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LEARNING AND TEACHING MUSICAL HERITAGE IN IMMIGRANT CHICAGO

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Abstract

In twenty-first-century Chicago, immigrant musical traditions are reproduced through a number of means. This ethnographic dissertation examines three nonprofit organizations engaged in this work, analyzing their operations and their effects on young people. In doing so, the project argues that such organizations—a relatively novel institutional structure—enable immigrant musicians and community leaders to pursue a wide range of musical and youth development goals that would otherwise be difficult to achieve. Through this study, the dissertation sheds light on broader societal phenomena including ethnic and panethnic formation, musical skill development in non-dominant genres, and youth political organizing. The core of this project is ethnographic study and interviewing with students, parents, teachers, and administrators at Sones de México Ensemble’s Mexican Music School, the Chicago Mariachi Project, and HANA Center—three Chicago institutions that provide musically and pedagogically diverse educations to young people.

On both an individual and an organizational level, this project is about navigating the ambiguous middle ground between two dominant frameworks. One of my interlocutors compared life as an immigrant to “a balancing act of two cultures” between the dominant US culture and the culture of one’s parents. The nonprofit music education programs analyzed in this dissertation similarly operate in a third space between the traditional locations of musical learning—formal institutions like schools on one hand, and community spaces like homes and churches on the other. The dissertation explains the productive creativity that happens in this middle ground, as musicians and teachers build innovative educational programs, and both young people and their parents make choices about the kinds of musical lives they want to live.

Chapter 1

Immigrant Music Education as Societal Phenomenon

“Whoever speaks about folk songs also comes to understand her or his own time and all that is part of it, even after ceasing to speak about folk songs.”

—Johann Gottfried Herder, *Volkslieder* (1779)

trans. Bohlman (Herder and Bohlman 2017: 70)

Music, this music, lives within our daily lives, right? We should be creating that music, right? . . . I always remind [my son], maestro Pichardo and maestro Díes are big, they're a big deal, you have no idea how lucky you are to be learning from these people because that's like, they're very well respected and renowned as musicians. So it's a privilege to be able to come here and learn from there, it's a great honor and so we feel very fortunate.

—Mari Carmen, parent, Sones de México Ensemble's Mexican Music School (Interview with author, May 18, 2019)

I think what's so impactful about *p'ungmul* [drumming] is that it's a collective musical effort . . . you have to do it together. . . . *P'ungmul* becomes powerful when everyone's on the same *hoheup*, same breath, like you have to hit it [together, collectively], you know? And *hoheup* is all about solidarity . . . it's really relying on each other, and you have to have eye contact with other people—are we on the same page? Which I think is so powerful. It's a form of solidarity, I think, and healing, and community. . . .

The program's goal is, how do we use our cultural arts and music to build community power. Our youth take the drums and we perform at rallies for immigrant justice, gender justice, racial justice, environmental justice, for our mission of citizenship for all. . . . But we also, for example, just had . . . a youth-led fundraiser showcase that our youth organize for the community, for young people, by young people, but also for the larger community. . . . They wanted to fundraise for DACA renewal and rapid response fund, considering the current political climate. . . . Our Drumming Up Power youth performed, so [the drumming is] part of this community building.

—William Oh, Youth Organizer, HANA Center (Interview with author, August 28, 2019)

Part I: Setting the Scene, Defining the Topic

Immigration, Cultural Heritage, Preservation, and Revival

On a sunny April morning, I sat with Juan Díes in his Ravenswood apartment as we discussed folk music revivalism and the politics of cultural heritage in Chicago. Behind Díes was a living room packed with instruments, from guitar and bass to a vibrant set of Aztec drums; around the corner, a dense stack of electronics made up his home recording studio. I initially had reached out to Díes in an effort to learn about Sones de México Ensemble, a folkloric band and nonprofit education organization. Fortunately for my purposes, Díes turned out to be a person of deep reflection who has given much thought to the nature of his work and the sociological currents beneath the surface of folkloric music education and performance.

Juan Díes (JD): I think that immigrants—you know, as immigrants we have to deal with balance—a balancing act of two cultures, from assimilating the general culture where we live and interact with people from other cultures, and our identity, that's rooted in our birth culture, the culture of our parents and our grandparents, to not lose tie with that heritage. So in that dynamic, you see many parents, for instance, who form, you know, folkloric dance companies in churches, and without any special or elaborate training they find the resources to sew costumes and find recordings and put on productions and then get the children involved, precisely out of the need to preserve the culture. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

Sones de México Ensemble is one of several hundred nonprofit organizations in the city of Chicago that include music education in their mission (Ingenuity 2020). “Music education,” in the Chicago nonprofit ecosystem, encompasses a diverse array of practices, from performance to appreciation, from individual lessons to ensembles, from long-term study to short-term experience. The musics taught by these organizations cover a wide range of styles, including the European

concert tradition, jazz, contemporary choral repertoire, many varieties of popular music, and more. Some, like Sones de México Ensemble, focus on traditional styles of music from other parts of the world. In many cases, these organizations were created by immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. Chicago has a lengthy history as a hub of immigration, and it has seen a revival of this history in recent decades. From 2000 to 2010, 54% of the population increase in the Chicago metro area came from immigrants (Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2014), and as of the year 2015, approximately 21% of Chicago's population was foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau 2015c).¹ Furthermore, roughly 37% of children in Chicago had at least one foreign-born parent (U.S. Census Bureau 2015a). These numbers are lower than past eras of high immigration, such as 1910, when 34% of Chicagoans were foreign-born (mostly in Europe), but it marks a substantial increase over 1990, when only 11% of the city's residents were foreign-born (Conzen 2005). The origins of these immigrants have also changed over time; before a 1965 change in federal immigration policy, the vast majority of immigrants in Chicago came from Europe. Over the past half-century, an increasing proportion have come from (in order of quantity) from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. As the global diversity of Chicago's residents has increased over time, the ecosystem of music education focused on cultural heritage has come to include organizations from Sones de México Ensemble to

1. To break this down further: approximately 573,000 of Chicago's 2,720,000 residents are foreign-born. Of those, approximately 52% identify as Hispanic or Latino, 21% as non-Hispanic white, 21% as Asian, 6% as Black or African American. These statistics should be taken with a grain of salt given the well-known problems with ethnic/racial identity and the US Census (see, e.g., Mora 2014:83–118). Nevertheless, they provide a rough snapshot of the racialized self-identity of Chicago's foreign-born population. Taken in terms of continent rather than racial identity, the approximate breakdown of Chicago's immigrants is: 316,000 (55%) from Latin America, 129,000 (23%) from Asia, 98,000 (17%) from Europe, 23,000 (4%) from Africa, 5,000 (1%) from Northern America, and 1,000 (0.2%) from Oceania. The top five nations of origin for Chicago's immigrants are (in order of quantity): Mexico, Poland, China, the Philippines, and India (US Census Bureau 2015b).

HANA Center, a Korean cultural organization that offers youth *p'ungmul* drumming classes. As Díes made clear in the preceding interview, however, this type of cultural education is not always formal or institutionalized—sometimes it arises at the community level due to a shared perception of need.

Immigration and the preservation of cultural heritage are not new. This should be especially apparent in Chicago, where Francis O'Neill, a turn-of-the-twentieth-century Irish-born police chief, famously created some of the most widely disseminated source books for traditional Irish music through the transcription of his fellow Irish-born Chicagoan musicians (Carolan 1997; Dillane 2009: 45-82). In the twenty-first century, however, questions of immigrant culture have taken on a new urgency. Anti-immigrant sentiment, always a latent force in the United States, has gained new ground as public figures increasingly question whether various ethnic, religious, and national groups belong in the United States. This is matched on the level of government policy, as formal deportations rose dramatically under both Presidents Bush and Obama.² Over the course of this research project (2015–2020), these issues have taken on new prominence in news media and public perception through the election of President Donald Trump and his adoption of rhetoric and policies that target xenophobia in particular at Mexican, Muslim, and Chinese populations in the United States. The night before I sent the defense copy of this dissertation to my committee, President Trump announced—amidst the COVID-19 crisis—that he would temporarily suspend all

2. Presidents Bush and Obama substantially increased the level of formal deportations, referred to as “removals.” In the past, the majority of undocumented migrants were turned away at the US-Mexico border, a process referred to as “returns” (Chishti et al. 2017). A crucial difference is that “removal” entails formal processing and fingerprinting. Attempting to reenter the US thereafter is a crime. This policy shift has criminalized immigration violations and led to a dramatic increase in federal convictions—and thus, time in prison—for such reentry violations (Light et al. 2014). Despite the increasing criminalization, prosecution, and deportation of undocumented immigrants during the Bush and Obama presidencies, it should be noted that the overall trend of increasing “voluntary departures”—often meaning systematic but informal expulsion—began its dramatic increase in the 1960s (Ngai 2014: 4).

immigration to the United States, “In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens” (Trump 2020).

Anti-immigrant sentiment and federal immigration restrictions are not unique to the current era. The former can be seen in nativism oriented (depending on the time period) against Southern and Eastern Europeans (Portes and Rumbaut 2014: 7–11), Japanese (Ngai 2014: 175–201), Mexicans (*ibid.*: 127–166), and nearly every other immigrant group throughout history. The latter—federal restrictions—can be seen in formalized policies from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (the purpose of which should be clear from its name) to the 1917 Immigration Act that expanded prohibition to immigrants from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and most of the Middle East, to the 1924 National Origins Quota Act, which was structured so as to discriminate against Southern and Eastern Europeans and addition to the groups already excluded (Migration Policy Institute 2013). Today, as in many of these historical periods, there are contentious public debates about assimilation and belonging. Does pursuing membership in a new nation necessitate leaving behind the distinctive aspects of one’s previous national or ethnic culture? Is the best way for immigrants to help their children succeed by pushing them to “Americanize” as quickly as possible or, as Díes suggests, by encouraging a balancing act between “assimilating the general culture” and not losing touch with one’s heritage—the “identity that’s rooted in our birth culture”?

