In a 2018 interview, Michael Crow recognizes that "people don't finish because the system is so narrow. There's not enough tolerance for the complete variability in our society" (Belvedere, 2018). In this way, Michael Crow has encouraged Arizona State University to be a place that welcomes people of all ages who have started college degrees and who want to finish them.

Sam is one of those people. At age 27, Sam had already experienced pursuing a piano performance degree, first at a university, then at a community college, in another

state, but it didn't work at the time, and he became an enthusiastic and highly motivated Apple employee. When he moved to Phoenix, Sam connected with the music education faculty at ASU and became a highly successful music education student. But the pathway into the degree was arduous.

Right before moving to Phoenix, Sam was back in community college for a semester, taking lessons and brushing up his piano playing. His professor was pleased with his progress. After moving to Phoenix, Sam decided to return to college and initially considered a performance degree. Sam started emailing the School of Music, making connections with studio professors, and figuring out the audition process. He signed up for an audition and practiced his repertoire:

*I knew nothing about Arizona, except that it's hot. And so I started researching online and I'm like, "Okay, Arizona State University is closest to where we're moving. So let's just try it." So we moved and I thought I would be able to just pull out an audition right after moving and only being back in [studying] piano for four months. And I had my audition. And it was—you know, I couldn't have done any better. Like, it's fine. I forgot a couple things. I didn't have some pieces that were required repertoire, but I'm like, "Let's still do it, anyways. Give it a try." And I remember getting [a letter], "Unfortunately, we're not going to move forward. Thank you for auditioning." And it was a blow to my ego, obviously. And it was really hard to hear. And it's like, "What am I doing again? I'm in this exact same spot [I was in when I dropped out]." And I was like, "I'm steadfast, and I'm going to make this happen."*

Sam was determined to make his dream of a musical career a reality, and he had learned from his past experiences that it's okay to develop your skills and try, try again. So he followed up with individual emails to each of the piano faculty members who were a part of his audition process, going down the list, one by one, politely asking for feedback about how to improve his skills before retaking the audition.

None of the piano faculty replied. Sam was overwhelmed and surprised. Didn't the faculty want to support the musical growth of all kinds of people, even if they wouldn't admit him to the program? Although Sam was disappointed, he kept trying and eventually received one email—an email so cruel that he believed the person wrote it just to drive him away. The writer told him: “What are you thinking? You are so unprofessional. You have absolutely no chance. There is nothing you can do.” Sam thinks that maybe this professor was being over the top to try to prevent him from making a financial mistake by pursuing a degree that the professor believed he was unprepared for. But Sam also thought that this was the worst feedback and criticism he had ever received. He knew his audition wasn't perfect, but he felt that he didn't deserve that level of backlash from a professor.

*With 39 graduate and undergraduate degrees and 3 minors, there is a place for you to pursue your passion at every level!*

— *Arizona State University, [Music degree programs web page](#) (ASU, n.d.-u)*

Sam doesn't know for sure if this harsh treatment, both the lack of response and the cruel email, was directly related to him being a non-traditional student. At 27, he was older than the majority of undergraduates when he auditioned. Maybe his skill level

would have been acceptable for someone just out of high school? Maybe the piano faculty believed Sam's age was an indication that he wouldn't—couldn't—possibly be serious about committing to a music degree? He wasn't sure.

President Michael Crow has talked about how important it is to move away from elitist forms of higher education. In a 2016 interview with an Australian news source ("Intelligence Comes in Many Types, Not Levels") now posted on the Arizona State web page (ASU, 2016b), Crow talked about making ASU into a place that meets the needs of a wider range of students, suggesting that more people should be admitted. The writer of the article noted:

*As president of Arizona State University since 2002, Dr. Crow has developed his institution not by pursuing the prized attribute of the elite status but by opening his doors to everybody while also driving research excellence. Now he is claiming ASU as the forerunner of a new evolutionary wave in higher education—the first since 1876—in which universities adapt to the learning proclivities of students, rather than the other way around.*

*He told [the news source] that one in two US college students did not graduate because “they didn't fit.” [Crow said] “Are we designing a university for everyone to get a degree? No. Are we designing a university where many people can get degrees? Yes. Are we designing a university where anyone who wants to connect in some way can benefit from learning? The answer is yes.” [Crow] says assumptions that some people are simply not cut out for university are fundamentally wrong.*

After receiving the difficult criticism, Sam took some time to process and consider his next move. He wasn't ready to give up on his dream:

*[The email] was pretty brutal. And I cried about it for days. Wow. It was tough. And I even sent [the email] to my previous [community college] teacher. She was like, "I don't feel like I'm clouded by any judgment, but I think that was a little harsh. I can't imagine that you played that bad." And I was like, "I don't think that I did either." And there was a glimmer of hope. I was like, "Who else have I not emailed? Because the other people didn't email me back. And I looked on the list and there was a second page of piano professors and it was Dr. Hernandez. I was like, "Sure, let's just try it." And I emailed [Dr. Hernandez] and he was like, "Hey, I remember you very well in your audition. You have a lot of work to do. But I see the potential. So why don't we meet up for a lesson? And we'll see." I was like, "Okay, cool." So I met up with him. I paid him for some individual lessons. And then I was a music audition student my first year at ASU. And I was part time because it was out of state tuition. And it was too expensive. The first semester, I remember him saying—and I was still working [for Apple]—"I normally spend time with students that can devote more time," and it really kind of messed me up a bit. I wasn't learning the repertoire fast enough.*

*I was thinking about it, "Why am I so fixed on being a performance major? I want to teach. Why don't I just do music education?" So that's when I reached out to Dr. Sweeney. I told her my whole story. She was like, "Sounds great. Let's get your audition materials ready." And I remember the second semester I auditioned*

*and I got the acceptance letter and it was really a happy moment of like, “Hey, I finally overcame all these obstacles.” Like, I was persevering through the whole thing and it finally paid off.*

### **Seeking opportunities elsewhere**

*Discover why the School of Music is right for you.*

*You’ll find an inventive music school with a comprehensive view of music; a cutting-edge music school with an abundance of opportunities; and a music school that inspires originality and demands dedication.*

*— Arizona State University, School of Music web page (n.d.-g)*

Margaret already seeks out opportunities; however, she is often looking for them outside the boundaries of the School of Music. An undergraduate student in her junior year, Margaret relies on her full-time job for financial stability. And despite committing a huge amount of her time to her fast-food manager job, Margaret loves being a music education major and believes this is her true calling and career path. Margaret’s adventurous and free-spirited demeanor sometimes supports her in deepening her musical and educational pursuits, such as her oboe studio recital contributions (see Chapter 4). Other times, these characteristics carry her into new and unfamiliar experiences.

Over the summer between her junior and senior years, Margaret became close friends with someone she knew from work—a younger employee who had just graduated from high school and who had decided to join the National Guard. Margaret’s friend told her about all the amazing benefits of joining the National Guard: an additional source of income, a signing bonus, and tuition support. Encouraged by her friend, Margaret agreed

to meet with the recruiter. Based on the descriptions of her friend and the recruiter, Margaret was intrigued by the sheer number and gravity of the benefits that would come with enlisting. She was quickly convinced that she should also commit to the National Guard.

In order to qualify, Margaret would need to make some life changes and decisions. She would need to gain weight; she was almost fifteen pounds under the minimum requirement. She met with a nutritionist, upped her calorie intake, and started eating protein bars every day. Further, Margaret would need to put the rest of her life on pause and attend six full weeks of basic training. Attending basic training would require Margaret to postpone her coursework and delay her student teaching and graduation by at least a full semester. At the same time, Margaret adamantly claimed that she wanted to finish her degree and become a music teacher. Why would she delay graduation and pursue this entirely new opportunity?

Margaret said she mostly wanted something different in her life, and she wasn't getting the type of experiences from her music program that she believed were helping her to be a current and forward-thinking educator:

*Yes, I want to finish my degree—it would be stupid not to finish, I've come all this way. But . . . I want to know more about the world, about people. I want to better understand people and different kinds of people. I think [joining the National Guard] will eventually help me better understand my students. I want to go to new places. I don't want to enter my career knowing nothing about the ways of the world.*



Margaret wanted opportunities that supported her in becoming a worthwhile, creative educator for her future students. But somehow the opportunities she thought she was getting at ASU did not meet her expectations. And when she met someone outside of school, a recruiter, who did have the opportunities she desired, changing direction became too good to pass up.

Margaret's perspective of the music education program, or at least of her experiences in it, was that the program did not prepare her to better understand people and the world, a value that she believed to be critical and cutting-edge in music education. In a video on the School of Music website, a music education faculty member describes the program in this way:

*This music education program is a place where we're inventing the future, we're trying to see music education in new ways and to develop kinds of programs . . . that are interesting to the students and interesting in terms of contemporary musicianship.*

*The newest exciting opportunity for the undergraduate students is our new curriculum . . . students have a lot of options and choices. I think that is really inspiring for the students to be able to choose coursework. — Music Learning and Teaching website (ASU, n.d.-n)*

The video continues with a then-current student describing their experience:

*The professors here really allow you to be yourself and let you pick what you want to do. I saw that they were interested in me, people were very supportive, open and very welcoming of my ideas. The faculty and the School of Music has been very open to me creating my own path and thinking of how and what kinds of*

*music that I want to teach, and they've been very clear that there isn't just one kind of music to be taught, and now we're taking it in and actually utilizing it. If you are looking to be unique, if you are looking to be challenged, but to also have a really good support system while you are experiencing and trying new things, this is definitely the place for you. — Music Learning and Teaching website (ASU, n.d.-n)*

For the student in the video, the music education program is a place where students feel supported and are challenged in ways that are meaningful to them. But Margaret never really felt that she had a reliable connection with any faculty member, and none of the brief moments of support she did recall seemed to have left an impression. Margaret most often felt insecure about her abilities as an educator.

Margaret longed for a forward-thinking, creative experience that would support her in being a worldly and worthwhile educator—things that her music education professors might believe she was getting, or at least had access to, through her program at ASU. But from Margaret's perspective, she wasn't seeing these values consistently across her program, and believed that she needed to look outside of her degree in order to find the experiences she desired.

As suddenly as the National Guard experience came into Margaret's life, it subsequently went away. For some reason, Margaret did not enlist in the National Guard. She decided to stay on her path and complete her degree, as she had always planned. What influenced Margaret's decision? Did she talk with family or friends? Did the National Guard turn out to not be the deal she wanted? Did her friend still enlist? Did she actually talk with her professors about the decision (which I had encouraged her to do)?

Was she unable to meet the basic enlistment requirements? Would enlisting conflict with her current work situation and hours?

**I want the opportunity to play what I want to play**

In a video on the music education website, one of the professors describes the program stating:

*I think this is the type of place where you can really seek out who you would like to be as a music teacher and build in the types of classes and opportunities to live that out and also realize that when you leave the school there's still a connection here. Many people stay in touch with us, work with us on collaborative projects, and I think you begin to be a part of a learning community and a teaching community. — Music Education Program website (ASU, n.d.-n)*

Arizona State University has one of the largest schools of music in the country with almost 800 students in its undergraduate and graduate level programs. This large student pool allows the School of Music to maintain five or more large wind and orchestra ensembles. These ensembles are tiered by student ability level and are described on the ASU Symphony website as follows:

*The ASU Symphony Orchestra [ASUSO] performs challenging and diverse repertoire chosen to help emerging professional musicians develop a wide range of skills and aptitudes. Rich concert programming offers audiences and the greater arts community opportunities to engage with major works of the orchestral canon as well as cutting-edge works of our time. Exploring the full creative range of the contemporary symphony orchestra, the ASUSO seeks to perform canonical works with technical excellence and artistry while also*

*pushing musical boundaries through innovative multi-disciplinary collaborations.*

— *ASU Symphony Orchestra website (ASU, n.d.-ae)*

Like most schools of music, students have an ensemble requirement as part of their degree, and those requirements vary by the kind of degree in which they are enrolled. For the seven undergraduate music education students in this study, the [requirement](#) is to participate in a large ensemble every semester except the semester in which they are student teaching, or a total of seven semesters (ASU, n.d.-v). For the institution, making ensemble participation a degree requirement helps ensure that all parts in the ensemble will be covered, and covered well, ensuring successful concert performances. For several students in this study, the large ensemble requirement caused nuanced problems and challenges that impacted them in related yet distinct ways. Anayeli, a senior percussionist and music education student, witnessed how the large ensemble requirements impacted the percussion studio:

*In the percussion studio, things get messy because there's a lot of ensembles. So for percussion studio, it's a large studio, but relatively, it's kind of smaller for the amount of ensembles we have. And so a lot of us end up kind of pulling double duty, especially if our professor asks us. A lot of the performance majors and the grad students end up having to perform in several ensembles. I did that for a while until there was a point where I was just like, "I can't do this anymore. It's taking up too much time and I'm a music ed. major."*

Anayeli already has multiple responsibilities to manage without volunteering to cover extra ensemble slots. She has requirements for her music education major, and, further, Anayeli works outside of school in order to pay her bills and tuition. Anayeli has

learned to protect her time well, and she speaks up to maintain the boundaries she has set up for herself. Protecting personal boundaries isn't always possible for her peers.

Anayeli's friend Lawrence, who is also a percussionist and music education major, received a "Special Talent Award"—for him, a small award of around \$1,500 per semester, the equivalent of the cost of 1 credit. Anayeli says that because Lawrence receives the special talent award each semester, he is regularly pressured into doing more than other percussionists, including playing in more ensembles than required. As a doctoral student, I also received this award. The agreement letter requires the recipient to participate in both studio lessons and a large ensemble, but I didn't do this, nor was I asked to do so, possibly because neither lessons nor ensembles are required in my degree program. But that is not the case for undergraduate students, for whom both lessons and ensemble are a degree requirement, and nearly every undergraduate music education student in this study felt pressured to enroll in multiple ensembles. It is possible that Lawrence was receiving the Special Talent Award for Percussion. Why is it that some students are asked to do more than their peers? Are these additional expectations put in writing or simply understood? Students who are receiving these awards, which they view as scholarships, might be under stress to pay for college. Do they feel as though they can share their concerns, or are they worried that speaking up may jeopardize future funding? Who decides which ensembles and how many ensembles each student will participate in? Is it made clear to students whether they are receiving the award for their major, like music education, or for their performance studio? When students feel overworked or uncomfortable, do they know who they can talk to? Who ensures that students are protected and not being exploited by the university and/or their faculty?