Such debates are fraught political matters at the national level, often descending into crude stereotypes, xenophobia, and nativism on the one hand and model minority rhetoric on the other hand. An example of the latter is the focus on “Dreamers,” young immigrants who were brought to the US as children, which is criticized by some immigration activists as upholding one “deserving” group at the expense of all others (Schwiertz 2015; Yukich 2013). In this rhetorical environment, our societal ability to understand the dynamics of immigrant communities benefits greatly from on-

the-ground research that examines the ways in which individuals and local organizations navigate questions of cultural engagement such as those laid out in this section. The prevalence of music education organizations that adopt discourses of immigrant heritage and cultural preservation suggests that these questions of roots and cultural assimilation are relevant at the local level. These phenomena in their US iteration are often discussed through lenses of political science, polling, and journalistic interviews. Long-term ethnographic study among individuals who are engaging with these questions through their day-to-day lives is valuable in order to illuminate the phenomena and understand them more deeply.

Why and how do some people choose to participate in immigrant heritage-based music education, and what can this elucidate about the cultural politics of tradition and belonging as navigated by individuals in the twenty-first-century United States? To answer this question, my project engages with music education from multiple different cultural backgrounds, in order to disentangle the dynamics of any one particular group from broader issues of assimilation and preservation. I carried out a multi-sited ethnographic research plan in order to understand the intersection of family tradition, community values, aesthetic taste, and cultural politics that shape individual and group choices within this research context. Due to its size, diverse past and present-day immigration history, and dynamic cultural policy, Chicago is an ideal field location in which to conduct the sort of multi-sited ethnography necessary to offer a preliminary, local answer to these large questions.

Cultural Politics, Cultural Policy

JD: In my case, with Sones de México, I've reflected on my motivations for, you know, why

am I playing this instead of playing in a jazz band, or a reggae band, or something else, why did I gravitate to this in particular? Some of it was—you know, I was angered or upset by the people’s ignorance about Mexican culture, in a way, or reacting to certain stereotypes that people had. People would think of Mexico and the thing that would pop in their minds would be tacos, margaritas, beach parties, you know, and my wish for them—since I grew up there, just to say, “yeah, those are fun things, I like margaritas, Corona beers, why not, I like tacos, you know, but there is so much more.” (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

Why does any musically inclined person gravitate toward a particular genre of music? One key aspect of Juan Días’s narrative is a desire to be a cultural ambassador—that is, to address the political questions laid out in the previous section by creating an avenue through which the aesthetic power of his music might affect people’s understanding of Mexican culture. How prevalent, though, is this sort of motivation when it comes to music that is emblematic of the various immigrant communities of the United States? In addressing this question, my project will critically consider both cultural politics and cultural policy.

By “cultural politics,” I mean the ways in which groups of people engage in discussions, negotiations, debates, and constructions of shared culture. This does not mean politics in the electoral sense alone, but rather politics as a host of concerns and ideas about groups of human beings, their shared (and unshared) traits, and the power involved in constructing representations of such groups. By “cultural policy,” I mean the much more concrete set of bureaucratic phenomena that shape broad societal notions of and approaches to culture—both governmental and nongovernmental. “Cultural policy” is often referred to primarily in the governmental sense, along with lamentations that the United States lacks the large-scale governmental engagement in culture that is common, for example, in many European countries. In this project I also consider cultural policy as encompassing the priorities and goals of the nongovernmental culture sector—particularly the philanthropic foundations that fund many small nonprofit arts and culture organizations.

Across the United States, public schools saw an overall decline in music education (and other forms

of artistic learning) beginning in the 1980s. The Chicago Public School system has begun to reverse this trend, implementing a 2012 strategic plan that emphasizes the value of “Arts Education” in the district’s schools and expanding arts teachers in the district by 25.8% from 2012 to 2017 (Ingenuity 2018: 49). Despite this in-school progress, much of the district’s arts learning has also been outsourced to nonprofit-based teaching artists—instructors who come into schools or run after-school programs on part-time, contractual bases. The teaching artist concept first gained momentum in the 1990s and since the early 2010s has become a key piece of the city’s arts education infrastructure (McBride 2015: 119–77). Beyond the public school system, a substantial amount of music education is delivered by nonprofit organizations. One argument advanced in this dissertation is that such organizations allow a flexible and legitimating structure for immigrant musicians, educators, and activists to advance music educational goals with young people. Such goals, particularly with genres of music traditional to immigrant communities, can be difficult to advance within the traditional public school system. Passing down musical traditions to young people may have previously been accomplished through churches, within families, or on local neighborhood levels through private teachers. These modes of transmission seem to be in decline, as churches shutter and many second-generation Americans disperse from the neighborhood communities where their immigrant parents first arrived. Such trends lend further necessity to nonprofit organizations as structures able to pursue new and flexible models of youth music instruction.

On a broad level, this project is concerned with the ways in which cultural politics and cultural policy do and do not affect one another. I analyze this interplay through ethnographic fieldwork with students, teachers, parents, and administrators, interviews with policy actors (e.g., school district employees and community leaders), and historical analysis of these phenomena in

Chicago and within a national context. The definitions of cultural politics and cultural policy I offer here are heuristic in nature, and the two terms are not clearly separate—a point I mean to emphasize by examining their intersection. For example, a private grant-making entity could play a de facto role in setting policy in the sense that its funding priorities could encourage or dissuade nonprofit music education organizations from pursuing particular goals. In this sense, I am not concerned with “policy” in a strictly technical sense of governmental action, but rather a broader and community-contingent manner. By analyzing the individual and communal priorities, governmental and nongovernmental structures, and negotiations that constitute politics and policy, I intend to tell the story of how programs come into existence. Opportunities for youth music education do not simply appear; understanding the nature of participation in such programs requires understanding the creation of their broader ecosystem.

Music, Education

JD: So, in a way, my emphasis on education, was my own fight, or struggle to rectify that situation, to improve the life and the image of Mexicans in the greater culture. So *Sones de México*'s not aimed at only Mexicans who want to preserve their culture, it's also aimed at non-Mexicans, that they may see and appreciate the wealth of Mexican music, especially this rural music that we play, that many times is not even appreciated in Mexico. You see, these, you know, poor farmers playing music on instruments that are not very high quality—there are people, maybe, who may not have attended a lot of school years, but the quality and the complexity of this music, once you start trying to learn it. I mean, there's all kinds of people in these communities, there're bad players and good players, but the good ones are really good, and very sophisticated, and the compositions are very elaborate, I will say, comparable to art music. So as we explore this, we want to share that amazement, and that appreciation for that complexity with other people. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

Music education, as a term, has a broad spectrum of meanings. Most fundamentally, it refers to the transmission of musical knowledge—regardless of style of music or style of instruction, pedagogical

context, or any other factors. It has a variety of more specific meanings, however, and it may be deployed by individual actors with a narrower—sometimes normative—definition. Some of these meanings include a formalized relationship between a student and a music teacher, an institutionalized setting with the central purpose of musical training, and an academic discipline with its own institutional norms and training procedures for student-teachers. Throughout this chapter and dissertation, I use the term broadly and without normative assumptions about what is or is not music education. I pay close attention, however, to the ways in which my interlocutors use the term as a signifier of underlying values or orientations toward musical instruction and cultural heritage transmission.

Much early formalized music education in the United States focused on singing religious psalms (Mark 2008: 12–27). With the rise of public schools in the mid-nineteenth century, a burgeoning music curriculum began to embrace wind bands in addition to vocal music. Lowell Mason, the leader of the first public school music program in the nation (founded in 1838, in Boston), “chose to anchor his school music materials in the Euro-Germanic classical music tradition . . . [and] the almost exclusive use of this tradition continued to be accepted in music teaching until well after the turn of the century” (Volk 1998: 26). Much public school music education since then has focused on the teaching of music derived from the Western European concert tradition, such as marching band music and light classical arrangements of folk songs and spirituals. In some schools, music education also entailed theatrical productions, from Gilbert and Sullivan to the growing repertoire of American music theater. Some early repertoire outside this scope included the adoption of folk music—predominantly European, though with some exceptions—by music educators in the early twentieth century (ibid.: 32–50) The widespread embrace of musics outside the Euro-American tradition did not come until the 1967 Tanglewood

Symposium, which ushered in the era of institutionalized “multicultural music education” (Campbell 1994: 67).³ This multiculturalism was characterized by a focus on diversity and appreciation of musics outside one’s own cultural heritage, and it was often designed with affluent white children in mind (Miralis 2014: 556).

The most recent shift in national music education has been toward “culturally relevant pedagogy,” a theoretical framework developed in the 1990s that encourages teachers to design curriculum based on their students’ own cultural heritage. The majority of research on the motivations for and efficacy of culturally relevant music pedagogy has been based on formal classroom, public school settings. There is relatively little research that closely examines students’ personal musical lives and the factors that lead to their engagement with traditions that they, their parents, or their teachers might deem culturally relevant. Nor is there much scholarly work that examines these phenomena outside formal school contexts, whether in community, family, or nonprofit settings. This lacuna can be blamed in part on the relative lack of collaboration between the disciplines of music education and ethnomusicology.

The final, disciplinary meaning I gave for music education is important to this project. Academic music education encompasses university departments, journals, public and private school teaching posts, and a body of academic research. Though much ethnomusicological research engages with music education in the broader sense (since much ethnographic research at some point touches on issues of cultural transmission), there is relatively little ethnomusicological work

3. This dissertation deals with immigration and the geographic-cultural origins of different musics and people. Because of this, I use “Euro-American” rather than “white” when talking about musics or people specifically in terms of their geographic origin in Europe rather than other parts of the world. In this dissertation I mean to emphasize the geographic and cultural origin of these people or musics as opposed to their entanglement in the racial construction of whiteness—that is a task for a subsequent project.

that addresses music education in the disciplinary sense. Nor do most music education researchers pursue the kind of fieldwork-centered sociocultural community analysis that is so valued for its explicatory power by ethnomusicologists.⁴ Instead, much music education research is based in the classrooms of researcher-practitioners. My project brings together recent work from both fields in an attempt to reach a deeper understanding of the problems laid out here. In doing so, I argue that nonprofit music education constitutes a “third space” between the formal school classroom emphasized in music education research and the informal community-based contexts typically emphasized when musical transmission is discussed in ethnomusicological work. These third-space organizations have implications for both the long-term transmission of musical traditions and the capacity for immigrant communities to enact goals they have for the youth generation.

It is important to note that many immigrants and their children do not choose to engage with “traditional musics” through music education. Many immigrant and second-generation youth who choose to learn music do so in the same diverse array of genres available to any child. For example, many choose to engage with the El Sistema-style orchestral programs that have proliferated over the past decade in many US cities (Ortega 2018). These programs are typically free or have low tuition and seek to recruit from the low-income—or “under-resourced” in the vernacular of urban youth programs—neighborhoods of cities, many of them populated by immigrants. Much work on the musical engagement of Asian American youth (who are predominantly second or third generation, with some exceptions) has examined classical music,

4. There are, of course, exceptions to this broad tendency. Most notably, the work of Patricia Shehan Campbell speaks authoritatively to both ethnomusicology and music education—as well as their intersections (see, for example, Campbell 1994, 1998, 2003, 2005). Campbell’s influence at the University of Washington has produced a small school of hybrid ethnomusicologist/music educators who have some influence around the world. Despite this, there is still a broad tendency for separation between the two disciplines.

pop, hip hop, DJing, and online music cultures like YouTube (G. Wang 2015; O. Wang 2015; Wong 2010; Diethrich 1999; Sharma 2010). In focusing my own project on “traditional musics” I do not mean to imply that this is the primary music education activity of immigrant and children-of-immigrant youth. It is, nonetheless, a common music education activity and one worth investigating for the many reasons described in this chapter.

Throughout the first section of this chapter I have emphasized the social and cultural contexts through which I attempt to understand the musical lives and civic subjectivities of young people in Chicago. Crucial to this understanding—yet perhaps most difficult to ascertain—is the aesthetic and cultural construction of “music.” This is the final, overall concern of this project: “music” as an aesthetic and cultural concept in immigrant Chicago. How do students, teachers, parents, and administrators construct “music” through music education?

This dissertation is an ethnomusicological study of community music education. Its aim is to understand the negotiations that take place in the construction of education and the ways in which young people experience, interpret, and react to both the educational process and the music itself. I intend to make my analysis legible and relevant to ethnomusicologists, music educators, scholars of American studies and urban education, and members of the Chicago arts nonprofit sector. Though my primary analytical sights are set on issues of societal and community citizenship, I expect that the project will also contain pedagogical and organizational insights about arts education and nonprofit community work.

Part II: Sites of Immigrant Music Transmission in Chicago

Here I summarize the scope of organizations that participate in the transmission of immigrant music traditions and explain why I chose to work with three particular organizations. “Tradition” is, to be sure, a fraught term—no more straightforward than “folk music” or “classical music.” I seek to use the term in a straightforward descriptive sense—an immigrant music traditions for my purposes is simply a style of music that originated in another country and was brought to the United States and Chicago by immigrants. The vast majority of organized music teaching institutions in Chicago do not teach such musics—rather, many focus on Euro-American classical and classical-derived forms such as those discussed in the previous section. Some others focus on African American traditions with deep Chicago roots like blue and jazz, while a few focus on popular American traditions like rock or pop music. The type of organization I examine here—those that focus on immigrant music traditions—are not typically grouped together as an analytical category. One of my arguments in this dissertation is that there are sociocultural and musical insights to be gained by looking at such organizations together rather than in isolation. They do constitute a category, not in a musical sense (for the musics are substantially different from each other) but in the sense that each adopts particular ways of navigating questions of immigrant heritage, youth education, and cultural transmission. Sometimes overtly and sometimes through subtext, they wrestle with complex sociocultural questions that often do not arise in, for example, a Suzuki violin program or youth orchestra.

Single-Tradition Music Education Organizations

Through my initial research I identified approximately twenty organizations that focus on a particular immigrant music tradition. I begin with the three organizations where I conducted fieldwork and then describe other organizations that I considered. These are included as reference for the reader, to convey the types of programs that exist beyond the three studied in this dissertation.

This Project's Three Field Sites

Sones de México Ensemble is a performing ensemble and nonprofit music education organization. Juan Díes, a cofounder of the group, has been one of my primary interlocutors, as emphasized in the first section of this chapter. Díes and the other members of the group conduct group workshops across Chicago and around the country, and they have recently opened a “Mexican Music School” through which they offer individual lessons in guitar. Most of their students range from age twelve to eighteen, though some are adults. The classes focus on guitar fundamentals, bilingual music vocabulary, and cultural history of several Mexican folkloric genres (Sones de México Ensemble 2020).



Figure 1.1. Mexican Music School end-of-course performance (teachers at left, students at right, parents in audience in foreground). At St. Ann’s Church in Pilsen neighborhood, August 2018. Photo by author.

The Chicago Mariachi Project (CMP), founded in 2013, aims to “elevate the art of mariachi” in Chicago. CMP offers an interesting counterpoint to Sones de México Ensemble. Both organizations focus on traditional musics of Mexico, but Sones de México Ensemble performs a wide range of folkloric musics while CMP focuses on mariachi, a popular genre with substantially more history in formal education contexts. Sones de México Ensemble is centered on a performance ensemble whose members offer lessons while CMP works primarily by partnering with Chicago Public Schools and recruiting the most promising students to attend a Saturday out-of-school Mariachi Academy. The most advanced CMP students regularly perform throughout the city (Figure 1.2). Conducting fieldwork and interviews at both organizations allowed me to study the similarities and differences that arise in student participation, parent engagement, pedagogy, and

aesthetic emphasis between the two groups' differing approaches and contexts (Chicago Mariachi Project, n.d.).



Figure 1.2. CMP students perform at a community event in the Pilsen neighborhood, June 2018. Photo by author.

In March 2017, Chicago's two largest Korean American community organizations (Korean American Community Services and the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center) merged to create HANA Center, located in the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago (Wong 2017). HANA Center has a resident *p'ungmul* ensemble, which they describe as "an ensemble of traditional Korean percussion instruments that represent various elements of nature and carries a tradition of activism and cultural pride" (HANA Center 2020). Their ensemble performs at immigrant rights rallies,

marches, and other events “to bring positive energy rooted in culture” (ibid.). HANA Center trains high school students in this tradition through workshops (Figures 1.3 and 1.4) offered during the fall, spring, and summer through After School Matters, a nonprofit organization that serves as an organizing and centralizing conduit for youth programs across the city. The stability of HANA Center and its predecessor organizations as long-standing community-based organizations combined with their integration of *p’ungmul* education into the city’s afterschool program infrastructure made this a particularly instructive field site.



Figure 1.3. Students in the Fall 2018 HANAsori program. Photo by author.



Figure 1.4. (L to R) HANAsori students Souzane, Yoshi, and Daniela perform a more complex piece as a trio after the full group performance at the end-of-program concert in December 2018. Photo by author.

Other Field Sites Considered

The Irish Music School of Chicago was founded in 2003 by Sean Cleland, a “Chicago-bred and internationally acclaimed Irish fiddler” (Irish Music School of Chicago, n.d.). Given the widespread commercial popularity of Irish music in the United States, I have considered the possibility that a higher proportion of students in this organization as compared to the previous three organizations might not consider themselves to be part of the community that the music represents. Nonetheless, the emphasis on Irish culture and heritage throughout the school’s promotional materials leads me to expect that a significant portion of the students will have some family connection to Ireland. For instance, Cleland is described as “a young Irish American determined to play traditional Irish music [who] made repeated trips to Ireland. Back at home, he immersed himself in the vibrant Chicago Irish Music community, literally sitting at the feet of the

mostly immigrant Irish musicians” (ibid.). The school positions itself as a public location for bringing traditional Irish music transmission out of its historical home-based context. While courses are offered for both children and adults, there is a strong emphasis on bringing in young musicians to “build, renew and share a community of Irish music” (ibid.). This would potentially be a rich site for fieldwork and interviews with students and teachers with a wide variety of relationships with Irish music. The potential combination of students with personal narratives of Irish heritage and students whose connections are instead aesthetic will make this a productive field site in evaluating the similarities and differences between such stances.

The Chinese Fine Arts Society, founded in 1984, “is dedicated to promoting the appreciation of Chinese culture, enhancing cultural exchange and pursuing excellence in Chinese music, dance and visual arts” in Chicago (Chinese Fine Arts Society 2020). Its student-centered programming includes a “Young Arts Ensemble” for young musicians who play strings, piano, and Chinese instruments; school classroom-based workshops; and an annual Music Festival in Honor of Confucius.

The Darbooka Drumming apprenticeship program is a North African/Middle Eastern-focused program that provides an introduction to drumming techniques as well as to “the cultures where [the drum] originated” (After School Matters 2017).

Tsukasa Taiko / Taiko Legacy at the Japanese American Service Committee of Chicago offers taiko classes and workshops as well as instruction other traditional Japanese instruments, including the *shamisen* and *shinobue* (Tsukasa Taiko 2020).

The Latin Music Project at the Puerto Rican Arts Alliance offers individual lessons in violin, guitar, and *cuatro*, organizes a Latin Music Project Ensemble, and hosts the annual National Cuatro Festival (Puerto Rican Arts Alliance 2020). Puerto Ricans, as colonized subjects of the United

States, are not immigrants; the confluence and divergence of Mexican and Puerto Rican experiences in Chicago have been studied extensively (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). I considered whether the cultural dynamics might nonetheless be worthwhile to study but ultimately decided not to take this approach.

The Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center promotes Afro-Latin arts and culture. Its programming includes workshops and classes in Puerto Rican bomba, Afro-Caribbean jazz, Brazilian samba, and Trinidadian steel pan (Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center 2020).

The Kalapriya Center for Indian Performing Arts “embraces multiple genres of the Indian performing arts to engage audiences, empower students and build community” (Kalapriya 2020). It provides dance education to students through Kalapriya Academy as well as through school-based programs.