Even with well-maintained boundaries, Anayeli says that being a percussionist often results in feelings of doing “double duty.” For percussionists, playing in one large ensemble, let alone fulfilling additional slots, means extra work. All ensemble musicians must practice, prepare music, and attend rehearsals and performances. Percussionists are further responsible for transporting percussion gear from the rehearsal space or storage to the concert venue and staging it for the performance. On concert days, which can be once a week and sometimes multiple events per week/weekend, Anayeli and her fellow percussionists juggle this prep work. Often shared rehearsal or performance spaces (either where the gear is stored or where it is being taken) will be in use for other performances and/or rehearsals throughout the rest of the day, so the percussionists must do their moving and prep around the other scheduled events. When a concert is off campus, this might mean loading a moving truck at 7:00 am, arriving at the venue and unloading the gear into storage area at 9:00 am, waiting until a rehearsal is over at 11:00 am, and then frantically setting up for their own dress rehearsal that begins at noon. While the students may have 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm to use to their liking, some lack transportation and have to find rides to get back to their dorms and apartments to relax or study before heading back to the venue and to play the concert. After the final bows, maybe around 9:15 pm, the work continues. The students must load the gear back into the truck, drive back to the campus rehearsal space, and unload so that the gear is ready for them at Monday’s rehearsal. Because concert days like these are such a big-time commitment, Anayeli can’t work or accept other paid gigs, particularly when concerts fall on high-demand weekend days. These details and added responsibilities amplify the impact of taking on even one additional ensemble for Anayeli.

Anayeli says the combination of the shortage of percussionists and the large ensemble requirement has caused tension, not only because of the double duty, but also because she believes that it limits her from engaging with and learning about diverse musical practices, which is integral to her career and life goals. Since she began attending Arizona State University, Anayeli has wanted to play in a jazz big band and gain experience in styles outside of orchestral and classical music. But because of the pressure to fill the large ensembles, her professor and the ensemble directors often try to persuade her and the other students from doing anything else. Anayeli says, “They’re always trying to get us into the classical large ensembles. They don’t really want us playing with the jazz ensembles at all.” Anayeli and some of her studio peers have chosen to take drum set lessons and have even won the audition spots in the small jazz combos, all of which is technically allowed within the percussion department. And while her professors aren’t pleased that she devotes time to a *variety* of ensembles, Anayeli says, “A lot of us want the opportunity to play in the jazz big band or the jazz rock class.”

Anayeli asked her professors every semester about playing in the jazz big band as her large ensemble requirement. Every semester, the large ensemble directors and her studio faculty told her, “Classical music is [your] degree. These ensembles are important, so [you] need to participate in them.” But classical music wasn’t her degree, and Anayeli tried to tell them that having well-rounded, diverse musical experiences are what will make her most successful as a music educator *and* performer. And even if her studio faculty agreed, they encouraged her to take jazz ensembles as *additional* credits, that is, take *both* a classical and jazz large ensemble. Anayeli didn’t see this as an option. She already had multiple commitments, and an additional ensemble would be too much. And,

some semesters, the jazz big band rehearsed at the same time as her assigned classical ensemble. Even if she was willing to, she couldn't do both.

*The faculty and the School of Music has been very open to me creating my own path and thinking of how and what kinds of music that I want to teach. They've been very clear that there isn't just one kind of music to be taught.*

— Arizona State University, Music Education Student, Promotional video (ASU, n.d.-n)

Finally, when Anayeli was entering her last semester prior to student teaching, she pushed harder than she ever had before. If she didn't get the jazz experience now, she might not ever get it. Her faculty, the large ensemble conductors, wouldn't budge. So Anayeli took her concerns straight to the top:

*Eventually I ended up having to write a whole letter about it. And I took it to [the Director of the School of Music] and just made a thing about, "I believe this is going to round out my education best—my education and degree." And I kind of used that as my fore fronting argument. And I mean, they let me into one of the [jazz] classes for the fall, which was super cool.*

*We also got a lot of freshmen in the percussion studio that year. So I think part of [being allowed to join a jazz ensemble] was that I just got lucky because our studio got rather large that year. I think there were just enough percussionists to cover all of the spots that they wanted filled in classical large ensembles.*



*And not that any of that has to do with racial or gender equality or justice. I think it's another way to speak to the fact that—at least at ASU—the support is with the classical studios. More than anything. More than the jazz performance studios. More than the music education degree. More than the music therapy degree.*

*Which is fine. [ASU] is a classical school. [ASU] just doesn't support an environment that's going to support everyone. I don't think it's a huge secret that classical ensembles and classical playing and that type of instrumentation and that type of education is made for a very specific type of person. Not that someone like me couldn't pursue that, but I also just don't want to. And I don't care to. And I think there's a large population at ASU that feels similarly because they have other musical interests that they want to pursue. But those things just aren't supported because it's a large classical school. A large portion of the population benefits from that, and the rest of us make the best out of it.*

### **I want the opportunity to play my music**

*Join an ensemble and see the opportunities*

*The student ensembles program at the School of Music, Dance and Theatre has a long history of excellence. Bands, choir, jazz ensembles and orchestras have commissioned and premiered many new works, performed at major state, regional and national conferences and produced a number of recordings.*

*Ensembles such as Marimba Maderas de Comitán, Javanese Gamelan and Pan Devils Steel Band offer a rich diversity of performance experiences for any ASU student.*

— *School of Music, Dance and Theater, Ensembles web page (ASU, n.d.-s)*

While having several ensemble options does give students the opportunity to engage with music from an array of music practices, the statement above reinforces the ongoing, problematic tradition of placing music practices into a hierarchy. In the statement, the Western ensembles are introduced first and are accompanied by measures of credibility. The “diverse” ensembles are simply a place where “performance experiences” occur and are considered the variety that makes ASU a place of unique opportunities and pathways. A reliance on and foregrounding of “band, choir, orchestra, and jazz” may sound like a range of opportunities, but in actuality are a cohort of traditions steeped in Eurocentricity and whiteness (Koza, 2008). Music education in public schools in the U.S. has become synonymous with the large ensemble model to the point that other forms of music making are not seen as legitimate (Stauffer, 2016), even as the profession, including the music education faculty in the School of Music, seeks change. In what ways is the School of Music embracing the work of decentering dominant, Eurocentric practices? What happens when students demand diverse music making experiences? In what ways are students supported? In what ways are they left wanting?

Similar to Anayeli, Christina has also experienced problems in conjunction with the large ensemble requirement. As described in chapter 4, Christina’s passion for mariachi music grew during her years in college. While she says she wasn’t raised in the mariachi tradition, as Christina grew into her identity as a Mexican American, her admiration for her culture and for mariachi grew as well. Christina began looking for

ways to bring her culture into the university instead of experiencing it only outside of the university. At ASU, all undergraduate music education majors must complete seven semesters of large ensembles in order to meet their degree requirements. However, the only ensembles that count towards the large ensemble credit are the large Western orchestras, bands, and choirs. “Diverse” ensembles such as Steel Pan, Gamelan, and Mariachi may only be taken as elective credit. Even jazz ensembles are excluded, unless a student enters the school as a jazz studies major or a music education student with a jazz emphasis.

For Dylan, an instrumental music education student, he doesn’t really mind how many credits he receives for his ensembles. Dylan participates in wind band, marching band, and World Harmony Choir every semester. Only two semesters of marching band could be counted towards his large ensemble requirement. The remaining five are fulfilled through wind band. Dylan receives elective credit for additional semesters of marching band, but participation doesn’t help his degree progress because the music education degree only includes a total of three elective credit hours.

This devaluation of the non-Western ensembles is what sparked Christina’s interest in changing the way her university included “World + Popular Musics” in the curriculum. As described in chapter 4, Christina created a detailed and comprehensive presentation that she shared with the top administrators of the School of Music. They said they appreciated her time and took her concerns seriously, but nothing happened. Nothing changed. Christina said:

*The fact that there is not much change to our programs is discouraging. I understand progress takes time, but I'm tired of waiting for nothing. Everything*

*I've learned about social justice I've taught myself. ASU is guilty of holding me back, therefore, holding itself back. I know I am completely biased when I say that ASU doesn't take the time to listen to their students. ASU is failing their students in this way. We have to be our own leaders, because we don't have any.*

The experiences of Christina, Anayeli, Dylan, and other students stand in contrast to the course description for the Large Ensemble Course Requirement from the Arizona State University Course Catalogue (ASU, 2021a):

*Instrumental Ensembles Course Description:*

*Students enhance musical diversity and artistic depth by participating in numerous ensembles as well as other artistic and educational projects. Each project focuses on specific pedagogical and/or musical learning outcomes.*

*Together they comprise a rich assortment of musical experiences and promote the primary course objective. The curriculum accommodates the distinctive needs of each student and is tailor-made to each individual's career aspirations.*

*Consequently, learning outcomes are highly individualized and student driven.*

### **Inclusion: Are we all welcome? Are we all safe?**

This second large section is about inclusion. After introducing the institution's story, I share stories regarding the students' experiences related to "finding anyone who was like me," "that's my name," two auditions, first time as a minority, being LGBTQIA+, and stories not shared in person.

Arizona State University Charter (ASU, 2021b)

*ASU is a comprehensive public research university, measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed; advancing research and discovery of public value; and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves.*

As discussed in chapter 5, with the installation of the new charter in 2014, President Crow has helped to pivot the university towards a set of core values that distinguish this institution as an inclusive place where more people than ever before are welcomed into collegiate education. From President Crow's perspective, this radical change in higher education pushes back on the historical elitist admission standards that praise institutions for being as exclusive as possible (i.e., accepting only the top 5% of applicants) (Crow, 2019b). However, President Crow also realizes that in order for the institution to grow, ASU cannot rely on its traditional student pool; ASU will need to attract and retain students from more diverse backgrounds. As stated in his inaugural address:

*Not only is Arizona growing rapidly, it has become more diverse. The past decade, for example, has witnessed a 40 percent increase in the statewide population and an 88 percent increase in the Hispanic population of our state. One of every four Arizonans is of Hispanic origin. As has already happened in California, within the next twenty years there will be no majority population in Arizona. There is tremendous diversity in the population of Arizona, and with that diversity comes a high degree of differentiation—culturally, socially, economically, and in educational attainment. We must build a university that*

*embraces that complexity. We must build a university that is able to engage all these groups. (Crow, 2002, p. 7).*

So what does this more inclusive campus look like? According to the university's Ten Year Review, in 2004, just two years after Michael Crow started his presidency and ten years prior to the installation of the new charter, ASU had a total enrollment of 58,156 (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2015). At the time, only 22.1% (12,854) of students identified as "minority." The most recent Ten Year Review data shows that in the Fall 2020, 128,788 students attended the university with 40.3% (51,947) identifying as "minority" (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2021). And while the statistics show a campus that has a more diverse population, what is it like to be a part of this more inclusive campus?

Some of the students in this study come from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. They have been admitted to—they have been included in—the university and the School of Music. Scholars have argued that to be included does not simply mean to be present, and that an institution truly committed to equity should do more to curate an environment where diverse people are fully welcomed participants and leaders in these spaces (Bledsoe, 2015; Stewart, 2017). While Arizona State University promotes an environment of inclusion, in what ways are these values lived out and experienced by students? What experiences support and/or interrupt feelings of inclusion? In what ways is inclusion achieved? In what ways is it not? Is everyone included? Is everyone safe?

## **I couldn't find anyone who was like me**

Christina, who identifies as Mexican American, had trouble finding other people in the School of Music that she could relate to and who had similar experiences to her own. She explained:

*This experience is similar to people that share more than one nationality. As a Mexican-American, I have to be Mexican enough for the Mexicans, and have to be American enough for the Americans. So, as a POC (person of color) in college, I feel like I have to be one way for my college peers and another way for my peers that didn't go to college. It's hard to find friends that feel the same way because most people "stick with their own kind." I'm sure there were other people that have felt this way [in the School of Music] too. I just never found them.*

Unfortunately Christina never found people—other students—she could relate to, even though other students in the School of Music—even in this specific study—had similar experiences and desires.

Dylan, a very active and responsible undergraduate music education student, participates and leads many student organizations and ensembles on campus. Dylan remembers arriving at ASU as a freshman and being surprised at the fact that there were almost no other students of color. When he was looking at colleges, Dylan narrowed his choices to Arizona State and a large, predominantly white university in a rural, collegiate-focused town in the midwest. He got into both schools, and both offered him great financial packages. Dylan doesn't remember seeing any people of color on his audition day at the midwest school—no faculty or students—no one. At ASU, he met an African American professor and he recalls the students on campus as being visibly more

diverse. Combined with the appeal of the location, ASU became the right choice.

However, when he arrived in his music theory class—one of his first classes and a course taken by all incoming students—Dylan couldn't believe that there were so few freshmen of color. Even now, he realizes that the School of Music isn't necessarily as diverse as he thought it would be.

Early in this project, it was challenging to figure out what to talk about with Dylan. Our conversations never quite seemed as though we were talking about what Dylan wanted to talk about until I asked him, "How would you describe yourself to someone who had never met you, especially if they wanted to get to know you well?" In that moment, Dylan lit up and spoke with more energy and purpose: "Oh, that's easy. You can actually get to know me really well through a song."

What's Normal Anyway? By Miguel (Pimentel, 2015)

*Too proper for the Black kids, too Black for the Mexicans*

*Too square to be a hood nigga, what's normal anyway?*

*Too opinionated for the pacifist, too out of touch to be in style*

*Too broke for the rich kids, I don't know what normal is*

*What's normal anyway? What's normal anyway?*

*I mean what's normal anyway? What's normal anyway?*

*What's normal anyway?*

*Be in a crowd and not feel alone, I look around and not feel alone*

*I never feel like I belong, I wanna feel like I belong, somewhere*

*Be in a crowd and not feel alone, I look around and not feel alone*

*I never feel like I belong, I wanna feel like I belong*



Dylan explained:

*I listened to that song, and I was like, “Wow. This is . . . this is me.” I don't know how else to explain it. I was like, “This encompasses me as a person, what I've been through.” Yeah. Miguel, he's mixed. I don't know how he identifies but he's Black and Mexican. And I'm mixed, Black and white. Just the first line itself, “Too proper for the Black kids. Too Black for the Mexicans.” I was like, “Yeah [this is my experience].” Cause, I mean, plenty of times, even at ASU, [people will say], “What? You're not Black.” “You speak too well,” and all these other things. . . . It is hard to hear. It is very difficult to hear.*

Dylan hears a lot of things that he wishes he wouldn't. He doesn't like to spend a lot of time dwelling on these experiences. Dylan describes most microaggressions, even the overt ones, simply as “frustrating” or “annoying.” He recognizes that it's a lot of small, “ordinary” experiences that are bothersome and add up to a good amount of inconvenience.