The Old Town School of Folk Music

Many of the organizations described in the prior section are focused on students who have a familial or ancestral connection to the music’s place of origin. They are not exclusive—no organization that I have seen says, for example, “Irish American students only”—but many of the organizations use language and publicity images suggesting that many of their students have a family connection to the music’s place of origin. In contrast, some other music education organizations in Chicago focus on a broad array of cultural traditions. Rather than focusing on a particular national or regional tradition, these organizations position themselves as places where a student of any background can learn a wide variety of musics.

The Old Town School of Folk Music is the most prominent such organization in Chicago. It was founded in 1957 with a focus on the musics of the US South and British Isles that were popular in the mid-century US folk music revival. Today, an increasing proportion of the school's courses teach musics outside these traditions. The courses for the Spring 2017 session included musics from Hawai'i ("Ukulele"), Mexico ("Son Jarocho"), Brazil ("Brazilian Dance"), Ireland ("Irish Step Dance"), the Middle East ("Middle Eastern Belly Dance"), Argentina ("Argentinean Tango"), West Africa ("West African Dance" and "Djembe Ensemble"), Senegal ("Sabar Dance Workshop"), Eastern Europe ("Gypsy Jazz Ensemble" and "Klezmer Ensemble"), Latin America ("Latin Grooves and Roots Ensemble"), and Jamaica ("Reggae Ensemble"). In another indicative sign, as of 2017, the school's website for their "Kids' Music Program" featured courses in Mexican *Jarana* and Irish Tin Whistle as two of their top three featured youth programs (Old Town School of Folk Music 2017).

I decided not to pursue in-depth fieldwork at the Old Town School for this project, but I am including an explanation of it here for three reasons. First, it is the largest purveyor of folkloric and traditional musics in Chicago. Second, it comes up in several of the chapters of this dissertation because so much of the city's folkloric music activity intertwines with the Old Town School. Third, it serves as a helpful point of juxtaposition, illuminating what makes distinctive the organizations I did choose to study. As the project took shape, it became apparent that it would be most fruitful to study small organizations that are guided by the particular pedagogical goals and vision of a small group of leaders. At the Old Town School, each class tends to be quite different based on the particularities of the instructor, and there is no systematic cultural goal at hand—other than perhaps a broad attitude of cosmopolitan cultural exposure and omnivorism. I decided, ultimately, that the project would be most productive if focused on organizations with very specific approaches

to specific music traditions, where I could dig deeply into the pedagogical goals and outcomes—both musical and cultural.

The Old Town School could prove a fruitful site for future fieldwork. To be sure, the school itself provides enough material for several entire dissertations, and it has recently been the subject of one (Lee 2011). An ethnographic study of the school’s diverse educational programming could prove fruitful. It would be valuable to better understand how an organization like the Old Town School, which draws on multiple traditions from around the world, might play a role in transmitting cultural heritage for individuals and communities—including immigrant communities—in Chicago.

Music Festivals

Chicago is home to a wide range of annual cultural festivals, many of which focus on the music, art, and food of immigrant-descended communities in the city. Such festivals serve several purposes in the transmission of traditional music: families attending the festival are exposed to music, performers earn money and have the potential to recruit new students, and students themselves have the opportunity to showcase their new talents in public. This is an explicit element of HANA Center’s *p’ungmul* drumming course, for example; in the description of the course, they write that “[u]sing what they learn during instruction and field trips, teens perform in ethnic and community festivals such as annual Korean Street Festival” (After School Matters 2017). I initially planned to conduct fieldwork at a variety of such festivals, in the hope of observing the social and audience dynamics around the traditional music performances—inspired by the rich scholarly literature on US ethnic music festivals (Bohlman 2004, Hawkins 2006, Dillane 2009: 83–130). Though I did

attend several festivals and take field notes, none of this material made its way into the project, as my focus shifted more to the particular institutional dynamics of my three field sites. Nonetheless, I include a list of music festivals to provide the reader with some context for the range of such activities taking place in Chicago—which helps both to publicize the organizations whose performers attend and to introduce young people to musical styles they may later seek to learn.

Chinatown Lunar New Year Parade: 2017 celebrated Chicago Chinatown’s 105th Anniversary at Cermak and Wentworth. Typically early February.

Chinatown Summer Fair: Typically mid-July.

Colombian Fest / El Gran Festival Colombiano: Typically mid-July. Kelvyn Park, 4438 W. Wrightwood Ave.

Fiesta Back of the Yards: Typically mid-June. 1600-2000 W. 47th St.

Fiesta Boricua: A celebration along the Division Street corridor called Paseo Boricua. Began in 1993. ~200,000 people attend. Typically early September.

Fiesta de la Villita (Little Village Festival): Celebration of Mexican independence from Spain. Began 1990. Typically mid-September.

Fiesta del Sol: fundraiser for Pilsen Neighbors Community Council. Began in 1972. ~1.3 million people attend; “largest Latino festival in the Midwest” (Fiesta del Sol 2020). Typically late July. 1400 W. Cermak Road (between Morgan and Ashland).

Greek Fest: in Lincoln Park. Typically early June. 2701 N. Sheffield Ave.

Irish American Heritage Festival: at the Irish American Heritage Center. Started 1986. Typically early July.

Korean Street Festival: Began in 1996. ~150,000 people attend. Typically mid-August. Location

in Albany Park.

Mariachi Festival: Began in 2015, funded by Mariachi Heritage Foundation, all day performance at Pritzker Pavillion in Millennium Park. Typically in late June.

Mole de Mayo: food-focused event in Pilsen. Typically late May. 18th St. at Ashland Ave.

St. Patrick's Day: Many events across the city; the Irish American Heritage Center even is particularly interesting from a traditional music perspective. Typically mid-March.

Windy City West Indian Carnival: Began in 2013. On the Midway by U of C. Aug 19, 2017.

World Music Festival: Sep 8–24, 2017.

Choosing Field Sites

The vital qualities I pursued for each site were that: (1) some sort of music education was taking place; (2) the music being taught was associated with a place outside the US from which some people in Chicago immigrated; (3) the organization was active and working with a lot of students; and (4) the organization had explicit goals of musical and cultural transmission. I determined that my research questions would not be better served by, for example, including a Polish heritage organization in my sample rather than an Irish one. To be sure, my research experiences would be different if I were to make that substitution, but each serves equally well as a case study to flesh out a study of immigrant Chicago.

In choosing three specific organizations, I prioritized diversity of institutional structure and the potential for each site to speak to broader discourses of racialization and panethnic formation.

In terms of structure, the sites vary widely. Sones de México Ensemble is centered on a performance ensemble of master musicians who offer lessons and workshops to young people,

predominantly outside of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Early on in my research, the ensemble also started its own Mexican Music School, which served as a valuable field site. The Chicago Mariachi Project is a community-based organization that primarily offers lessons through partnership and collaboration with CPS. Its core is the Pilsen neighborhood where several of CMP's teachers also serve as in-school classroom music teachers. CMP recruits students from in-school ensembles to join its Saturday Mariachi Academy—an interesting pipeline model with fruitful comparison to youth orchestras. HANA Center's *p'unngmul* drumming is ensemble-focused but based in a community center, unlike either of the other groups selected. The drumming group's embeddedness in an institution focused on social and political action deeply affects the musical experience of participants.

I have also selected these organizations with an eye toward their ability to shed light on broader questions of race and ethnicity in US society. Each organization is involved—often subtextually rather than explicitly—in discourses of panethnic or racial identity. By selecting field sites whose members have the potential to be involved in a variety of such identity formation projects, I sought to strengthen the ability of my dissertation to speak to a range of Chicago immigrant heritage experiences.

Part III: Media Discourse Analysis

One reason for my pursuing this project was my perception that this type of music education organization—and activity, more broadly—is typically portrayed in the media in a one-dimensional fashion. The media discourse around these programs is characterized by celebration of safe

multicultural heritage. Young students are implicitly portrayed as assimilated Americans who participate in these programs as a way of performing cultural heritage and connecting with their parents or grandparents. My suspicion in designing this project was that something more complex—culturally, musically, developmentally—was likely going on. This indeed turned out to be the case. Even at organizations where this stereotyped story of heritage celebration had an element of truth, there were other pedagogies at play. For readers not familiar with the baseline media discourse about this type of organization, I thought it useful to be briefly familiarized, so that it is clear in subsequent chapters how the organizations and their students depart from these simplified depictions. Here I set forth a brief media discourse analysis of the Chicago Mariachi Project, the subjects of the fourth chapter of the dissertation. I selected CMP for this analysis because it has received a great deal of media coverage (comparatively speaking), providing sufficient examples to identify discursive trends.

Methods

To begin, I found every news article that I could locate that described the Chicago Mariachi Project. The articles ranged from November 2016 to January 2019. Because of the group's distinctive name, finding such articles was relatively easy. My goal was to find pieces that discussed the group's mission, goals, or effects. I excluded any articles that only briefly mentioned the group in a list of local upcoming performances. The goal here was to identify articles that might give the reader some impression of the group beyond merely the fact that it consisted of young people playing mariachi music. I identified thirteen such articles, primarily from local Chicago news sources—for example, local outlets of ABC, CBS, and Telemundo, as well as Chicago-based media sources like WGN,

WTTW, the Chicago Tribune, or Block Club Chicago. I extracted the text from each of these articles into MAXQDA (a qualitative data coding software) so as to code them for discursive themes. In addition, I identified five video profiles of the group—that is, videos that contained interviews or editorial content beyond simply a depiction of performances. I took notes on each video and transcribed relevant portions so as to include them in my analysis.

Analysis

The articles and videos that I examined fell into a few categories. Of the eighteen pieces, eight were profiles of the group; five described a viral video of the students performing on board a Southwest flight in July 2018 (on their way to the Mariachi Spectacular conference in Albuquerque); three were profiles of Congressman Jesús “Chuy” García’s January 2019 swearing-in ceremony in Washington, DC, at which CMP performed; and two reported on CMP’s first-place win at the July 2017 Mariachi Spectacular conference.

All except the eight profile pieces—that is, the articles describing the plane performance, the DC performance, and the festival win—described the group through a frame I call “local youth musical group does something notable.” The pieces generally opened with a colorful description of the group’s performance or accomplishment, a brief explanation of what the group is, and a brief assessment of the group’s goals, mission, or significance. The last section tended to be most interesting from a discursive standpoint. I have excerpted two representative passages:

Students of the Chicago Mariachi Project elevated the art of mariachi — literally — by performing aboard an airplane this week. . . . The performance was well received by passengers. The Chicago Mariachi Project pairs students with renowned mariachi musicians from across the country to teach the traditional Mexican musical style. Instruments include violins and guitars. (WGN 2018)

“We are truly humbled and honored to have represented the City of Chicago, our artform and mission of Elevating the Art of Mariachi, there. I am so proud of our students, families and team. This more than anything else puts Chicago’s mariachi education movement on the map on a whole different level,” said Álvaro R. Obregón, founding president of Chicago Mariachi Project. . . . CMP currently runs programs in five Chicago Public Schools and partners with nonprofits, community and arts organizations such as [list cut], to expand opportunities for these talented young musicians. (Serrato 2017)

These pieces give the reader or viewer a cursory understanding of what CMP is or what it may be trying to accomplish. In the first passage, there is an allusion to the group’s mission statement (“Elevating the art of mariachi”), and a sense that the young group members learn a traditional Mexican musical style from master musicians. In the second passage, Obregón’s quote foregrounds the group’s role in representing Chicago on a national stage, alluding to the fact that mariachi education in Chicago is a movement that may be increasing in prominence. The additional explanation contextualizes that CMP “expand[s] opportunities for . . . talented young musicians” through partnerships between CPS schools and nonprofit community organizations.

These explanations are accurate but cursory, providing the reader with a vague and superficial understanding of the group. Given the brief amount of information, it is likely that the average reader would filter her or his understanding of CMP through whatever preconceived notions they held—if any—about youth music education in general and mariachi in particular.

The longer, focused profile pieces on CMP provide a bit more substance for discursive analysis. The following section first examines one particular television profile of the group, then expands into an explanation of the tensions between individual-based and musical genre/tradition-based explanations of the group’s goals and effects.

“Where They’ve Come From”

One particularly interesting exchange came in a short segment on CMP included in a longer “Around the Block” feature about the Pilsen neighborhood. “Around the Block” is a series on “You and Me This Morning,” a morning show on the Chicago-based WCIU-TV. Each episode of the series profiles a different Chicago neighborhood, “finding out what makes each one of them a unique place to call home” (*You and Me This Morning* 2016). Their Pilsen episode includes a brief interview with Phil Olazaba, music instructor at Cooper Dual Language Academy as well as with CMP, and a brief performance by the elementary school students in the Cooper Mariachi. To be clear, this segment is focused particularly on a school-based ensemble that is partnered with CMP (not CMP’s out-of-school mariachi academy). At the beginning of the segment there is an interesting exchange between Olazaba and the reporter, Jon Hansen:

JH: I imagine what’s really rewarding about this—especially the Chicago Mariachi Project—is that, you know, kids play in the band and orchestra, and that’s great, but it’s so cool for these kids, they learn a little bit about their culture too, and play something that really represents who they are and where they’ve come from.

PO: Yeah, not only that, they’re doing that with students from around the city through the Chicago Mariachi Project, and learning harder repertoire, learning about not only what the songs are about but where they’re coming from (Ibid.).

In identifying what makes CMP and their school partner ensembles notable or remarkable, Hansen initially emphasizes a cultural argument—that, for these students, mariachi is cooler than band or orchestra because it is “their culture,” it “represents who they are” and it represents “where they’ve come from.” Olazaba responds diplomatically, taking the reporter’s framing and shifting it slightly to emphasize two points. First, he pivots from culture to musical skill, emphasizing that through CMP’s citywide Mariachi Academy the Cooper students are able to come together with

other advanced students to learn harder repertoire and hone their skills. This resonates with his comments earlier in the interview, where he initially frames the students' notability in terms of their talent and hard work vis-à-vis music as a craft: "besides having natural talent, they work so hard at their craft." Second, Olazaba reframes the reporter's cultural argument, moving the focus from the students themselves to the music. Olazaba emphasizes that the students are learning "what the songs are about" and "where [the songs] are coming from." This exchange can be read as a microcosm of CMP's broader framing of mariachi as cultural heritage.

The reporter's initial framing contains two assumptions: (1) all students playing mariachi in Pilsen (or at least at Cooper Elementary) are Mexican; (2) mariachi has such universal Mexican symbolism that any Mexican would feel that it is part of "their culture" and "represents who they are." Regarding the first assumption, it is unclear whether the reporter meant "where they've come from" in the literal sense that the students had emigrated from Mexico or in the more symbolic sense that their familial origins lie in Mexico. The former is clearly inaccurate, as most members of CMP were born in the US, but the latter is also not wholly accurate. While the majority of students in CMP have parents or grandparents who immigrated from Mexico, there are several for whom this is not the case—several are African American or white, while others have ancestry in Latin American countries other than Mexico. The second assumption is more discursively complex. While this cultural representation assumption is widespread in media discourse, CMP tends to emphasize a different framing. Rather than an individualist student-centered discourse of connection with mariachi in order to understand more about their culture or who they are, CMP's adult leaders frame their mission around mariachi as a free-standing musical entity—implicitly, one that each individual can form a personal relationship with.

The Role of Media Discourse

My point here has been to highlight dominant discourses. This is not meant as a criticism of these particular publications or journalists—nor of the people quoted in these articles. These journalistic pieces are meant to be feel-good stories about local kids doing right. In taking this angle, however, they often play into the model of minority rhetoric discussed in Part 1 of this chapter. Journalists and community leaders are aware of negative—sometimes xenophobic and racist—rhetoric about Mexicans and Mexican Americans that circulates in the United States and in recent years has come from the President himself. Stories like these work as a countervailing positive force, which is admirable. However, in presenting bright, smiling young people as community models, they also have a tendency to gloss over or miss deeper stories. In this case, I argue (in Chapter 4 of this dissertation) that a more interesting aspect of CMP's story is the structural question of *how* they achieved the accomplishments proudly described in these news stories. In answering that question, I draw on the concept of musical pipelines and trace a dense web of social connections between Mexican musicians, educators, school leaders, and community activists. This web, I argue, enabled several ambitious people to assemble a sequence of opportunities whereby young people in CMP were able to develop their skills to the point of competing successfully on a national stage.

In the present era of rising xenophobia, I do not seek to glibly undermine positive stories about immigrant and children-of-immigrant youth. Rather, in digging deeper beneath the surface of these positive stories, I hope to articulate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of these young people and the adults who work to foster their musicality.

Part IV: Research Methods

Context and Research Questions

In the present-day United States, the once-dominant multicultural “melting pot” narrative has given way to a public discourse of anxiety about immigrants and refugees. Tension regarding immigrant heritage and community belonging is evident at levels of society ranging from the neighborhood to federal politics. These phenomena in their US iteration are generally discussed through lenses of political science, sociology, and journalistic interviews. This dissertation instead uses ethnographic study of community-based youth music education contexts in order to illuminate the phenomena and understand them more deeply.

The project is also concerned with the role of youth music learning in constructing American nationalism. When children face the ideas that “This Land Is Your Land” and that “God Bless[es] America,” they are conditioned into particular forms of civic subjectivity (Kaskowitz 2013). Music, as an aesthetic form that is naturalized during childhood, is able to impart ideas about the world in a way that renders them seemingly true and obvious (Bradley 2006; Hebert and Kertz-Welzel 2012). How does participating in a music tradition that is rooted in immigrant heritage participate in or disrupt such conditioning? How does childhood aesthetic experience affect the formation of ideas about heritage and society? I seek both to understand the mechanisms through which such conditioning takes place, and—perhaps more importantly—to explicate students’, teachers’, parents’, and nonprofit arts administrators’ understandings of and beliefs about these processes.

The project's core research question—introduced in the first section of this chapter—is: why and how do people choose to participate in immigrant-heritage-based music learning, and what can this elucidate about the cultural politics of tradition and belonging as navigated by individuals in a twenty-first-century US city? To answer this question, I analyze education-focused organizations from multiple different cultural backgrounds so as to separate the dynamics of any one particular group from broader issues of assimilation and heritage preservation. Focusing on community-based contexts rather than schools is valuable for reasons listed above but also because it allows a focus on the choice to participate. My overall query can be broken down into a host of narrower constituent questions that have guided me throughout the project.

Why does any one person participate in a particular music tradition? How can a participant or a listener understand the mixture of family tradition, community values, aesthetic taste, cultural politics, and other factors that shape people's choices about engaging with folk music? To what extent are these influences mediated by local and national contexts?

What kind of discernible relationship exists between community-based cultural politics (that is, the orientations towards cultural heritage expressed by people who consider themselves to be part of some sort of cultural group) and municipal cultural policy? How are communities and individuals aided or hindered in their pursuit of heritage-based music education by the city's cultural policy? How have these dynamics changed over the course of Chicago's history?

How is "music," as an aesthetic and cultural concept, constructed through music education? What orientations toward music do students bring with them and how are those orientations altered through music education programs? What sounds good and why? Under what circumstances, if any, do people pursue music learning in spite of their aesthetic preferences? To what extent do students justify their learning choices through pre-existing aesthetic preferences,

and to what extent do they construct aesthetic preferences to fit the learning situations in which they find themselves?

Beyond the level of individual actors, I use this dissertation to analyze the broader relationship between cultural politics and cultural policy in Chicago. In order to understand these phenomena in the community contexts I describe above, I draw on ethnographic fieldwork with students, teachers, parents, and administrators, which sheds light on the cultural politics at play among different individuals and groups within Chicago's constellation of community-based music education programs. I put this fieldwork in conversation with prior research in ethnomusicology, education studies, American studies, music education, sociology of immigration, and nonprofit organizational studies. My research approach allows me to analyze the ways in which municipal cultural policy and on-the-ground cultural politics are mutually constitutive and the ways in which this mix of policy and politics impacts the ways that students engage with and experience community-based education programs.