Dylan has had multiple experiences of meeting someone new, someone who isn't used to being around people of color, who asks, “What are you?” Because Dylan is mixed—Black and white—his mother's lineage often gets overlooked in conversation: “Oh, I didn't know you were mixed.” On the other hand, an African American student in marching band said, “You speak too well” and “You're not Black.” Statements like these further the erasure that Dylan feels, in that people make assumptions about him based on his skin color and the way he acts. Dylan would prefer to just be known as Dylan: “I'm just who I am. I'm a person. I'm not like, ‘I'm mixed and play trumpet.’ I'm Dylan. If you want to know more, feel free to ask.”

## **Microaggressions: “But that’s my name”**

*Arizona State University Diversity Philosophy (n.d.-q)*

*Diversity is defined in terms of representation and inclusion. Representation reflects the extent to which our students, staff, faculty and administrators proportionately reflect the regional and national populations served by our public institution. Inclusion encompasses empowerment and voice among all members of the university community in the areas of scholarship, teaching, learning and governance.*

— Arizona State University, *The Office of Inclusion and Community Engagement* (ASU, n.d.-f)

The Office of Inclusion and Community Engagement at Arizona State University is tasked with “creating an inclusive environment” (ASU, n.d.-f). One initiative is the *Dispelling Stereotypes Video Series*, a collection of videos that started with the goal of highlighting the indigenous people and students in the ASU campus community. Its first iteration, “Native 101,” features indigenous faculty, administrators, and students sharing their stories. Realizing the breadth of diversity on its campus, the university expanded the video series and now “give[s] women, Hispanics, veterans and other groups on campus an opportunity to share their own stories and help dispel stereotypes” (ASU, n.d.-p). Additional initiatives such as the “*Healing Racism Series*” (Roen, 2014) and *diversity keynote events* (ASU, 2016a) help demonstrate how multiple places across campus try to work against microaggressions. While these initiatives and resources help depict the

institution's espoused values, what do students need and want in their daily lives to feel included, supported, and welcome?

Anayeli can tell from the very first day, from the very first activity in a new class how the rest of the semester will go. Within ten, even five minutes, she knows whether or not she can trust her professor or TA (teaching assistant), if they will be on her side, if they can work together and have shared understanding, if they will respect “what [she] says and know that what [she] says holds value.” In a single moment, Anayeli knows whether she will be able to build a relationship with the faculty more or simply “learn what she can” from the class. What activity allows Anayeli to know so much, so quickly about the entirety of an upcoming semester? Roll call.

On the first day of class professors typically go through the roster and call out each student's name. Some professors and teaching assistants pronounce her name correctly, but the majority don't. And if they don't, their responses communicate a lot of information to Anayeli. In college classes, Anayeli usually repeats her name with the correct pronunciation (uh-NAA-yeh-lee), and sometimes that is all it takes. When professors take the correction with humility and pronounce her name correctly from then on, Anayeli know they are “with it.” Unfortunately, uncomfortable and “cringey” responses often occur. Some professors and TAs refuse to learn to say her name correctly, others keep saying her name incorrectly, and others avoid saying it for the rest of the semester. Anayeli isn't sure whether this is due to a lack of effort or confidence. If they do work on saying her name correctly, sometimes the response is accompanied by an inflammatory remark such as, “Wow, that's such a mouthful! I will be working on this all year!”

*There have been a couple of younger people in the School of Music—some TAs, not in the [music] ed. program—but like in my percussion studio, where they have kind of messed with me and teased me about [my name]. Like they said [my name] correctly, but they'll tease me. And with those people, I'm just like, we clearly have different morals, different beliefs, different views. And that's fine. We're just not going to be close ever. We're not going to be friends, and I don't want to be your friend and you probably don't care to be mine. And I'm cool with that. It's just very obvious to me to not have that relationship with you, if you can't pronounce my name.*

Anayeli didn't always correct her teachers and professors. At her high school, her peers were mostly white. Other diverse students were primarily Asian; there were not a lot of “Black and brown students.” To find some “camaraderie and to commiserate,” Anayeli created a “little club” with the other Hispanic students who were in the marching band. Now, in college, her friends support her by pointing out how ridiculous it is when professors refuse to or can't learn to pronounce her name. One friend said, “If people can learn to say supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, then they can learn to say Anayeli.” Anayeli added, “White people spell ‘Michaela’ five different ways, but it's all pronounced the same. So you can figure [my name] out.”

Even now, in college, Anayeli doesn't always speak up and correct her professors. Correcting others is often a lot of work and uncomfortable, so Anayeli often weighs whether it is worth speaking up in any given situation. When deciding whether or not to correct them, she thinks about whether she will interact with this person only once or twice, such as a guest speaker, or whether the person is someone that she is going to be

around for a long time, like a class professor or peer in the percussion studio. She asks herself, “Is this a battle worth fighting?”

Anayeli faces similar problems in her percussion studio. One thing she likes about being a music major is building relationships with professors and peers over multiple years in one-on-one private studio lessons, in classes in the music education area, and in ensembles. While she might interact with the same professors and students for several years, and potentially become lifelong colleagues, Anayeli says there are still people who have never learned to say her name correctly. Even as she graduated this week and completed her student teaching, some professors and studio peers still do not know how to say her name.

*I feel like white people get so surprised or sensitive about the fact that I'm colored. Or they feel like they have to tiptoe around the fact that I'm brown, as if I don't know. And I've been so aware of my brownness for so long—probably way before you've been aware of your whiteness—so when we get into situations that start with the whole name thing—in that circumstance, you're not addressing my name, which is a part of the brownness. And you feel you have to tiptoe around it, because for some reason my brownness is a point of sensitivity for—at some point the country—but very apparently for you as a person. Like me being brown is making you feel uncomfortable.*

*Something that's also just sort of uncomfortable and cringy is when people just don't talk about [our race] as if we don't already know, you know? We don't have to tiptoe around or feel really sensitive about it. No, I am Hispanic. I know I'm*

*Hispanic. I know my name is Hispanic. You know I'm Hispanic. You can see that. You can see it in my name. Like, there's no reason for there to be any sort of awkwardness or uncomfortableness, because we could just talk about it like it is, you know. He's Black. He knows he's Black. She's gay. She has known she's gay. Or whatever it is. Like, we already know these things about ourselves. And it's just one of those things where I feel for you that you're barely figuring it out.*

Unfortunately, Anayeli says the name pronunciation problem happens frequently with people who are considerably older than she is. For these people, she usually accepts or overlooks their perceived naivety. They are from a different generation; they may not have heard how important it is to pronounce names correctly—especially for people of color. She sees that in some ways an excuse, a reason, for their behavior. Notably, if young people make the same error, Anayeli responds differently. There is no excuse. In her percussion studio, the TAs mispronounced her name and then continued teasing her about it. Anayeli said that this was fine, but she knows that “we will not be close, and we will not have a relationship.”

Anayeli has some professors who do a better job of talking openly and realistically about social and cultural issues. These professors often open up time and space in their classrooms for discussions related to topics such as race, gender, and sexuality. Anayeli says that these professors don't always know how to lead the conversation and will openly admit that they don't have all the answers; however, they do a good job of getting out of the way and letting the students contribute and lead the conversation. Conversely, it's easy to tell if the professor hasn't created a classroom where people feel safe in these conversations. When something inappropriate or offensive

is said, the students will not call it out or address it in that moment because they know their professor won't welcome or know how to handle that kind of discussion. Instead, the students carry on these conversations outside of class. One way or another, Anayeli and her peers will talk about these important topics.

### **Microaggressions: Two Auditions & Music Theory**

For Christina, the experiences that have been most impactful in her university education have been those that resonate with her: her personal life, passion, and culture. Christina also realizes that these important parts of her, her values, are not a part of or found within the university. Anything meaningful that she got out of her university experience, she had to bring from her life and community outside the institution into the institution. Unfortunately, the most salient experiences that have occurred within and because of the university are negative.

A senior violinist and music education major, Christina has worked diligently to achieve a high level of playing in both classical and mariachi genres. Each year students audition into their large ensembles, playing individually for at least one of the ensemble directors. Christina passed her audition and was seated in the top orchestra. However, a few weeks later she was surprised when the orchestra director asked her to complete a second audition:

*About a month into the semester, the orchestra director made me re-audition to continue being a part of the ensemble. Just like everyone else, I had already taken and passed my first audition. We had already been in rehearsals for a month and our first concert would be in a few weeks. Why now, why was I being asked to take a second audition? The director asked me to prepare a completely different*

*set of excerpts. I went to his office—by myself—and played for him all over again. As far as I know, no one else had to do this.*

*I want to be challenged and I want to learn, but I don't want to be where I'm not wanted. This experience was uncomfortable, and I feel that I was singled out.*

*When I told my friends about this, no one really understood me, or saw what I saw. It has been two years since this happened, and now people are starting to see some of the things that I noticed about this professor and the orchestra.*

Christina's ensemble director is not the only one who has made her feel unwelcome. As an incoming freshman, Christina was nervous about taking music theory and aural skills for the first time, so she tried being proactive and reached out to her professor.

*When I came to ASU, I had no music theory or history experience. We didn't do any of that at my high school. I wanted to be successful in my classes, so before the semester even started, I went to see my music theory professor. I told them that I was worried about the class, that I was unsure of how I would do well. As the semester went on, I feel like that professor used that information against me and made things harder for me. I think she thought that she was helping me by somehow holding me to a really high expectation, as if this would just make me successful. But the whole situation—her attitude, the way she treated me—was just difficult, hard, bad, not appreciated, or wanted.*



Throughout the semester, theory felt extra hard and Christina felt as though she was being held to a different standard than the other students. She wondered if she should have even spoken up and reached out to the professor in the first place.

### **Microaggressions: First Time as a Minority**

#### *Study as an international student at ASU*

*As an American university ASU welcomes students from 136 countries around the world. Almost 9,000 international students call ASU home, making us a top 10 university in the U.S. for hosting students from other countries.*

— *Arizona State University, International Admissions website (ASU, n.d.-ad)*

Edward moved from southeast Asia to rural Illinois to pursue his master's degree in performance and then realized "there were no other southeast Asians at the school." But Edward found ways to manage, becoming close with a neighbor who he calls his "adoptive mom": "She took care of me. I related to her more than my roommate. Her husband was also really supportive. They were a godsend." In his second year at that school, another southeast Asian string player enrolled and they shared an apartment, but the roommate had a different set of values than Edward, and they never became close.

In rural Illinois, Edward first experienced microaggressions. During his driver's license exam, a "sweet lady at the DMV" asked Edward where he was from. Edward stated the name of his home country, to which the DMV lady replied, "Where is that? I have never heard of that country." Edward remembers multiple instances, both at his school in Illinois and at ASU, of people saying, "Wow. You speak English so well" when they realized that he was an international student. Edward knows they often meant it as a

compliment, but it never felt that way: “I don’t really despise it, but I am also still figuring out if the person is really complimenting me, or is it a backhanded compliment? Or maybe they just don’t know?”

Once, when Edward was living in graduate student housing in Illinois, a “frat boy” “greeted” him with a stereotypical bow—hands pressed in a prayer gesture, bending at the waist. Edward knows that this person did this on a dare, and Edward chose to respond by saying, “I’m not Chinese. I’m [southeast Asian]. This is not appropriate.” Edward wasn’t necessarily upset, but rather thought, “This is weird. Don’t you know better? Why would you do that?” Edward recognized these acts as racism and found it strange to be experiencing racism for the first time as a grown adult.

*Being a majority, sometimes you're invisible because you're just within the common—you just share a lot of common things with a lot of people. But when you're a minority sometimes just by your physical appearance, it puts a spotlight on you. And sometimes it puts pressure on you to prove yourself, to prove that you can do it, that you can make it.*

These experiences prior to ASU are important because, like any of the students in this study, Edward carries his past experiences with him. When Edward was accepted and made the decision to attend ASU for his doctoral studies in performance, he wondered in what ways his experiences might be different.

Edward says that ASU has been more accepting than his school in Illinois, which he attributes to size and location; however, being an international student at ASU has two sides: “the up and the downside.” The upside: “The high level of training that I got from the school. It worked pretty well for me. I am galaxies beyond where I was as a violist

back home.” Further, Edward likes the connections that come from being a student at a large institution situated within a huge city. Students from other top schools across the country choose to complete/enroll in graduate work at ASU, which affords Edward opportunities to play alongside exceptionally good musicians. Visiting guest artists, masterclasses, performances, and coaching have also added to his experience. More southeast Asian students from his home country enroll at ASU compared to his Illinois experience, even within the School of Music, and his viola studio is diverse, but he has not met any fellow students from his home country. Edward says that, so far, people in the School of Music have not been hostile and don’t view him as different. In Phoenix, he has found multiple Asian markets that carry some of the foods that he grew up with. ASU in many ways has been an improvement from his school in rural Illinois.

Living in a large metropolitan city and being part of a larger more diverse campus has advantages, including a sizable international office on campus to serve the almost 9,000 international students (ASU, n.d.-ad). However, now that Edward is at one of the largest institutions in the country, he is surprised that ASU isn’t doing more to support international students. He still struggles to afford school and is constantly concerned about the xenophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric of the then-current U.S. GOP administration:

*I'm in the midst of applying for a work visa. If suddenly a job position opened in Canada and I got in, I'll just go to Canada. Because right now I'm getting more disillusioned with this country. Every time I hear xenophobic issues in the news, especially in relation to Trump's government, I'm becoming more and more convinced that maybe they don't want me here? I remember when Trump*

*announced that he will temporarily suspend immigration to the US for 60 days. I was kind of scared because he—for me—he's using this virus issue to put forward his agenda. And—oh my gosh—my anxious self was thinking, what if they just extended it to 90 days? And what if for a year?*

Throughout his academic career in the US, but especially during the recent GOP administration, Edward has been bombarded by the country's rhetoric against immigrants. With the U.S. administration and border patrol increasing the barriers for international travel and limiting or denying visa applications, Edward's ability to border cross is less certain than ever. Lately, Edward has been thinking seriously about finding another country to call home. While he used to travel home for holidays and research, Edward has felt that he needs to remain in the United States to ensure his safety and visa status.