Through this project I intend to speak to multiple audiences, including researchers in the disciplines discussed here; my interlocutors and their Chicago communities; and a broader array of people concerned with the nature of U.S society in the twenty-first century. In a practical sense, this means that I intend to use the material of this research and dissertation to produce both academic papers and work that will be legible to nonprofit community stakeholders, members of Chicago's arts education policy community, and general readers. I aim to influence discursive constructions of heritage-based music education in the United States and build cross-disciplinary discourse. At the core, however, my aim is to tell the story of how musicians, teachers, community activists, and students come together in Chicago's neighborhoods to create meaning through musical collaboration. Through this story, I clarify the role of these processes in the development of young

immigrant and second-generation Chicagoans as members of social, ethnic, and artistic communities.

Observation and Interviews

The data for this project came from participant observation and in-depth interviewing at three field sites in Chicago. Each site is a nonprofit cultural or musical organization that has programs focused on the teaching and learning of heritage-based musics. The organizations and my process for selecting them are described at length in the previous section. The nature of my role as an observer varied from site to site. In general I observed the discourses and activities that surrounded the music transmission process. I sought to gather observations that would help me to understand, for example, the pedagogical nature of a mariachi violin lesson. Ultimately, this could be used to ask: How is this different from other types of violin lessons? What else is being taught or communicated? In a bilingual classroom, does the instructor use multiple languages for instruction? If so, how do students respond? Does the instructor include cultural context along with technical music instruction? Are students interested or bored? What kinds of musical moments provoke student enthusiasm? Outside of the lesson environment, observation included the ways that teachers discussed music with students, parents, and each other. Does conversation tend toward cultural context or focus on the music itself? Do parents treat the music education experience as something where they simply drop off and pick up their child? Is the music or heritage element important to them? To what extent have they encouraged their children to pursue these musical activities?

The nature of my role as an observer varied from site to site, guided by the nature of the educational programming. My role at Sones de México Ensemble's Mexican Music School was the least participatory of the three sites. The school is structured around group lessons where parents often participate or sit at the back of the classroom. This structure was conducive to my observation, as the students were already comfortable with non-participating adults observing the lessons.

The Chicago Mariachi Project has a music academy model; students from different schools across the city audition to be part of the Mariachi Academy and are placed into one of three ensembles based on skill level. The three groups rehearse every Saturday morning in the city's Pilsen neighborhood—a cultural and artistic center for Mexican American Chicago. During the 2018-2019 school year, I attended these rehearsals—observing, talking informally with teachers and students during downtime, and conducting formal one-on-one interviews after many of the sessions. Because of the formal academy structure and focus on tight ensemble cohesion, I was an observer rather than a participant-observer. During the summer, I traveled with a cohort of advanced students to Albuquerque, NM where they participated in a week-long youth mariachi education conference and festival. Here I was able to shadow students as they attended performance workshops, mariachi history symposia, and nighttime jam sessions. My established relationship with the group enabled me to have open conversations with the students about the nuance of their experiences. For some, the trip was eye-opening, placing their weekly musical activities back in Chicago within a broader context of national ethno-musical solidarity. For others, it served as a crucible of identity negotiation. What did it mean to be the Midwestern mariachi kids, the one group not from the Southwest? How did their sense of self as Chicagoans, Mexicans/Mexican

Americans, and mariachis seem to be challenged by the different attitudes, beliefs, and forms of expression they encountered from their Texan, Arizonan, and Californian peers?

By contrast, my fieldwork at HANA Center was less focused on the musical ensemble as an entity and more focused on the community center as a base where a variety of youth development activities take place. Though much of the youth engagement is filtered through music education activities, the drumming programs I attended also had extensive political and cultural education components. There are multiple levels of engagement for students: the drumming program tends to be a first contact point with HANA Center for many young people, but those who find the experience rewarding tend to get more involved in both youth organizing and musical activities (e.g., drumming at immigrants' rights rallies and protest marches). Due to the more informal nature of the musical instruction, I built rapport with my youth interlocutors by adopting a more participatory ethnographic style at this site—during the summer I learned to play several drums in the ensemble and joined the students at performances. This helped me to build relationships with the students, but it also provided insight into the pedagogical experience—unlike my other field sites, none of the students typically had any experience with the musical tradition before joining the HANA program.

My engagement with parents also varied by fieldsite, and I modulated this engagement based on the structure of the site. Of the three, the Mexican Music School had the greatest parental engagement—for good reason, as the students were between the ages of nine and fourteen, younger than at the other sites. Many parents participated in lessons, observed from the back of the room, or waited in the hallway outside. I also found that the young age of the students posed challenges in discussing some of my more complex questions of heritage and goal-setting. As a result, the majority of formal interviews at this site were either with parent-child pairs or even with parents

alone (typically while their children were in lessons). At the Chicago Mariachi Project's Mariachi Academy, parents are moderately involved. The age range of students is broader (eight to eighteen), but on average they skew older, with a solid cohort of high school students. Because of this, as well as the three-hour structure of the Saturday academy, parents of younger students tend to drop off their children and pick them up at the end of class. Many of the teenage students also transport themselves—either by car or on public transit. My fieldwork and interviews focused predominantly on the students, with only occasional interviews and conversations with parents. HANA Center went to the other extreme—all of the students were in high school (ages thirteen to nineteen), and there was no parental involvement other than their attendance at performances or other special events. All of my fieldwork and interviews were with students, and I had minimal interaction with any parents.

Regarding language, most of my interactions with students, teachers, and parents took place in English. Sones de México Ensemble's school has predominantly Spanish-language instruction (for pedagogical purposes described in Chapter 3), but all of the students and most of the parents also spoke English. I had occasional conversations with some parents in Spanish, but my documented interviews were in English (with occasional phrases or sentences in Spanish). The Chicago Mariachi Project's predominant language of instruction is English, with occasional digressions into Spanish; all students spoke English primarily, and I only covered in Spanish with a few parents. Because of the multiethnic nature of HANA Center (many students were bilingual or multilingual, but not in the same languages), all interactions were in English.

My observation and participant observation were paired with formal interviews. These were formal in that they were one-on-one (or occasionally one-on-two), audio recorded, and included a core set of questions. A wide range of less formal conversations take place during participant

observation and were included in my data as fieldnotes. In the formal interviews, I asked a core set of questions to establish the subject's background, experiences, and engagement with music education. I then asked follow-up questions to explore ideas they raised that could provide insight into my research questions. My core interview questions are included in Appendix 3 of the dissertation. I conducted fifty interview with forty-two subjects—twenty-two students, ten parents, and ten adult staff members (each a different combination of teacher, youth organizer, administrator, and musician). A list of these interview subjects can be seen in Appendix 2.

Rather than speaking in the social scientific terms of my research questions, I framed my interviews around everyday ideas about musical engagement, cultural heritage, and aesthetics. Across students, teachers, and parents, I sought to investigate the stories that people construct about why they are drawn to a particular type of music. What role does their own sense of identity in the US play? What do they hope to get out of the music education experience? What is their relationship to musical sound, and how easy or challenging has it been for them to appreciate the style they are learning, given the music they listen to in the rest of their lives? How does each person's decision to study this music relate to the rest of her or his life? How does the music relate to each individual's social life? Do they have friends who study or listen to the same kind of music? Do they hope to? What role does the music play in each person's experience of being a resident of Chicago? Perhaps little; perhaps it is integral (and, to be sure, positions between).

Regarding anonymity, I asked each participant to specify their preferences on the assent/consent form that they filled out prior to our interview (see Appendix 1). Each participant had the option to have her or his real name used in my writing or to have a pseudonym, as well as the option to be quoted or not to be quoted. For students and parents, even if they and their parents chose to have their real name used, I only use their first names in this dissertation so as to

ensure a degree of privacy. For adults working at these organizations in a professional capacity (e.g., teachers and administrators) who consented to have their real names used, I have used their full names. This study examines programs that are so unique in structure, goals, and accomplishments that it would be impossible to anonymize them. Furthermore, there is no discernible need for this, as no sensitive details are discussed. It is my hope that some of this material may even prove useful to these organizations.

Note on Transcriptions

As this research project is not focused on the particularities of linguistic subtlety, I have taken a straightforward approach to transcriptions. In general, I have left out short filler words such as “like,” “you know,” and so on to promote the readability of the transcript excerpts. In some cases I chose to include these words when it helps to illustrate the speaker’s thought process in transitioning from one topic to another.

Any pause longer than a second is denoted by an em-dash (—). An em-dash is also used to denote when a speaker changes course to a different thought mid-sentence, as so: “I was thinking about what to talk about in this interview, and—wait, is the recorder on?”. Editorial elisions—interview excerpts in this document where I have cut out material for brevity—are indicated by ellipses (. . .).

In conversations that move between English and Spanish, I switch between spelling conventions based on the language of the word or phrase; for example, writing “Mexico” when pronounced with the English x sound (/ks/) and “México” when pronounced with the Spanish x sound (/h/).

Research Timeline

My approach at each field site was to begin with a period of observation and/or participant observation to develop an understanding of the activities taking place, get to know participants, and build initial relationships. Once I had accomplished this goal, I began to conduct interviews—crucially, after I had a good sense of whom I wanted to interview and once the interviewees were comfortable enough with me to have an extended conversation. Here I describe the basic timeline of my activities at each field site.

Sones de México Ensemble

April/May 2015: First interviewed Juan Díes, participant observation at Sones de México Ensemble performances and workshops, interviews with other ensemble members.

Fall 2017–Winter 2018: Reconnected with Díes, began to observe classes at Mexican Music School.

2018: Periodic class observation at end-of-session concert attendance.

Spring 2019: Continued observation, bulk of interviews conducted.

Chicago Mariachi Project

Fall 2017: Initial meetings with Álvaro Obregón to discuss fieldwork with CMP.

January–June 2018: Fieldwork and interviews at CMP's Saturday Mariachi Academy and performances.