*Statement from Provost Searle to ASU's international students*

*July 7, 2020*

*Dear ASU Students,*

*You may have heard reports today in the news media or elsewhere about an announcement made through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), regarding modifications to temporary exemptions for nonimmigrant students taking online courses. Specifically, the SEVP announced that nonimmigrant F-1 and M-1 students attending schools operating entirely online only may not take a full online course load and remain in the United States.*

*ASU administration wants to reassure students that this announcement does not impact current ASU international students who are or will be enrolled in campus immersion courses at the university.*

*Specifically, ASU does not believe the new regulations and procedures proposed by ICE will have a material impact on the university or its international students. Students attending ASU on a F-1 visa in fall 2020 will continue to participate in immersive, synchronous classroom instruction both in-person and through ASU Sync, our digitally-enhanced, synchronous immersive learning modality.*

*If you have any questions or concerns about your personal situation and circumstances, please feel free to reach out directly to the ASU Provost's office or the International Students and Scholars Center.*

*We look forward to seeing you back on campus this fall.*

*Mark S. Searle, Ph.D.*

*Executive Vice President and University Provost*

*Professor, School of Community Resources and Development (Searle, 2020)*

### **Being LGBTQIA+ On Campus**

*We recognize that race and gender historically have been markers of diversity in institutions of higher education. However, at ASU, we believe that diversity includes additional categories such as socioeconomic background, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, veteran status, nationality and intellectual perspective.*

— *Arizona State University, The Office of Inclusion and Community Engagement*  
(ASU, n.d.-f)

The problems and stressors that Edward experiences as an international student feel “under the surface” because they are problems that he deals with in offices and through paperwork and procedures. For Edward, being a gay man in Phoenix causes more visible, overt problems. Edward says ASU’s community is more accepting than rural Illinois, but there is not much visible support in the School of Music for music students who are LGBTQIA+; there are no resources or posters that indicate the School of Music is aware of or welcoming of LGBTQIA+ students. And while he hasn’t experienced much homophobia from his peers in the School of Music, he has definitely experienced it in Tempe and on the broader campus. One time Edward was walking with his boyfriend in town holding hands, and some young men drove by and yelled, “Fuck you.”

Sam, an undergraduate student who is also gay and white, has also experienced homophobia within ASU’s campus borders and classrooms. Sam remembers talking with his studio professor and referencing his husband several times. As Sam was leaving, his professor said something like, “Just so you know, I am totally okay with you and your husband. But with other faculty you may want to just say your ‘spouse.’” Sam understood and appreciated this advice and believes that piece of information can help him navigate the school. But the experience also got Sam wondering: “What if I had been placed into a different studio? What would my life and education experience be like if my professor had a problem with who I am?” He started to consider how things might be difficult, or at

least different, if his professors and he weren't on the same page about his sexual orientation.

Sam also worries about being gay and becoming a teacher: "Will it be okay for people to know? What will the kids be like? The parents?" Sam said, "I know I will have to navigate those conversations once I get there. It is just going to be something that I worry about until I know." Sam finds it helpful and important to make connections with people who have gone through the same situation; however, Sam doesn't know any public school teachers who are gay.

Sam had a great experience in his vocal lab class regarding the inclusion and representation of diverse sexual orientations. In that class, the TA didn't shy away from important conversations related to equity. She asked students to share their opinions and knowledge and led conversations about LGBTQIA+ student concerns, especially with regards to assigning vocal parts and concert attire. Sam appreciated that someone was willing to open these sometimes difficult conversations. He expected that these kinds of conversations would also happen in his Introduction to Music Education class, but it never came up. He wonders whether the pandemic and the switch to remote learning stopped some of those topics from being broached or whether they were never intended to be a part of the course curriculum.

Overall, Sam wishes that the entire music education department consistently talked about and celebrated diversity, equity, and inclusion. Sam believes that diversity and related topics are not talked about enough, even though they are more important than most, if not all, other topics covered in his classes. Working for Apple, Sam learned that the most important training for employees was to understand the values of the company;

the company prioritizes core values over everything. By understanding the values, employees could best enact and emulate the goals and culture of the company in their daily work. In what ways does the music education department organize their values? Do those values make an explicit commitment to and action towards equity? Antiracism? Diversity? If they aren't explicit, can we be sure it is happening?

*The Music Education program in the ASU School of Music, Dance and Theatre is one of the most innovative in the U.S. Our degree programs emphasize four core principles intended to prepare students for successful careers as leaders in music teaching and learning:*

- *Flexible musicians*
- *Innovative practitioners*
- *Inquisitive thinkers*
- *Community leaders*

*ASU music education graduates make a difference in the lives of their students and communities. (ASU, n.d.-n)*

### **Stories not shared in person**

All people, including those in this study, have an infinite number of stories they could tell. Choosing which stories to tell often involves feelings of security and relationship. In this study, some stories were told outside of our face-to-face conversations. What stories do students share openly? What stories are too difficult to retell in person?

I wasn't always sure what Dylan wanted to discuss during our meetings, and I'm not sure he did either. However, Dylan was interested in being involved and agreed to



experiment with a few communication tools. He tried journaling, and afterwards, he was honest that he did not enjoy writing very much. We considered having him record himself talking, sharing whatever stories came to mind. I wasn't sure he was going to enjoy that either. However, after weeks of casual, possibly stalled conversation, Dylan—unprompted—sent me three voice recordings over the course of a few weeks. The stories were all related and unexpected. Looking back I should have realized that these would be stories he could tell.

*Mallory's Journal: Today Dylan said, "People say this doesn't exist, but I have lived through it and it definitely happens." I told Dylan that it sounds like he is frustrated and annoyed that he even has the knowledge and experience to talk about racism. He agreed.*

During the summers back in his hometown in Georgia, Dylan works as a lifeguard. After work he and his friends/coworkers often go somewhere to eat and hangout. One day, as Dylan was driving to a post-work restaurant, a cop pulled up next to him at a stop light. Dylan had a feeling in that moment that he was about to get pulled over. He decided to put the thought out of his head and kept driving carefully to the restaurant. Instantly after turning into the restaurant, and as he expected, the police officer pulled Dylan over. Dylan did everything you are "supposed" to, and left with a warning. A missing front license plate was the reason the officer gave. But Dylan knew the real reason:

*'Cause I'm Black. That's it. There's no other reason. I didn't do anything wrong. I felt like he was going to pull me over. . . . I'm annoyed that it happened. Just not fun. It happens. Sadly, it's part of my life that I have to deal with. But, yeah, I've*

*been taught what to do when you get pulled over, if you are ever approached by police. . . very frustrated, and I did give him kind of an attitude—slight attitude.*

*Because I knew why [I got pulled over] and I'm sure he knew why.*

Another time while was finishing up his lifeguarding shift, it was Dylan's turn to take out the trash. Wearing his bright red swim trunks and plastic safety gloves, he took the trash bin out to the dumpster behind the building to empty it. Dylan noticed a police car in the adjacent parking lot and heard the "woop-woop" of the siren. Dylan figured there was no way the cop was trying to get his attention; he was taking out the trash. What else could he possibly be doing? When the siren hailed him a second time, Dylan knew the officer was trying to get his attention. The officer approached Dylan, "What are you doing?" Dylan answered, "I'm at work. I'm just taking out the trash." The officer continued to question Dylan and started to move closer to Dylan. The situation was interrupted only when Dylan's (white) manager walked out into the alley. His manager asked, "What's going on here?" The manager told the cop that Dylan was doing exactly as he said and sent Dylan back into the building. Dylan's co-workers asked what was going on, and he said, "I'll tell you later." Eventually the cop called Dylan back outside and said, "I thought you were stealing that trash can. My bad. I apologize." Dylan was annoyed. He is thought, "Why would I be stealing a trash can?" Dylan's managers asked if he was okay and said the situation was done and over.

Another time Dylan was stopped by police in Tempe was when he was hanging out with two friends, "an Asian girl and a guy who is Hispanic but looks white." The police asked Dylan more questions than either of his two other friends:

*Do I have a felony? Where am I from? What's my address? What dorm do I live in? I don't remember what else they asked, but it was a lot, at least 10 more questions than they asked everybody else. Where in Georgia am I from? Where do I work? What do I do?*

Dylan has told only a few people, including friends and family, these stories. Until the day he sent the first recording, Dylan and I had had only casual discussions about his responsibilities and campus involvement. Suddenly, he was offering up story after story of overt racism. So I asked, "Why these stories? Why now?"

*Dylan: I want educators to understand that students go through this, even when they're not officially adults. Even when students are younger than 16, that it still does happen.*

*Mallory: Do you have any ways that you would recommend teachers support students? What might that look like?*

*Dylan: I don't really know, because I don't know if many teachers have been through that [themselves]. I'd say if they've been through it, [talk to the student], "Hey, It's okay. Like, I've been through this. It happens. It's a thing that happens in life, sadly, however, it's possible to overcome it." And just be there to support students. "If you need me to help you digest what's going on" or lead students to [campus counseling] services, or anything. Like, teachers aren't like counselors, even though some definitely try to be. Just lead students in the right direction. Like, if the teacher gets help or can relate to the story, they can support a student in that way.*

*Mallory: So what if a teacher doesn't know these stories about you? Are there things that they do that make you feel supported, even when they don't know this about you?*

*Dylan: [Professor Smith] wants to know more about us and shows that he cares about us, in and outside of class. And to me, he's shown that he's supportive of [the student diversity committee] and he helped bring in [a guest for our committee] and has told me, "If you need help with [the committee] in any way, let me know. I will help in any way I possibly can." So I was just saying that to show support to students outside of the classroom.*

Dylan shared these stories with me early in the summer of 2020, when Dion Johnson and George Floyd were still alive, and before the news of Breonna Taylor's death had been picked up by mainstream media. But he also shared these stories at a time when so many other people of color had already been, and continue to be, killed by police ([Ater, 2020](#); [Chughtai, 2020](#)). Hearing his voice recordings, Dylan seemed so calm. I guess you can't imagine, or don't want to imagine, this happening to you when time and time again you are shown people who look just like you being killed. I wondered how he could be so calm. He said again and again, "It's frustrating," "It's annoying," "It happened."

Through his retelling, if you listen closely, you can hear the moments when Dylan shares that this is not okay, that he is not okay with it, while at the same time he seems to want to let it go, not talk about it perhaps, recognizing that this is his—and so many others'—reality. For Dylan, it seems incredibly annoying and frustrating and tiring to have to go through this, to recount this, to try to forget this, and to move on from this.

Dylan knows that his skin color, even though he is mixed, gives him the visible impression of being Black, as if this somehow excuses what happens. It doesn't. It just adds another nuanced hurt to his experience, that people don't see him for the actual person he is, his lineage, his family. Further erasing of his identity. More towards the end of the recordings. His voice. It's subtle. He doesn't express his emotions in a huge, open way. But to hear Dylan recount his interactions with police:

*I know why you are doing this.*

*I don't want to be here doing this.*

*You shouldn't be here doing this.*

### **Institutions During Crisis**

This final large section is about institutions during crisis. I introduce my story and the institution's story regarding the pandemic, and then I share the students' experiences related to the topics of academic impact, pandemic projects, student living, and students who don't have a choice.

*What I (Mallory) recall happening at the start of 2020 was that a major illness was sweeping across mainland China. Experts said the virus had the potential to spread quickly, and while COVID-19 had not yet made its way across continental borders, people were discussing that possibility. How would we keep the virus contained within the major port cities? If we just monitored international travelers, perhaps quarantined people at hotels, could we somehow mitigate and control the spread?*

*By mid-March, COVID-19 had made landfall in the United States, branching out from the large metropolitan areas, hitting Los Angeles, and inevitably taking hold in Phoenix, Arizona. Conversations with students for this study had begun in February, and by March everyone in the study—the students, my advisors, and myself—were doing what we could to make sense of and survive during a societal shift unlike any of us had ever experienced. (Journal entry, Summer 2020)*

The spread of COVID-19 to metropolitan Phoenix was (and still is) a crisis for the students in this study. The pandemic, and the quick change to a state of emergency, became a real-life stress test for the institution, challenging whether or not it could live up to its espoused values.

While all the stories in this project represent critical incidents, the stories surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate the immediacy and impact of the institution's responses on students' daily lives. Because crises and—in this case of this study, global emergencies—push institutions and people to their limits, the functions of the institution become hypervisible. Time is crucial and decisions are made quickly and in alignment with the institution's previously established policies, procedures, and values. The response reveals what the institution prioritizes, and how it functions—most often as intended, designed, and decided (Ahmed, 2012). When times are comfortable and typical, the institution can easily justify the outcomes of its problematic functions as individually experienced problems: “We didn't mean that,” “It's not like that for everyone,” or “Let us explain.” However, the institution's processes are thrown into sharp relief in times of

crisis. When push comes to shove, people show their true colors. In times of crisis, institutions show their true colors.

With the stories in previous sections, I needed to seek out, reflect, and ultimately make choices about the ways in which the institution's story bumped up, created tension, or aligned with the students' stories. In the following student and institutional stories, it did not take much work to put these stories side by side because they were happening in real time, side by side. When the pandemic occurred, the institution was automatically put into a position where its institutional branding, response, and story were enmeshed with the pandemic, making the stories from the students and the institution inextricably linked and visibly connected.

### **The Pandemic**

The following is an email communication from President Michael Crow to the Arizona State University Community:

*March 5th, 2020*

*Dear ASU community:*

*As many of you prepare for spring break, I want to provide you with background and information about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).*

*First, the current level of health risk in the United States remains low. More cases are being identified in the United States and the situation will continue to evolve.*

*The university, with the help of public health officials, continues to monitor events diligently. Your health, safety and success are our primary focus at the university.*

*. . . This will continue to be a fluid situation, one that you should monitor during spring break. Efforts are being made at the federal, state and local levels to minimize risk and further spread of the virus, and we are doing likewise at the university. If you are a student and have any health concerns, or simply would like to talk more about any stress you have related to this situation, please contact the Dean of Students.*

*It is a time to be informed and prepared and it is wise to be conscientious regarding your health, but there is no reason for alarm or panic. Enjoy your spring break. Follow the public health recommendations about washing your hands, staying hydrated, and getting enough rest.*

*We will see you back on campus soon for the final two months of the semester. In the meantime, we will continue to gather information, share what we know and be prepared to make any adjustments that our public health professionals recommend.*

*Sincerely,*

*Michael M. Crow*

*President*

*Arizona State University*

*(M. Crow, personal communication, March 5, 2020)*

Eight days later, President Crow closed the university campus, and the faculty, students, and staff began adjusting to learning and working remotely. Students' personal and academic lives were greatly impacted by changes that were primarily out of their



control. In what ways were the students impacted by the pandemic? What supports and priorities were most crucial to them? In what ways did the institution prioritize its responsibilities and values?

### **Academic Impact**

Anayeli and Christina were in the middle of their student teaching—their final semester prior to graduation—when the pandemic hit. Their student teaching experience drastically changed from being in-person with a mentor teacher and classrooms of students, to minimal interaction with their teaching placements; the school systems were just as overwhelmed with the pandemic-induced changes. Most of their student teaching experience was altered to writing lesson plans about what they would do if they had ever the opportunity to be with students. The changes were disappointing and de-motivating. Anayeli and Christina felt disconnected and grief-stricken during what was supposed to be a culminating experience of their undergraduate degrees. More disappointment occurred when graduation was altered to a virtual ceremony. Both Anayeli and Christina understood that these changes were necessary in order to keep everyone safe and healthy, but they were still disappointed.

Students who were in coursework similarly experienced difficulties and frustrations. Sam enjoyed the new online masterclasses that his studio professor organized and how his music education classes continued meeting synchronously. However, Sam was disappointed in the lack of grace that some faculty showed towards students in their classes. Students and faculty had to utilize and learn new processes for attending and participating in class and often dealt with technology glitches. Since some faculty did not seem to understand the student perspective, Sam watched as those faculty

created burdens and “just a lot of busy work,” rather than simplifying and accommodating for students.

While Margaret loved participating in her remote oboe studio recital, she found it difficult to participate in the sea of faces in her Zoom classes. She regularly wondered, “Does anyone even know if I am here?” She felt lonely and disconnected, and stopped attending some of her classes. When a few of her faculty emailed and asked if she was okay, she made the attempt to attend classes more regularly. Jack didn’t mind his classes being changed to remote instruction; however, he found it difficult to not be able to go anywhere and to be living and studying in the same space twenty-four hours a day:

*Since this [online experience] is school now, I have a sort of school brain turned on when I'm in classes. And then after that, I just do the same things in the same space, like, “What am I watching on TV?” or “What am I doing outside of school?” I think if I could do class [online], but then also be able to go out, see friends, then it'd be a good balance. But living in the same place where I'm also doing all my schoolwork and stuff, it's tough. I think it's just best to try and work in places where you're not going to distract yourself. But other than that—for me—it's just toughing it out and just getting through it. And then after that, it's just the same things like what I'm watching on TV or like what I'm doing outside.*

For students in this study, the limiting impacts of the pandemic felt draining and took away many of the creative musical outlets that they had previously experienced while on campus. Arizona State University’s promotional materials told a different story of students and faculty not only surviving, but thriving during this new normal:

*Finding creative purpose during a pandemic*

*April 8, 2020*

*In this time of social distancing, people are finding new ways to stay busy without common forms of entertainment such as shopping malls, movie theaters or gyms.*

*Creativity has become the norm in living everyday life.*

*. . . the pandemic might be able to bring out the creative side of people that is not always able to emerge while interacting with others in person. Finn [the person being interviewed] believes that a lot of great work can come from isolation, citing Henry David Thoreau and Mary Shelley as prominent examples of those who found creative inspiration in spending time alone.*

*— Arizona State University, ASU News website (ASU, 2020)*

### **A Tale of Two Pandemic Projects: Are we being innovative?**

*ASU ranked No. 1 in innovation for 6th year by US News and World Report*

*September 13, 2020*

*Long before it was a buzzword, innovation was a concept that Arizona State University embraced in the name of reimagining the role of an institution of higher education.*

*Over the past several years, that credo has manifested in a host of breakthroughs, advancements and transformations. In recognition of the university's culture of discovery, U.S. News & World Report has announced that it has named ASU the most innovative university in the nation for the sixth year in a row, as well as one of the top 50 public schools in the U.S.*

*— Arizona State University, ASU News web page (Greguska, 2020)*

*March 19, 2020*

*During this unprecedented time, Herberger Institute faculty, staff and students are working together to make minute by minute changes in order to make sure that we can continue to create, innovate and be together. There is a deep generosity of spirit and empathy that is central to the way artists and designers see the world. In the coming days, we hope to lift up and share the new and exciting ways you are inventing and making and seeing and shaping in this new normal. Please share your ideas and innovations with us at [email address].*

*— Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, Student Briefing Email from the Dean (S. Tepper, personal communication, March 5, 2020)*

When the pandemic disrupted the semester, professors had to implement “new and exciting” forms of learning, many of which they had never tried or experienced before. In the oboe studio, Margaret and her peers were each given the task of memorizing and performing a piece for a creative joint recital. Margaret loved contributing to the recital through her playing, her art, and her poetry. She also saw the recital as a decent pandemic alternative to studio class because students could work on their own schedules, would not need to be near one another, and could pursue their own interests and needs, such as focusing on certain playing techniques or repertoire. Overall, the recital project felt manageable and meaningful to Margaret during a semester when most things were challenging, chaotic, and unmotivating.

Because all classes had been switched to remote instruction, Margaret also experienced a new project in her wind ensemble. In an attempt to keep the students

engaged, the wind ensemble director announced that the students would be recreating Terry Riley's *In C* through a collaborative, asynchronous recording project. *In C* is a minimalist piece for an unspecified number of performers in which 53 short, recurring musical phrases are played for an undetermined number of repetitions resulting in a highly metric, yet aleatoric performance (Third Coast Percussion, 2017). The director decided on *In C* for the project because—similar to the oboe recital—students could work on their own time schedule, did not need to be near one another, and could each contribute to the project in a meaningful way. However, Margaret did not feel as supported and comfortable as she had with the oboe recital. Instead she felt that the *In C* project was a “frantic scramble to figure out what [was] going on.” To her, the directors seemed to be throwing together whatever they could to make the rest of the semester work. Margaret understood that no one planned for a pandemic to occur or knew how to deal with the sudden shift to online learning, so she had empathy for leaders in the situation. At the same time, Margaret found the *In C* project disappointing for several reasons.

First, Margaret was frustrated when she saw how her ensemble's project was vastly different from the project assigned to the other wind band. Margaret's peers in the other band were asked by their directors to recreate a different minimalist piece: *4'33"* by John Cage. *4'33"* is well known by musicians and technically doesn't require any rehearsal; the players are instructed to sit in silence for exactly four minutes and thirty-three seconds, a piece that challenged the notion of what counts as music. To recreate this piece at ASU, and consistent with the composer's intent, the directors asked students to record the sounds around them—at home, at work, in nature, and on campus—and to

submit the recording and any pictures of what they were seeing during these initial weeks of the pandemic. The directors, and likely the teaching assistants of the wind ensemble, organized and assembled the recordings and images into a final video that was widely distributed and praised on the Arizona State University website, social media, and Herberger Institute newsletters. A news article was written about the project, and, along with the recording, was shared widely as a shining example of the creativity and flexibility of the ASU faculty and students (MacDonald, 2020).

Margaret expressed that the other ensemble's 4'33" project was meaningful in that students had some choice about what to contribute. She thought that students seemed enthusiastic about participating, sharing pictures and sounds that echoed their individual experiences of isolation, uncertainty, and grief. The project was also manageable in that the performance lasts literally four minute, thirty-three seconds compared to Riley's *In C*, which lasts upwards of an hour. The final result of the other ensemble's 4'33" project felt and sounded whole, and Margaret thought that the recording was nice to watch and listen to, rather than her own ensemble's *In C* project which she felt "just sounded off, not right." Margaret felt the directors of the 4'33" project smartly chose repertoire that was "open-ended and that worked well given the restrictions, versus something that was metric and bound by a tempo that was extremely difficult to put together."

Margaret witnessed and experienced a difference in the amount of labor required for 4'33" and *In C*, as well as between the three subgroups for *In C*. In her wind ensemble, students had to contribute to *In C* in two different ways. Each week the ensemble director sent Margaret and the other students instructions to record themselves playing a few motifs, switching to the next motif at the time of their own choosing, for a

total of three to four minutes of playing. The director required Margaret and her peers to repeat this process with the different motif sets, submitting their recorded homework assignments twice a week over the course of several weeks. The students did this until all of their recordings resulted in almost a full hour of shifting motifs that were then spliced together with the other students' recordings.

The second task was that each student had to choose to be a part of either the audio, visual, or dynamics group. Margaret chose to be in the visual group, who had to help create an accompanying movie for the piece. It was clear to Margaret that people in this group were disinterested and uncertain about what their goals and tasks were. Margaret said that in their Zoom breakout room meetings, most students “blacked out (turned off) their cameras,” logged off and left the meetings, while others “sat silently, looking awkwardly at each other.” The few students who tried to remain engaged worked together to gather images, and did some movie editing to create the final product. Margaret also talked with her friends about what was happening in the different groups. She felt the dynamics group basically “had to do nothing,” because they were assigned to listen to the recording of the piece and add dynamic symbols (crescendo, piano, forte, etc.) to indicate the volume and shaping that they wanted for the piece. Then someone else input those symbols into the actual digital recording. Margaret believes that students in the audio group had the hardest job because they actually had to splice all of the recording clips together. Margaret said that most people in this group “knew that they were doing way more work than the other students,” but they continued doing it because they wanted to try to salvage and “make the project sound as good as possible,” even while being frustrated that the project was not going as well as they had hoped. Mostly,

the recording technique resulted in a final product that for Margaret and many of her peers sounded disjunct and unprofessional. Margaret said that this project has been a lot of stress and work, especially for something “that has no meaning to us.”

Weeks after the project was completed and presented through social media, Margaret says that “everyone has forgotten about it,” and that it is something that she “will never be proud of.. We did it because we were told to. . . . It wasn’t connected to us as people, or to what we had been doing the rest of the year.”

Toward the end of the spring pandemic semester, Margaret started taking a music theory course at the local community college because it was less expensive and fit into her schedule better. The course ran into the summer, finishing several weeks after ASU’s semester and the wind ensemble project had come to a close. The theory course included a reading about minimalism, and the name “Terry Riley” popped up. Margaret said that she learned about the context of the piece and the motifs that Riley wrote for *In C*, and she now understood the style and why the piece was made up of all these seemingly random bits that shifted and changed at random times. I asked Margaret if she would have appreciated learning this information while she was working on the piece at ASU, and if it would have changed her mind about the worthwhileness of the project. She said that knowing the context likely would have helped and reiterated that, at ASU, “We didn’t get any direction. We were just plopped right into it. Here’s the sheet music. Get to work.”

*Statement from ASU President Michael M. Crow on the transition from in-person classes to online instruction*

*March 11, 2020*



*The spread of COVID-19 may necessitate changes in the way we interact, but it does not change what we do. ASU will continue to operate and will continue to deliver the highest-quality education possible to the students we serve, and ASU employees will continue to perform their duties.*

— *Arizona State University, Office of the President web page (Crow, 2020)*

### **Impact on Student Living Situations: Who/what is the priority?**

Sadie and Dylan serve as community assistants (CAs) at ASU, and each oversee a dorm floor full of students who live on campus. In this role, they help students check in and out at the start and end of the school year, and are available to answer questions and to help resolve conflicts throughout the year. Sadie cares about her residents and understands the challenges they face, which became even more apparent as they began to feel the full effects of the pandemic: “I love my residents. And I want them to succeed in their lives. That’s really difficult for them to do right now.”

The change to remote learning and the risk of exposure to the virus forced students to reevaluate their living arrangements. Sadie continued living on campus because she was able to keep her job as a CA, and with her own dorm room she was afforded some safety against contracting the virus. CAs also receive waived housing and reduced meal plan costs, which incentivized Sadie to continue using her benefits on campus. And, she had few feasible options for moving off campus. Her father works as a first responder and if she headed home, her family would have had to quarantine before he could go back to work.

In her CA role, Sadie witnessed first-hand how the pandemic impacted her peers and dorm residents. Lots of students made the decision to move out of their dorms and wait out the pandemic in their families' homes. While this option meant less exposure to the virus, students still experienced challenges and stress, including financial concerns and the burden of unexpectedly living at home with their family and, vice versa, their family unexpectedly having to live with and care for them.

Sadie and several of her peers viewed refunds for housing and meal plans as a critical and time-sensitive issue: "The housing here is like \$13,000 a year. And food is like—food is expensive. The meal plan is a lot, too, and it was supposed to be unlimited food once you get in the dining hall. That's a significant amount." While students who moved home with their families may not have taken on an added rent cost, they and their families assumed the burden of purchasing groceries. Other students, including international students, chose to find nearby rental properties, so had already paid for ASU housing and now assumed the cost of rent at their new apartments. They hoped for a housing refund to help them afford their off-campus rent, which they saw as necessary to protect themselves from the virus.

In order to afford his tuition and bills during the third year of his DMA studies, Edward had been working a minimum wage campus job at one of the many on-campus Starbucks locations. While Edward would rather be earning a living wage through performing, he was still "proud to have [his] first blue collar job." When the pandemic hit and students moved off campus, the university reduced the number of dining hall options, including the coffee shops. Subsequently, Edward was left without a job. As an international student, Edward didn't have a visa that allowed him to work off campus.