July 2018: Traveled with CMP to Albuquerque for week-long mariachi festival.

Summer 2018, Summer 2019: Follow up fieldwork and interviews at CMP's summer performance series in Little Village.

HANA Center

January 2018: First meeting with Yujin Maeng to discuss fieldwork.

Spring 2018: Met with Inhe Choi and worked out research agreement with HANA as well as with After School Matters.

June–December 2018: Fieldwork and interviews at Summer and Fall HANA ASM sessions.

Jan–Oct 2019: Periodic attendance at HANA Center events and follow-up interviews.

Authorial Subjectivity

Any ethnographic study such as this one is inherently subject to questions of the researcher's position vis-à-vis her or his research interlocutors. In designing this project, I sought field sites at which I would have flexibility to get to know young people and adults on their own terms and where the organizational leaders were comfortable with my spending unstructured time with the music-learning groups. The first phase at each field site entailed open-ended observation and casual conversation as I got to know how the programs work, observed teaching and learning processes, and got to know participants. This made for a smooth transition into focused interviews when I deemed the time appropriate at each site. From the start, I made my goals and intentions clear—first to organizational leaders in initial talks to determine their interest in my spending time with their program, then with young people and their parents as I began to observe classes and attend events.

There are many ways that my past experiences prepared me to conduct this research. As a reader, I find it helpful to know *why* researchers set out to investigate the phenomena at the center of their projects. To that end, I offer a brief explanation of my motivations and preparations for this

research. Growing up, I was exposed to a diverse array of formative musical experiences: classical piano and violin lessons; oral tradition folk songs with family and friends; band, orchestra, and chorus classes in school; and high school musical theater. As I grew older, I gravitated to the folkloric and became retroactively interested in how, growing up in New England, I had been exposed to a diverse array of maritime folk music—perpetuated in part through local music educational institutions. This equipped me with an interest in and awareness of people’s youthful musical formation.

I first began to consider the significance of cultural engagement in the lives of immigrant teens after college when I worked as an Americorps-placed college counselor at a high school in Providence, RI. There I supported two hundred students—nearly all first in their families to pursue college—through the process of researching, applying to, and enrolling in higher education. Most of the students were first- or second-generation US residents from the Dominican Republic or Haiti. As I came to know their stories, it became clear how their senses of self and community were shaped not just by their home and school environments but by the myriad community organizations with which they were engaged—from religious activity to spoken word poetry to competitive debate.

Throughout two years at that high school and two more years working with a different immigrant-descended youth population in Boston, MA, I continued to observe the ways that these first- and second-generation students were taking advantage of a dense network of urban nonprofit organizations to pursue activities that shaped their senses of self and community. Given my training in musicology, I was particularly interested in the artistic instances of this phenomenon. I applied to graduate school with the intention of studying those instances, motivated by two factors: first, a need to understand and explain the effects of community-based music learning on youth

development, and second, a desire to bring the complex, three-dimensional lives of people like my former students into public discourse.

These experiences do not merely explain my motivation for pursuing this line of research. My four years of youth mentoring and advising work also prepared me for ethnographic fieldwork with teenagers—a task that must be approached with patience, humor, and an appreciation for the adolescent condition. My professional background in college access also equipped me with skills to provide reciprocal support to some of my field sites—for example, at HANA Center I conducted several workshops on the college application process and the higher education system of financial aid.

Part V: Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first, which has been intended to establish the reasoning behind this project, its focuses, and its methods, now reaches its conclusion. The second chapter builds on this foundation by explaining the theoretical frameworks guiding the project. These frameworks, drawn from ethnomusicology, music education, sociology of immigration, sociology of ethnicity, and nonprofit studies, are introduced in the context of existing academic literature as well as their applications to this study.

Chapters three, four, and five are ethnographic case studies of my three field sites. In each case study, I explain a particular feature of the organization that illuminates my larger thesis regarding nonprofit organizations' capacity to serve flexible youth development goals—within the context of immigrant music traditions. The third chapter examines Sones de México Ensemble's

Mexican Music School, arguing that the ensemble's novel approach to education has enabled a diverse range of young Mexican American parents—and their children—to engage with the present revival of Mexican *son*.

The fourth chapter focuses on the Chicago Mariachi Project and the notion of musical pipelines. Of all the groups I examined, CMP has been most focused on cultivating a high level of technical and performative musical skill. This chapter explains how CMP's leaders have been able to achieve this in an environment of scarce resources for such a group that is marginal to the mainstream of music education. The chapter also digs into the effects that this intensive sequence of nontraditional music education experiences have on the young people most deeply involved.

The fifth chapter examines HANA Center's HANAsori *p'ungmul* ensemble and the question of interracial, pan-immigrant solidarity. The HANAsori ensemble brings together immigrant and second-generation young people from many different ethnic and national backgrounds, tied together by musical, social, and political bonds. I explore how HANA has responded to the city's changing immigrant demographics by reframing their drumming program to reach non-Korean youth, and I explain why their pedagogical approach to *p'ungmul* has proved so effective at fostering community and empowering young people with the leadership ability to pursue political change in their city.

The sixth and final chapter offers concluding thoughts as I consider the potential futures of nonprofit, community-based immigrant music education.

Chapter 2

Frameworks for Understanding

In this dissertation I draw on and engage with work in several fields and disciplines. While my approach is rooted in ethnomusicological methods, I also draw heavily from education studies (particularly studies of youth development and out-of-school learning), sociology (of education, of immigrant, and of racial and ethnic formation), American studies, and ethnic studies. I expect that readers from any of these particular academic backgrounds may not be familiar with the other disciplinary approaches—and readers from beyond the academy may not be familiar with any of them. The present chapter introduces many of the topics and frameworks that I use throughout the dissertation. In another sense, the present chapter unpacks each element of the dissertation's title—Why do I examine processes of learning and teaching music? How do I conceptualize musical heritage? What is immigrant Chicago?—as well as those elements that did not make it into the title.

Part I: Music / Education

This dissertation focuses on people, organizations, and communities in the present day that are engaged with the project of immigrant-heritage-focused music education in Chicago. In order to analyze the present moment, one needs to historicize the institutions and processes through which this music education is taking place. These organizations are distinctive from multiple standpoints.

The layperson might find it generally interesting that there exist nonprofit organizations teaching specialized immigrant musical traditions. From the standpoint of music education scholarship, however, there are further reasons to study such an organization. In this section I explain the scholarly rationale for studying immigration and heritage via music and I survey the institutional history of teaching musics other than those derived from the Western European concert tradition. What began as “multicultural music education” in the mid-twentieth century has shifted through several phases, defined by different pedagogical approaches, different repertoires, and different philosophical approaches to both the point of music education and the students that it should be attempting to reach.

Music as an Approach to Immigration and Heritage

There is already a substantial body of literature in musicology, geography, ethnic studies, and migration studies arguing for the value of cultural and music-focused analysis in understanding migrant and immigrant communities (Bottomley 1992; Chambers 1994; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996; Alessandrini 2001; Baily and Collyer 2006; Ragland 2009; Zheng 2010). There has not been a comprehensive approach to education-specific research in this area. Much scholarship examining the children of immigration and their music-learning experiences has focused on multicultural education (Anderson and Campbell 1996; Volk 1998). Often, work on multicultural music education emphasizes the role of such practices in fostering values of tolerance, understanding, and pluralism in non-immigrant (typically white, middle-class) children. More recently, scholars have drawn on Ladson-Billings’s (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy in arguing for approaches to music education based in the self-identified “relevant musics” of a student population (Abril

2013; Kelly-McHale and Abril 2015). However, the majority of this research continues to focus on school-based contexts. There is little scholarly attention on the rich variety of out-of-school music-learning experiences that immigrant and children-of-immigrant students experience—particularly in a city like Chicago, which is densely covered by a web of nonprofit and community-based arts learning programs. There is some excellent research on the nature and effects of afterschool and community-based arts education (Mahoney et al. 2005), but little of it discusses immigrant communities in particular.

My dissertation takes as its premise the notions that: music plays an important role in immigrant communities and in the lives of young people connected to these communities; because of this, studying music education provides insight into youth development beyond that provided by education studies with other curricular focuses; and finally, the dearth of scholarship on community-based learning contexts means that a crucial area of immigrant youth development is neglected. The cultural engagement of immigrants has been politically fraught throughout most of US American history (Portes and Rumbaut 2014). Despite this long history, the US is at a crucial juncture, as anti- and pro-immigrant political movements have come into increasing conflict at the local, state, and national levels. Scholarship that elucidates previously unexplored aspects of immigrant and children-of-immigrant youth development is crucial for both the academy and the broader public. Understanding this phenomenon will bring further nuance and insight to the intersection of immigration and education as a political and societal phenomenon as well as the artistic, social, and personal development of individual immigrant and children-of-immigrant youth.

Foundations of Multicultural Music Education

In order to begin analyzing Chicago's current music education ecosystem of nonprofit organizations, classroom teachers, teaching artists, and cultural institutions, it is important to understand the recent history of music education as a university research discipline in the United States. One must examine in particular the shift over the past half-century toward a system in which many music educators include or even focus on musics beyond the classical and popular Euro-American traditions—such as marching band repertoire, choral arrangements of folk, religious, and popular songs, musical theater, and European art music—that dominated the curriculum before this era. The shift toward a broader repertoire was not a singular movement, but rather a variety of pedagogical impulses that I examine in further detail. For some, the spirit of the movement was an expansion of the curriculum to embrace the world. For others, the diversification of music education repertoire had less to do with musics beyond the borders of the United States than with a reconceived notion of who American students were and what musics might be relevant to their lives.

In her article “Musica Exotica, Multiculturalism, and School Music,” Patricia Shehan Campbell surveys the history of multicultural music education. Multiculturalism as a particular approach to cultural pluralism in Western European-derived liberal democracies gained influence in the second half of the twentieth century. Though there have been gestures toward what might be considered multicultural music education over the past century, Shehan Campbell identifies the 1967 Tanglewood Symposium as a watershed moment. The “assembly of performers, conductors, educators, sociologists, anthropologists, government and industrial leaders, scientists, and others” (1994: 67), under the auspices of the Music Educators National Convention, affirmed the value and

importance of teaching music outside of the Western classical tradition. This declaration ushered in the modern era of overtly multicultural music education.