Without any other options to work on campus and no guidance from the university, Edward was forced to move out of the room he rented and moved in with his closest relative—both in distance and relationship—his aunt in California. Edward loves his aunt, but it was hugely inconvenient to leave his apartment in Tempe and move in with her twelve hours away. His family also pressured him to move and be closer to a relative during the pandemic. Edward wishes that there would have been safe alternatives and financial support so that he could continue working and living in Tempe.

There were no refunds, employment aid, tuition breaks, or adjustments in sight for any of the students. Sadie told about one particularly revealing interview she had read in the student newspaper, in which the president of the university chastised students for asking about housing and meal plan refunds:

*There was a statement that [the university president] made for some publication that's run by students. And [Michael Crow] said, "The funny thing is that someone declares a national emergency and they're talking about bringing on martial law in California, and then people ask us, 'Are we going to give them a refund?' Are you kidding me? I mean, that's what you want to talk about, is a refund? So, like I said, we're offering full, full service. We'll sort all this out at some point, but we're not going to sort it out now. [Students refunds are] like number 48 on a list of 48 things"*  
*[quote read directly from The State Press article (Ravikumar, 2020)].*

Sadie was appalled by the president and university's response to this sudden change in students' housing situations. She was frustrated mostly by the tone and choices the university was using and making. If students were living off campus,

if they weren't eating, if they had lost jobs, then they needed refunds to help support them. Sadie thought that the president didn't seem to recognize or address these important details.

While the president assured students and the public that the university was still in "full, full service," Sadie saw inconsistencies between what the president said and the lived realities she and her fellow students faced.. Sadie said that a key benefit of the costly meal plan is that it is supposed to cover "unlimited food once you are in the dining hall." Inside any of the numerous dining halls on campus, students can literally eat as much as they want for as long as they want, and get a "to go" box on their way out. Sadie explained that since the pandemic, students could only get food to go, and so were limited by how much food they could carry in their boxes. Prior to the pandemic, numerous dining halls open across campus allowed students to quickly and easily grab food in between classes and within a short walk from their dorms. As the student population dwindled on campus, the university shut down dining halls, student workers lost their hours, and "full service" became something completely different and on a much smaller scale. Instead of getting her meals right in her dorm or across the walkway in the adjacent building, Sadie now walked 15 minutes each way to and from the dining halls that remained open. And even though students and staff working in the dining halls, and students going to get food were all wearing masks, Sadie says that it all felt risky.

### **Some of Us Don't Have a Choice**

Scores of students did not have the option to leave campus. Students who call the dorms home may be international students, students from somewhere else in the country, students whose families are unable to afford the travel costs, or students whose families

do not have space or enough income to afford another person living in their residence. There are also students who have no other place to call home, including foster children who have aged out of the system. After the university switched abruptly to remote learning, Dylan, in his role as a CA, was asked to check in with each person remaining on his dorm floor:

*It was the Saturday after the first week [of remote learning], [my bosses] were like, "We need every [resident] to fill out this form and we need it by 5pm." But [I know] not everyone is gonna fill it out. All I can do is just send [the form], and hopefully my residents fill it out. If not, then . . . [The situation] was just mostly annoying, really stressful. I had to take time to send everyone a message when I know they won't fill it out. That was annoying, and also because I know the university housing [office] is not open on the weekends. Why are you requesting stuff on the weekend? We know you won't see it till Monday anyways.*

Sadie was concerned about the content of what she was being asked to discuss with her floor residents:

*I've been instructed by my boss to inquire about the reasons why people are still here, which I feel kind of uncomfortable with. I feel it's inappropriate to be asking people why they want to continue living where they're paying to live. But [the housing managers] just want to know if it's like [a student] wants to stay or if they have to stay.*

Sadie believed this type of questioning showed that the university was trying to figure out what would happen if health officials mandated a full shut down of housing. Was she

given a mask to wear? Was she instructed on how to do the check ins in a way that didn't spread COVID-19 all across her floor?

Sadie sees how each student's situation impacts the choices they have and the degree to which they can keep themselves safe. Sadie knows that, for her, the choice to even attend college was greatly influenced by her desire to have a "college experience" of living away from home in a safe environment to learn about herself and the world. Sadie expressed that students don't want and didn't sign up for remote learning and at-home living. She was frustrated that the university, especially at the guidance of the president, was acting as if the changes still provided the same college experience, with just a few minor tweaks.

I asked Sadie if she thought that perhaps the university would change course in a few weeks and revisit refunds once the initial shock of everything was settled and they had time to work out a plan. She confidently said, "No way." And her reasoning for this made sense to me. At this point, everyone was leaving the dorms, technically, of their own accord. So in this way, the students and their families are the ones who essentially broke their lease (or still have a lease, but just decided to get off the property). Sadie implied that if the university can still claim that they are "full-service" and they are providing what they promised to students, then they don't owe anyone a refund. However, it seems it would be safest for the students to go home, for those who reasonably can. And for those who can't, one of the "largest, most innovative" institutions in the country should be able to figure out a plan and accommodate those students.

## **A pause**

The stories told in this chapter represent a curated collection of the experiences of people in this study, and were related to seeking your own opportunities, inclusion, and institutions during crisis. The students stories were placed in dialogue with the stories of the institution, gathered from its large digital presence. Placing these stories side by side can help us to consider the reality of the institution's espoused values. I reiterate the opening of this chapter: these stories make me wonder, and I hope they make you wonder, too.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE STORY OF WHAT THESE STORIES TAUGHT ME

#### **Where did this project begin?**

This project began to take form as I got to know other students and heard their stories throughout my doctoral studies. Some of their stories were about the barriers and challenges that they regularly faced while pursuing music degrees at Arizona State University.<sup>1</sup> Their stories covered a range of experiences, from the personal to the public, and from interactions with faculty and peers to dealing with procedures at the institution. Their stories left me wondering, “Why did this situation have to happen this way? Is there anything we, the students, the faculty, and/or I, can do to make this right, or better? Can things be different going forward? And if not, why?” After a while I realized that these stories kept coming and coming, and that students from all different areas of the school were facing their own individual yet related issues. My growing relationships with my peers opened my eyes to all the different ways that they navigated and experienced the institution. They had an intimate and firsthand understanding of the ways in which their institution supported them and disappointed them, included them and left them out. I realized that the people actually attending the institution—the students—had a crucial perspective that needed to be heard, and I wondered, if we listened, what might we learn?

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the ways in which music students experience equity and inequity within their school of music and to learn from them how their institution as a system impacts students’ experiences. The research puzzle

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<sup>1</sup> I name the institution in this study because it is not possible to disguise it while also referencing its language and materials.



comprised, in part, the following questions: In what ways do music students experience equity and inequity?; What institutionalized systems facilitate or hinder their sense of inclusion?; How do their stories bump up against the stories the institution tells itself about equity?

### **What did I do?**

To learn about this complex research puzzle, I engaged in an ongoing process of inquiry and narration with eight music majors who were currently attending Arizona State University. These students came from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, including (but not limited to) diversity of race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, age, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and musicianship. Some of the students and I talked across several weeks, some over many months, and some of us are still talking. Each person engaged with this project for the duration and depth that they could or desired. As we got to know one another, I turned our conversations into a series of individual student sketches and a collection of stories regarding the students' experiences within and related to the institution. Throughout this project (and up until the very last moment), most of the students reviewed my writing, and helped clarify my misunderstandings, shaping the accounts of their experiences and ensuring that their stories were told in the ways that resonated with them.

I also wrote an overview of the institution's story based on its charter, mission, goals, values statements, promotional and recruitment materials, institution and department websites, print materials, and admission and course registration information. I worked with the institution's own language, policies, media, and publicity to represent its story.

While other scholars have taken the time to listen to students and document their stories, I chose to do something different. In this study, I placed the students' stories in dialogue with the story the institution tells. Placing these stories side by side helped to reveal the complex ways that one institution—its structure, procedures, and personnel—impacted students. By examining the dialogue between the students' and institution's stories, the ways in which the stories reinforce or contradict one another were revealed.

### **What happened?**

Placing the students' stories and the institution's story of equity side by side resulted in a collision between the institution's espoused values and what the students live and experience. While the institution has many aspirations, the students in this study regularly experienced a different reality. Often the students' experiences stood in contradiction and/or complication of the institution's espoused values and promises.

This mismatch between what an institution says and what it does is not uncommon. As Ahmed (2012) describes, there is a “gap between what organizations say they do and what they ‘do do’” (p. 141). While not all students are diversity workers as described in Ahmed's research, the students' experiences in this study demonstrate how the institution's story fails to align with their lived reality.

Ahmed (2012) suggests that “perhaps the habits of the institutions are not revealed unless you come up against them” (p. 26). Similar to the diversity workers in Ahmed's research, the students in this study told stories of the ways in which they navigated and experienced the institution. When the students faced challenges, barriers, and burdens, they came up against the actual structures and procedures that are at work in the institution, rather than its espoused values. In this way, the students' experiences of

the institution reveal how the institution functions, not how it says it functions. The students shared many stories that could be retold and discussed here (see Chapter 6). For now, I will highlight a few stories that demonstrate the complicated interplay between the students' and institution's stories and that raise questions for me about equity in music education.

For example, Arizona State University and the School of Music have told stories about the ways in which the institution and department are “student-centric,” adaptable to “the needs of learners,” and full of “an abundance of opportunities.” Students in this study desired these opportunities and adaptations to their degrees, and sought them out. What happened when they asked for what they wanted?

Sadie and Jack both wanted more conducting experience, and the institution has ways of providing this opportunity. Through extra courses or volunteer leadership experiences, Sadie and Jack were both able to get more conducting experience beyond what was included in their degree requirements. This did not mean that their experiences were perfect. There were, however, mechanisms for making their requests happen, and further, when they asked, no one criticized them for asking.

Anayeli and Christina made requests of a different nature. They asked about the type of music that they could play in their School of Music and for which they could receive credit towards their degrees. They wanted to alter their degree requirements, moving away from Western classical ensembles and toward a broader range of musical experiences. When Anayeli asked to engage in jazz experiences that aligned with her desires for a “well-rounded” music education, she was frustrated that she had to “prove why [a variety of ensembles] was beneficial.” While the institution provides elective

ensembles from a wide array of music practices, Anayeli was actively discouraged by her professors and large ensemble directors from doing anything outside of her Western classical art music large ensemble requirements. They wanted her to fill the roles that they needed in their ensembles. Eventually, after pushing repeatedly to make to play in a jazz ensemble, and when another person was found to fill her seat—leaving the ensembles that “counted” undisrupted—the School of Music administrators gave Anayeli permission to play in a jazz big band and have it count as her large ensemble requirement for one semester.

Christina also wanted to play music from outside the Western classical tradition. Specifically, she asked for the music of her culture to be valued and accepted within her institution. She tried to make this opportunity happen for herself by organizing her own mariachi ensemble. She turned to the institution and asked for rehearsal space, but her request was challenged. Ultimately the institution denied her request since it did not fit their policy. Disappointed, Christina took her concerns to the administrators of the School of Music—she told them her story—and asked that mariachi and all other ensembles be counted as large ensemble course credit similar to what was given to the Western classical ensembles. While Christina “felt that [the directors] were actually listening” and were sympathetic to the issues she raised, nothing ever happened.

Sam, a 27-year-old non-traditional college student, also had experiences that misaligned with the story and values of the institution. President Michael Crow indicated that Arizona State University was redesigned as a place that welcomed students to come and finish their degrees, and “where anyone who wants to connect in some way [could] benefit from learning” (ASU, 2016b). The School of Music was also described as a place

full of multiple pathways for students to get involved in music and the music department: “there is a place for you to pursue your passion at every level!” (ASU, n.d.-u).

When Sam first auditioned for the piano performance degree, he realized that he might not have prepared exactly what the piano faculty wanted to hear. He admitted, “I didn’t play all the required pieces.” While Sam does not recall the exact audition requirements, he does recall that he prepared “three pieces of contrasting styles,” by Beethoven, Liszt, and Ginastera, and that he was supposed to perform a Bach prelude and fugue. Sam was rejected for not playing what was expected at the level of ability that was expected. When Sam reached out for feedback, he received harsh criticism from one of piano faculty members who wrote in an email, “What are you thinking? You are so unprofessional. You have absolutely no chance. There is nothing you can do to be admitted to this program.”

Sam, however, was determined and realized that music teaching was his passion. He reached out to every piano faculty member, and after even more rejection, found one who was willing to work with him. He began taking lessons and started talking with the music education faculty. Developing these connections and finding faculty to support him eventually led to Sam retaking the audition and being admitted to the university to pursue a degree in music education. But what if Sam hadn’t persevered? What if he had never found a faculty member who was willing to work with him?

Throughout this study, students shared stories of their experiences of bumping into the institution—its structures and processes. Their stories covered a wide range of topics and revealed the ways in which students felt supported (or unsupported) and heard

(or unheard) within their institution. Their stories continue to raise questions for me and make me wonder. I hope they make you wonder, too.

### **Stories and Scholarship in Dialogue**

What I have learned from the students during this research experience—this inquiry process—is vast and ongoing. I will continue to find meaning and insight in the months and years ahead as I ruminate on this project. The experiences I had while engaging with this project will forever be a part of my ongoing research journey and pursuit of equity in/through music learning and teaching.

In addition to the students' and institution's stories, there are other stories that can be brought into the dialogue. Bringing the voices of scholars and theorists into the foreground helps me to further think about and question these stories. For now, I highlight some of the most salient and current understandings I have gleaned from this research regarding these students' experiences within one collegiate institution.

### **Well-worn Pathways**

When Anayeli and Christina asked to alter their large ensemble requirements, they asked for something that went against the standard requirements and norms of the institution. Ahmed (2017b) describes how institutions favor the well-worn pathways:

The path exists in part because people have used it. Use involves contact and friction, the tread of feet smooths the surface; the path is becoming smoother, easier to follow. The more a path is used the more a path is used. How strange that this sentence makes sense. Without use a path can disappear, becoming overgrown, bumpy; unusable. (Ahmed, 2017b, p. 18)

For Anayeli and Christina, the path towards large ensemble credit was well-worn and made clear: there are certain ensembles that count as large ensemble credit and some that do not. The ability to deviate from this path was challenged because it is not what usually happens in this institution; the institution continued to function “as usual” (Ahmed, 2017b). These stories stand as testament to some of the structures and processes that maintain this institution. The students who asked for more conducting, like Sadie and Jack, asked for a topic within the canon of Western European art music. Their requests took place and are possible within the institution—no questions asked. But when students wanted to center the music of another culture or the music of their own people, they faced barriers, challenges, and denials to their requests. While students can incorporate other musical practices into their degrees as electives or extra courses, they do not have the option to center and give value to these practices in the same way the Western European art music is valued in the School of Music they attended.

While the School of Music, like many schools of music, may suggest that they provide and value a “rich diversity of performance experiences” (ASU, n.d.-s), the students’ experiences stand in relief against the structure and processes actually at work in this institution. While the School of Music is titled as such, its primary function is to serve as a School of Western European Art Music.

Administrators and faculty are often aware of the ways the school’s focus has centered on Western European art music and has, in small ways, been open to a wider spectrum of musical practices. The continuation of Sam’s audition story helps illustrate how institutions sometimes acknowledge and change their procedures.

Since Sam's audition, the piano studio faculty have acknowledged that some of the music audition procedures reinforce a dominant, exclusive narrative. The current piano audition requirements now state:

*The keyboard faculty of the [ASU School of Music] recognizes that many women and BIPOC composers have been overlooked in what has become the standard concert repertoire. We affirm the lives of these composers and recognize the great contributions they have made and are making. To this end, we encourage applicants to perform music by women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and under-represented composers. (ASU, n.d.-m)*

However, prospective piano performance majors are still expected to present “a minimum of three pieces contrasting tempos and musical styles” and “must include one complete classical sonata.” For non-performance majors (another troubling piece of rhetoric that implies valuing), including music education and therapy, musicology, theory and composition, students are expected to perform “two pieces of contrasting tempos and styles from the Baroque, Classical or Romantic time periods” and “a third piece of your choice” which could be from “20th or 21st century, an original composition, an improvisation or a piece in a style of your choosing” (ASU, n.d.-m).

These requirements and the recognition of an exclusive musical lineage are an example of how the institution is performatively acknowledging the existence of musics outside the Western European canon and composers who are not typically centered and represented, but, in reality, is passing the burden of institutional change onto the students. As opposed to actions that further actual and equitable change, performative diversity or performative allyship feign concern while not actually addressing underlying systems of



oppression. Performative allyship, in these instances, is indicated in the speech acts of an institution. Ahmed (2012) describes how speech acts uplift an institution while maintaining oppressive structures:

The document becomes not only a form of compliance but of concealment, a way of presenting the university as being “good at this” despite not being “good at this” in ways that are apparent if you look around. . . . Diversity becomes a form of image management: diversity work creates a new image of the organization as being diverse. It might be image management—or perception management—that allows an organization to be judged as “good at equality.” Just as changing the perception of an organization from being white to diverse can be a way of reproducing whiteness, so, too, being judged as “good at equality” can be a way of reproducing inequalities. (p. 102).

While the piano studio professors “encourage” change in composer representation, they have not actually *required* any change to occur. Further, the piano faculty affirm the value of pieces that have become the standard repertoire, much of it composed by white men. In order for any change to take place, students must take it upon themselves to seek repertoire by women, BIPOC, and under-represented composers. In this way, the studio faculty members acknowledge there is a problem, give permission for others to make different choices, but stop short of assisting or requiring that the problem be addressed. Simply acknowledging there is a problem is a rhetorical and performative act, and does nothing to change the underlying systems that continue to exclude these composers and musics from the institution.

Further, it is important to note that the piano studio is just one studio in the School of Music, and while they have opened some space for change, many of the other studios have not. A quick overview of the audition requirements from all of the music studios reveals a composer list that continues to host an abundance of white men, many of whom are old and/or dead. In this way, the School of Music has made some gestures and attempts at changing its structure; however, it seems that many of these changes are surface level, leaving the traditions and systems in place.

While the troubling accounts of ensemble and auditions requirements may seem like simply a problem of which musical style is centered, scholars argue that this very problem is one that contributes to the “systematic inclusion and exclusion of people” (Koza, 2008, p. 146). Koza (2008) describes how entrance auditions are one piece of a pipeline that determines who studies music in universities, and therefore, who receives music teaching licenses. In turn, this pipeline determines how music is taught, often as “a musical monolingualism that will foster a vast cultural divide between [teachers] and many of their students” (Koza, 2008, p. 149). While K–12 general music has showed some signs of change, this piece of the pipeline has a long history of foregrounding Western European art music and determines which students are successful in K–12 formal music education (Koza, 2008). The segments of the pipeline in turn reinforce who excels in collegiate entrance auditions, thus reinitiating the cycle.

While not explicitly referring to race, this pipeline contributes to and is funded by the racialization of bodies. Koza (2008) explains that “understanding how the audition repertoire list accomplishes de facto racial and ethnic discrimination begins with the recognition that racial exclusion and domination can be achieved ‘without making any

explicit reference to race at all” (Omi & Winant, 1993, as cited in Koza, 2008). Koza (2008) demonstrates how students’ bodies go through a racialized “binning” process throughout their K–12 experience, narrowing the pool of who is admitted to collegiate music schools. For example, schools of music have admission performance thresholds predicated on whether or not students have received private instruction (Koza, 2008, p. 147). The process of binning therefore starts early and includes whether or not students can afford, or even know about, private instruction.

Based on research from the National Endowment for the Arts, Koza (2008) found that despite not being able to determine why “music preferences exhibit racial and ethnic patterns,” they do. Koza (2008) argues:

Even though the audition specifications do not explicitly refer to race, they discount genres having deep roots in non-White musical traditions and, more importantly, reject the styles and genres that non-White people in the U.S. currently are more likely to enjoy. This rejection is bundled with approval of musics more likely to be enjoyed by White people, if anyone prefers them anymore. (p. 149)

In this way, and similar to what Koza (2008) describes, the Arizona State University audition requirements, as well as the large ensemble requirement and hierarchical credit valuation, feed into and fund a similar “binning” and racialization of bodies. In these examples, the structure of who and what counts in music is clear. Further, who and what counts in music is reinforced and reproduced—unless specific, explicit commitments to change are made, enacted, and held accountable.

In this study, when students made requests to pursue music outside of the Western classical canon, they came upon the structures of the institution. Often these structures are grounded in the problems that we don't talk about.

The wall is what we come up against: the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change as well as to the mobility of some, a barrier that remains invisible to those who can flow into the spaces created by institutions. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 175)

Racism is the problem that we don't talk about. While some institutions may work to tell a new story of change premised on inclusivity, a lack of explicit policy change and enactment leaves structures of oppression in place. In some examples, the institution has left the door to change and equity open, but the students must figure out the change in order to bring themselves into the institution, and in turn, they have to navigate these spaces. Performative diversity/allyship puts the burden on people of color to figure out how to enact the change that the institution names.

### **Unbalanced Emotional Labor**

In this study, students shared stories that revealed the emotional labor required to navigate and find success within their institution. Marginalized students, especially students of color, face and are burdened by “unbalanced emotional labor” as they navigate institutions (Evans & Moore, 2015). This comes about “as a result of negotiating both everyday racial microaggressions and dismissive dominant ideologies that deny the relevance of race and racism” (Evans & Moore, 2015, p. 439). The unequal distribution of emotional labor can be seen in the ways in which students navigate institutions and in the microaggressions that are wielded against them.

**Navigating institutions.** Most of the students in this study wanted additional or individualized opportunities from their degrees, something that Arizona State University asserts that students can have at this institution. Once on campus, however, the students were not encouraged to take on opportunities or to customize their experience. Instead, students had to initiate these opportunities, sometimes getting what they wanted, sometimes getting more than what they asked for, and sometimes getting no response at all.

Who got what they wanted? Jack, Sadie, and Sam each had unique experiences of making requests of the institution; they each eventually got what they wanted. While they may have received more than they bargained for in some instances, they were confident and felt entitled in making their requests. It cannot be overlooked that these students—those who felt they could speak up, who asked and received—identify as white and white-passing. Why is it that white and white-passing students in this study found some ease in garnering the opportunities they desired?

In this study, students of color shared stories that they often must think before they act, like when Anayeli wonders, “Is this a battle worth fighting?” or when Edward thinks about whether he should speak up or to just “deal with it.” The students think about the level of effort required, the personal risk involved, and the likelihood that their effort will give them the results they want. These considerations help students protect themselves, but also reinforce the power dynamics already operating within institutions. Evans and Moore (2015) assert:

The inclusion of people of color into previously exclusively white institutions in the post-civil rights era has resulted in racially complex and hazardous spaces that

people of color must navigate in order to participate in the resources and rewards these institutions offer. . . . People of color carry the burden of having to choose between tacitly participating in their marginalization or actively resisting racist ideologies with the possible consequence of institutional alienation, exclusion, or official reprimand. (p. 452)

Students of color, however, do sometimes choose to speak up to or against their institution. In this study, students of color chose to speak up when the issues were of great importance and when they felt safe enough to ask. Anayeli asked over and over again to be allowed into jazz ensemble and to count it as her large ensemble credit, and she was denied multiple times. Her request was only approved when several things aligned: she brought the issue to the Director of the School of Music, there were other students who could fill in the large ensemble spot, and the approval granted was “special permission” for her final semester in her degree program, not a regular policy. No other students were given this opportunity; nothing changed. In this way, Anayeli’s request had no impact on the structure or policy of the institution.

But what about Christina? She didn’t just ask the institution to allow her to take mariachi as her large ensemble requirement. Christina asked for more. She presented her case to the top administrators in the School of Music. She pointed out the ways in which the large ensemble credit upheld Western music as superior to other types of ensembles and she expressed how a lack of representation and equal worth given to her music—her culture—left her feeling marginalized. While the administration made time to hear Christina’s request, there was no communication or follow-up. Wahab (2005) describes how institutional discussions are regulated by processes and structures of the institution:

Often the voices of the minoritized intended to rupture/interrogate processes and structures of domination remain ghettoized by a vortex of white academy insisting on having a conversation with itself. In other words, the academy grants token space-inclusionary sites to antiracist discourse that dispenses with its complicity in imperial discourse. (p. 33)

Arizona State University has many ensemble offerings outside of the Western tradition; however, by regulating these ensembles as electives and outside of the courses deemed worthy of large ensemble credit for most music degrees, the institution reifies the hierarchy that keeps white, Eurocentric values on top and solidifies racist practices and foundations as the core of its institution. While students in this study made attempts to center the “rich diversity of performance experiences” that ASU claims to uphold (ASU, n.d.-s), their requests were unacknowledged and non-disruptive to the structures that maintain the school as steeped in Eurocentric values.

Students in this study voiced their concerns and/or sought support to modify aspects of their experience. In these moments, the students troubled the institution. Ahmed (2014) describes how institutions hear critiques as complaints, for “to hear you as complaining is not to hear you at all” (p. 45). Instead of addressing the students’ concerns, the institution locates the problem as being within the student. The institution will not conform to the students’ request; the student needs to conform to the institution.

What might happen if an institution adopted a culture of consistently acknowledging and interrogating its own practices? What if student requests were seen as valuable insight for understanding the problematic structure of the institution? What would it mean to hear critiques as critiques—as maps for transforming our institutions?

**Microaggressions.** In this study, students shared that—although they have been admitted to the institution—they have ongoing experiences that disrupt their feelings of support and safety. They shared about the microaggressions, including overt racial profiling, that impact their daily lives. Like on the first day of class when Anayeli’s peers and professors talk about her name, saying, “Wow, that’s such a mouthful! I will be working on this all year!” Or, when several weeks into the semester, Christina is asked to retake her orchestra audition, even when no one else had to. Or when Edward and his boyfriend were harassed by other students on campus for holding hands. Or when Dylan was racially profiled and pulled over by police—multiple times. Unfortunately, this is not surprising; in our society, racism is an ordinary and everyday occurrence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Sue (2010) defines microaggressions as “the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 5). Compounding the burden, research has shown that the impacts of microaggressions are cumulative and impact the recipient’s wellbeing over time (Sue et al., 2007, p. 279). While many people believe microaggressions to be “insignificant” or fleeting, Sue et al. (2007) assert that the impact of microaggressions is more dangerous and damaging than blatant acts of racism (p. 279). Anayeli consistently and continuously deals with people mispronouncing her name. Microaggressions target a person’s psychological well-being and may cause/lead to lowered self-esteem or physical deterioration through stress-induced illness, including



life-threatening conditions (Sue et al., 2007). In this way, racism can be seen as the destructive and deadly force that it is.

The burden of microaggressions is furthered as students operate within institutions that function under “dismissive dominant ideologies that deny the relevance of race and racism” (Evans & Moore, 2015, p. 439). The focus of Arizona State University’s story is inclusivity, that this is a place “measured not by whom we exclude, but rather by whom we include and how they succeed” (ASU, n.d.-k). However, “inclusion” stops short of the actionable goals of equity and justice (Stewart, 2017). Arizona State University hosts public discussions on microaggressions, disavows exclusion and oppression, and provides support for students experiencing harm. The students still experience harm. Students can ask for and take advantage of the help, but they still have to do the emotional labor of seeking out and asking for help. They still go through the harmful experiences that necessitate the support. They *may* get help, the institution *may* acknowledge and even respond, but the emotional labor still exists.

While oppressive systems are harmful and need to be dismantled, students of color have enacted the emotional labor of *micro-resistances*, which help them to navigate white institutions and find the success they deserve. Evans and Moore (2015) assert:

Our findings reveal that people of color in white institutional spaces negotiate their responses to racist institutional practices in such a way that creates avenues to resist racial objectification and degradation and emotionally protect themselves from the damaging consequences of racism. These everyday micro-resistances, as we call them, represent an important aspect of racial resilience and resistance,

enabling people of color to participate in racially oppressive institutions while maintaining and valuing their human dignity. (p. 441)

Students in this study demonstrated their ability to, at times, question the system and raise their concerns. They engaged in dialogue, albeit sometimes frustrating and disheartening, to discuss and interrogate the processes that burdened them. They realized their own self-worth and protected themselves through a system that was not designed for them. These “micro-resistances” show up “through the affirmation of self-definitions and valuations of skill and intellect (Evans & Moore, 2015, p. 451).

*The fact that there is not so much change to our programs is discouraging. I understand progress takes time, but I'm tired of waiting for nothing. Everything I've learned about social change, I've taught myself. We have to be our own leaders.*

— Christina, senior, music learning and teaching student

### **So now what?**

The ongoing systems of oppression that undergird many institutions prolong harmful practices, including the unbalanced emotional labor placed on students from marginalized groups. Having this knowledge and awareness causes me to consider my own institutions and spheres of influence. If we are to work towards equity and justice, we must seek out and understand the challenges facing students, we must work to alleviate the burdens experienced by students in their daily lives, and we must prevent and dismantle the systems that oppress all students, including those of marginalized groups. We each have a role to play in this ongoing and critical work.

This research has documented my interest in equity, institutions, and supporting and centering students, but how do I move from talking to transformation? How do I hold myself accountable to the values I have espoused in this document? The recommendations that follow are commitments that I make for myself in the various spheres of influence I occupy, and may be of use to others who are interested in pursuing equity in/through music education. It will be my responsibility to hold myself accountable, to build accountability between myself and my peers, and to ultimately take action beyond talking about the problems in music education.

### **Collegiate music faculty**

Listening to and considering the stories of collegiate music faculty was not part of this study. Those narratives are likely as varied as the students' stories, because faculty may be at different places with regards to their understanding of and pursuit of equity in their interactions with students and their institution. The students in this study encountered faculty who maintained an oppressive frame, and those who challenged oppression. Even though I did not listen to and center faculty narratives, faculty are implicated in this study. I am aware that there are faculty who also have experiences of bumping into the institution's structures and processes in ways that are similar, yet distinct from, the students. In future research, it may be helpful for me to understand how faculty are making sense of equity, "diversity," and "inclusion" and to learn about the ways in which they challenge and reinforce oppression in their institutions. For now, these are some of the thoughts I have regarding collegiate music faculty who wish to pursue equity in their institutions.

Collegiate music faculty can work on these complex issues and ultimately support students by developing their own self-awareness. Raising self-awareness and learning about critical topics of equity, antiracism, and whiteness are important and ongoing steps towards enacting change. Attending workshops and seminars, such as those offered by the [Equity Literacy Institute](#) (2020a) and engaging with texts predicated on equity, justice, and antiracism may be useful tools for learning and growth. White, white-passing, and any other teacher who wants to further interrogate whiteness may find it useful to explore the topics of [white supremacy](#) (Saad, 2020), [antiracism](#) (Kendi, 2019), and [learning to talk about race](#) (Oluo, 2019). As music educator and scholar Jason Thompson recently discussed during a seminar on equity, “When we inform ourselves, we become capable of transforming our spaces” (personal communication, March 16, 2021).

While many well-meaning collegiate educators have begun their explorations of racism and other forms of oppression in their institutional spaces, they should be vigilant and always recall that “white progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 5). White people must do the work of learning about themselves and their role in maintaining systems of white supremacy. Further, if people who receive privilege in any of its forms wish to work against the systems of oppression they must constantly consider, monitor, and disrupt the ways in which their movement and privilege in the world is harmful to others.

As faculty learn about themselves, they will also need to develop strong relationships with their students, taking on a more equitable and power sharing ethic in their interactions and classrooms. Faculty will need to recognize the ways in which students are impacted and oppressed by the intersections of their multifaceted identities,

including their interactions with faculty (Hess, 2015). Faculty will need to go beyond surface level relationships where the end goal is to assist students in meeting the classroom objectives. Recall the in-depth relationships that were built and shared in Chapter 4. Instead, teachers committed to equity should get to know their students deeply and as multifaceted people. Teachers should be willing to open space for students to bring their whole selves and to be fully agential beings in these spaces. Teachers can move from doing music education “to” or “for” students, and instead learn to do music education “with” students as co-generators of knowledge and curriculum. By treating students as equal human beings who bring a wealth of understanding into their classrooms, teachers can practice and enact more equitable power relations in their space of learning and teaching. Further, because some music faculty have the unique benefit of being able to interact with young people over the course of several years, they are in a prime position to build and model more equitable relationships across an extended period of time. By developing self-awareness and centering relationships, teachers can foster equitable and power-sharing partnerships and build trust and openness with students, all of which can help teachers and students work together to alleviate and dismantle the systems and challenges students face.

Further, to build these relationships, collegiate music faculty need to demonstrate an explicit commitment to equity and antiracism (Hess, 2015), and to enact these values through their course design, materials, and daily interactions (Stauffer, 2012). Students in this study greatly appreciated and wanted to have “conversations that matter” (Hess, 2015). Students were ready and willing to discuss and work against the systems of oppression that impact their own lives, classrooms, and the field of music education.

Collegiate music faculty can both plan for conversations related to social justice in their lessons and be flexible to the unprompted topics and discussions that students bring up. By displaying support and action towards equity as an individual within classroom happenings, music teacher educators can foster an environment and relationships where students feel comfortable to share their lives and to ask for the support they want or need.

For example, antiracist music educators may find it useful to learn how students' multifaceted identities impact their experiences and to incorporate notions of multicentricity into their curriculum and pedagogy (Dei, 1996; Hess, 2015). Relying on Dei's (1996) foundational antiracism work, Hess (2015) notes that "multicentricity works to center the students in their own realities first and then move to the less familiar. It considers the relationships and power relations between different centers and is conceptually integrative" (p. 75). This validating approach helps students see themselves and others as having a wealth of knowledge and recognizes the contributions of all people as part of an integrative whole.

Collegiate music faculty who want to alleviate the daily impacts of oppressive systems should be prepared to provide material and non-material support to students and should anticipate and remain alert for difficulties that students might face in navigating institutional systems. Spending class time discussing the nature of institutions and how students can best advocate for themselves—providing institutional "insider info"—can help raise students' own awareness that there are systems that are built to block and barricade certain people in certain ways (Yosso, 2005). Students can both advocate for

themselves and find support in having faculty advocate for student needs in larger institutional conversations and decisions.

Specifically considering music teacher preparation, music teacher educators inhabit a unique role in that they have some direct knowledge and positionality to disrupt and work against systems of exclusion, such as the pipeline that influences which students are successful in school music and those who ultimately become music educators (Koza, 2008). Music teachers educators who want to further a more equitable field can engage with the above recommendations, and further, make explicit to music education students the need for and enactment of antiracist and equity-minded teaching practices. Music teacher educators need to engage in direct and open dialogue with music education students about the ways in which music education has been exclusive and help music education students to raise their own self-awareness. In this way music teacher educators can help prepare future music educators who are open, capable, and honored to center all the young people and all the musical practices they will encounter in their teaching careers.

Collegiate music faculty committed to equity should support their students and mitigate the harm that students are burdened with. However, faculty must go beyond mitigation and engage in the long-needed dismantling of oppressive institutions and their structures. Since collegiate music faculty are also institutional leaders, I will address these recommendations in the following section.

### **Institutional leaders**

Institutional leaders such as administrators and faculty have direct access to the procedures and policies of the institution and often have their own intimate understanding

of ways in which institutions function (Bradley, 2011; Fiorentino, 2019; Koza, 2008). In order to disrupt and dismantle these systems, institutional leaders must first acknowledge their positionality within these institutions and gain self-awareness about the ways in which they may be benefiting from and/or complicit in systems of oppression.

As institutional leaders learn about themselves, they can move beyond the “languages of appeasement,” including “diversity” and “inclusion,” and adopt a personal and institutional commitment to equity and justice (Stewart, 2017). Focusing on the actionable goals of equity and justice can assist institutional leaders in considering how they permeate and dismantle systems of inequity in the spheres of influence that they occupy (Equity Literacy Institute, 2020b). The Equity Literacy Institute (2020b) describes a spectrum of abilities that people working towards equity can develop, including the:

1. Ability to *recognize* even the subtlest biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies
2. Ability to *respond* to biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies in the immediate term
3. Ability to *redress* biases, inequities, and oppressive ideologies in the long term by addressing their root causes
4. Ability to actively *cultivate* equitable, anti-oppressive ideologies and institutional cultures
5. Ability to *sustain* bias-free, equitable, and anti-oppressive classrooms, schools, ideologies, and institutional cultures (Equity Literacy Institute, 2020b)

Ideally, leaders and their institutions are in the sustaining phase, however, while working toward that place, institutional leaders must commit to and continue the ongoing and



critical work in whichever ability level they find themselves. By furthering these equity-focused abilities, institutional leaders can engage in the necessary work of dismantling oppressive institutions. Institutional leaders should realize that they have agency and power within institutions and that what they do with that power matters and has material impacts on people.

*“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” —Desmond Tutu (Ratcliffe, 2017)*

### **Music learning and teaching scholars**

Scholars have called for the field of music education and its research to move from talking to transformation. To do this, music learning and teaching scholars need to engage in the crucial work of raising their self-awareness and centering equitable relationships in their work. At the 2019 Desert Skies Symposium, scholar and educator Joyce McCall called for scholars to take on their “research as action.” Researchers need to center equitable relationships with people and communities, and engage in projects and collaborations that support the desires and needs of the community. Scholars can also investigate the ways in which their research can be action-based in that research grants and various funding sources might be acquired to meet community needs and interests in material ways. In this way, researchers can foreground relationships and engage in research in ways that are organic and community-serving.

Pertinent to narrative inquiry, Hess (2021) has called for the field of music education to interrogate its storytelling practices. Although stories may have given scholars and teacher educators the sense that they were centering marginalized voices and inducing policy change, Hess (2021) warns that stories “may also inadvertently reinscribe

oppressive relations or reinstate the very hierarchical conditions that elevate dominant bodies across different privileged identity categories over those who lack privilege in those same categories” (p. 68). To avoid this, Hess (2021) recommends that scholars attune their research focus to interrogating oppressive institutions and systems, not solely on excavating stories of oppression. Further, Hess (2021) suggests that in order to maintain the integrity of counter-storytelling, scholars must ensure that agency of the storyteller and the ownership of the story is maintained. Most importantly, Hess (2021) argues that people from marginalized groups need to be a part of decision making and policy-change within institutions; the call for their storytelling (or counter-storytelling) must go beyond talking and include these people in transforming the institution. Since many music education scholars are also teacher educators and institutional leaders, they are in a unique position to build relationships with and support students, advocate for and implement change that centers students in decision-making of institutions, and utilize their research in ways that are equitable, while interrogating systems of oppression.

**Let the students lead. Get out of the way.**

As this document draws to a close, the students’ voices still resound in my head. What I recall most from Anayeli was that she and the other students wanted to engage in conversations regarding equity and justice and wanted to be a part of action and change in their school. They were knowledgeable and had worthwhile insight enough to contribute to and to lead the conversations. Sometimes their faculty got out of the way, opening space and time to engage with what the students knew was most important. What would it mean to let younger generations be the leaders in our institutions? If we listen, what might we learn? If we let them lead, where might we go?

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APPENDIX A

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY DATA COLLECTED

The institution's story was compiled from promotional and recruitment materials, values, and mission statements, and university branding. The following websites were active at the time of publication of this study. The links and their content may change over time.

Arizona State University. (n.d.-a). *ASU News*. <https://news.asu.edu/>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-b). *ASU Online*. <https://asuonline.asu.edu/>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-c). *EdPlus at Arizona State University*.  
<https://edplus.asu.edu/projects/asu-online>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-d). *Enrollment trends by campus of major*.  
<https://www.asu.edu/facts/#/facts/enrollment/campus-major>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-e). *New American University*.  
<https://newamericanuniversity.asu.edu/home>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-f). *Office of Inclusion and Community Engagement*.  
<https://inclusion.asu.edu/>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-g). *School of Music, Dance and Theatre*.  
<https://musicdancetheatre.asu.edu/>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-h). *The Sustainability Opportunity*.  
<https://schoolofsustainability.asu.edu/opportunity/>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-i). *About the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts*.  
Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts.  
<https://herbergerinstitute.asu.edu/about>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-j). *Alliance History*. Mayo Clinic and Arizona State University. <https://mayo.asu.edu/about#alliance-history>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-k). *ASU Charter, Mission and Goals*. New American University.  
<https://newamericanuniversity.asu.edu/about/asu-charter-mission-and-goals>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-l). *ASU-Roden Crater Project*. Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. <https://herbergerinstitute.asu.edu/roden-crater>

Arizona State University. (n.d.-m). *Auditions*. School of Music, Dance and Theatre.  
<https://musicdancetheatre.asu.edu/admissions/music/undergraduate-auditions>

- Arizona State University. (n.d.-n). *A degree in Music Learning and Teaching*. School of Music, Dance and Theatre. <https://musicdancetheatre.asu.edu/degree-programs/music/music-learning-and-teaching?dept=392823&id=1>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-o). *Design Aspirations*. New American University. <https://newamericanuniversity.asu.edu/about/design-aspirations>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-p). *Dispelling stereotypes video series*. Office of Inclusion and Community Engagement. <https://inclusion.asu.edu/diversity/diversity-101>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-q). *Diversity philosophy*. Office of Inclusion and Community Engagement. <https://inclusion.asu.edu/diversity>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-r). *Faculty*. School of Music, Dance and Theatre. <https://musicdancetheatre.asu.edu/people/faculty?dept=392823&id=1>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-s). *Join an ensemble and see the opportunities*. School of Music, Dance and Theatre. <https://musicdancetheatre.asu.edu/ensembles#world-popular>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-t). *A look at today's college student: The growth of online learning*. ASU Online. <https://asuonline.asu.edu/newsroom/online-learning-tips/look-todays-college-student-growth-online-learning/>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-u). *Music degree programs*. School of Music, Dance and Theatre. <https://musicdancetheatre.asu.edu/degree-programs/music>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-v). *Music Learning and Teaching, BMUS*. School of Music, Dance and Theatre. <https://musicdancetheatre.asu.edu/degree-programs/music-learning-and-teaching-bmus>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-w). *Music (Popular Music), BA*. Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. <https://herbergerinstitute.asu.edu/degree-programs/music-popular-music-ba>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-x). *A New Community*. New American University. <https://newamericanuniversity.asu.edu/about/new-community>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-y). *A New Environment*. New American University. <https://newamericanuniversity.asu.edu/about/new-environment>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.-z). *A New Objective*. New American University. <https://newamericanuniversity.asu.edu/about/new-objective>

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