This movement was ascendant in the United States and Canada throughout the 1970s and 80s. William Anderson and Patricia Shehan Campbell's edited volume *Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education* is a massive undertaking, as eighteen contributing authors assemble "both a compendium of descriptions of the world's musical cultures and a collection of lessons . . . designed . . . to provide experiences for students in diverse musical cultures at every level and in every setting" (1996: ix). In their Preface and Introduction, Anderson and Campbell trace the growing institutional support for multicultural music education throughout the 1970s and 80s, culminating in a 1990 Washington, DC Symposium on "Multicultural Approaches to Music Education" cosponsored by the Music Educators National Conference's Society for General Music, the Society for Ethnomusicology, and the Smithsonian Institution. The edited volume was a response to the demand for multicultural education and lack of teaching resources (ibid.: ix). It demonstrates a high degree of collaboration between music educators and ethnomusicologists; of the eighteen contributing authors, eight were ethnomusicologists.

Though there is an apparent expectation on the part of the editors that teachers already demanded a resource such as the one they were providing, they nonetheless provide justification. In the Preface, the editors summarize US history, emphasizing the long presence of Native Americans and Africans as well as more recent arrival of "waves of immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and Europe" (Anderson and Shehan Campbell 1996: viii). Anthony Seeger, at the time Director of Smithsonian Folkways, took a similar approach in his Foreword to the book, asserting that "North America has been multicultural since the American Indians spread throughout its vast extent" (ibid.: x). In his telling, the "creation of the United States out of English colonies, French territories,

Spanish settlements, and Native American nations” was merely an extension of that legacy, creating a “multilingual and multicultural nation that has been subsequently nourished by millions of immigrants” (ibid.: x). These narratives paint a rosy picture and seem aimed at mollifying teachers who would prefer to focus on the Western concert tradition. The justifications seek to prove that the US has always been a multicultural land and that the multicultural music education movement is just catching up with reality (ibid.: x). The volume demonstrates both the virtues and limitations of multicultural music education that future scholars would critique. Anderson and Campbell assemble a disciplinarily, nationally, and institutionally diverse set of authors with substantial expertise in the musics that they are presenting. The authors and editors nonetheless take an additive approach—presenting material added to a Western European-based curriculum rather than taken on its own—and the book is replete with examples transcribed onto Western European staff notation, suggesting a reliance on Western epistemologies of music critiqued by authors including Miralis (2014) and Bradley (2015a).

Though ideologies of multiculturalism do not hold the sway they once did, they have undoubtedly informed the logics of race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture of many Chicagoans. Despite a recent upsurge in public displays of xenophobia and isolationism, metaphors like the American melting pot continue to serve as common frameworks for understanding difference in US society. This raises important considerations for the present project. To what extent do the logics of multiculturalism inform the music education projects at the ethnographic core of the dissertation? My dissertation poses a multifaceted question, which will require me to speak with students, teachers, parents, and cultural policy actors about their own conceptions of society, their place in it, and music’s place in it. Does a student attend Irish fiddling lessons because it adds a musical dimension to her extant Western classical training? Perhaps she is instead beginning her musical

education with Irish fiddle music. Does she have Irish heritage? Does it matter to her? Does any of that play a role in her music education choices or in her aesthetic perception of the music?

Ideologies like multiculturalism have a way of working their language into the everyday vocabulary of life. The extent to which my interlocutors do or do not rehearse the language of multicultural appreciation in their own music narratives will inform my analysis of the processes at play in Chicago.

A Critical Turn in Multicultural Music Education Research

During the 1990s, some researchers began to point out the dearth of scholarship regarding the effects of multicultural music education. Yiannis Miralis surveys research on multicultural music education in his chapter “World Musics and Cultural Diversity in the Music Classroom and the Community” from *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research in American Music Education* (Conway 2014). He offers a comprehensive survey of qualitative research on the topic over the past few decades in the US. Though there was little scholarship on the topic as of the early 1990s, by 1998–2002 the most common topic of dissertations on qualitative music education was multiculturalism (being the primary topic of 13% of the dissertations from this period) (Miralis 2014: 553–554).

Miralis identifies several common criticisms of multicultural music education as it is carried out by teachers. These criticisms include the “problematic nature of limited teacher knowledge and expertise, Eurocentric musical training, the limitations posed by musical notation, and the limited availability and inappropriateness of existing materials” (ibid.: 555). One limitation of the research that Miralis surveys is that many of the studies focus on affluent, suburban, primarily white classrooms (ibid.: 556). This gap in the scholarship focused on multicultural music education

persisted into the mid-2000s.

In a sense, multiculturalist logic embodies the colorblind liberalism critiqued by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006: 7, 26). Multiculturalism and, by extension, multicultural (music) education embraces the concept of a multiethnic society, but it fails to address or interrogate the backgrounds and prior knowledge of students, teachers, and musicians. Much of the attendant scholarship falls into a similar epistemological trap, accepting at face value the idea that embracing difference by teaching musics outside of the Western European concert tradition will have the effect of advancing equality in an abstract sense.

A recent strain of critical scholarship has challenged this idea, engaging with both the racialized nature of Eurocentric music education and the racialized subtext present in much multicultural music education. Deborah Bradley asserts that the “recent trend toward greater inclusion of ‘world music’ in education often takes colonialist form through unauthorized appropriation and publication, through multiple forms of misrepresentation, and through language suggesting such music, as indigenous knowledge, is marginal or inferior to the Western musical canon” (2012: 410). Within the classroom, she sees this multicultural approach as operating with the epistemology of “‘color-blind’ racism” through narratives such as “music is a universal language” (Bradley 2015a: 190). Bradley deconstructs the notion of what it means “to be musically educated” (2012: 413), arguing that North American practices foreground ensembles rooted in Western European epistemologies of music. She compares Ghanaian Ewe drummers and Native American flute players, whose training consists of years of community-based apprenticeship, practice, and instruction, with the school-based choirs, bands, and orchestras that dominate North American music education. In contradistinction to the former model, she argues, “music education” in the US has become synonymous with large ensemble participation and the elementary general

music curriculum that prepares students for future participation in such ensembles. One piece of evidence for this is that such participation “is the only recognized form of musical knowledge considered valid for entry into many North American university music schools” (ibid.: 413).

Bradley argues that different types of music education accrue different sorts of cultural capital—to be explicit, the more valuable form of music education is that which prepares students to join the more prestigious high school choral and orchestral ensembles or to compete for university admission. This suggests several questions that I pursue in this project. Is Bradley’s analysis of prestige and cultural capital the same sort of logic that animates the music education choices of families whose children study musics that would not prepare them for such goals? Do those choices represent the sacrifice of prestigious cultural capital in favor of engagement with family heritage? Might this simply mean that alternative forms of cultural capital are valued more highly by such families? I grapple with my interlocutors’ epistemological orientations toward musical knowledge and cultural knowledge more broadly in order to begin answering these questions.

The extensive treatment of sources addressing the legacy of the Western European concert tradition in US music education might appear to be out of place in a project ostensibly focused on other musics. This is due, quite simply, to the prevalence and dominance of such literature in the field of music education. To cite just one suggestive example, the recently published *Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research in American Music Education* (Conway 2014) includes thirty-two chapters, only one of which overtly addresses questions of cultural diversity in relationship to students, teachers, or musics. This relative dearth is representative of the broader state of research into the musical learning of American youth. While education, or music transmission more broadly conceived, is treated briefly in many ethnomusicological works, they rarely receive lengthy or

substantive examination. Many recent (ethno)musicological works that address the intersection of immigration and cultural heritage in the US, including Avant-Mier (2010), Cepeda (2010), Moon (2005), Peña (1999), G. Wang (2015), Washburne (2008), Wong (2004), Yang (2008), and Zheng (2010), focus primarily on history, performance, and community identity, with less explicit attention to transmission and youth engagement. For my own project, I draw methodological and theoretical insight from the mix of ethnomusicological, music education, and other disciplinary sources laid out in this section, in an attempt to foreground the processes of generational transmission that I see as crucial to answering the questions laid out in my methodology section in the prior chapter.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings began to develop an alternative to multicultural education in her article, “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.” She explicitly aims to improve teacher education by ameliorating some of the problems she sees as inherent in multiculturalism. She advocates “helping prospective teachers understand culture (their own and others) and the ways it functions in education” (1995: 483) and believes that multicultural education courses “serve to exoticize diverse students as ‘other,’” while “a culturally relevant pedagogy is designed to problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society” (ibid.: 483). Scholars including Carlos Abril and Jacqueline Kelly-McHale have more fully developed the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (also referred to as “culturally responsive pedagogy”) within the field of music education.

Abril lays out one of the most succinct characterizations of this pedagogy in “Toward a More Culturally Responsive General Music Classroom.” Much of this approach hinges on creating strong interpersonal relationships between teachers and students—a key component in coming to understand students as individuals rather than members of groups. Abril notes that, “obvious as it may seem, students and their families may not relate to songs just because they are sung in the native language or are from or thought to be from a given country. Contrived songs, stereotypical music selections, or exoticized portrayals of cultural groups are as insidious as not considering culture at all” (2013: 9). This sort of observation, and Abril’s need to include it, suggest that the “well-meaning” multiculturalist racialization of students of color or immigrant students is still an extant—and possibly widespread—phenomenon among the teachers for whom he is writing.

Jacqueline Kelly-McHale’s 2011 dissertation, “The Relationship between Children’s Musical Identities and Music Teacher Beliefs and Practices in an Elementary General Music Classroom,” is a focused case study of this pedagogical approach. Kelly-McHale studies four Mexican American children in a Chicago-area elementary school music classroom, engaging with questions of immigration, assimilation, and culturally responsive pedagogy. This line of research focuses primarily on students’ cultural identities and the ways in which teachers can engage with those identities in order to facilitate musical learning. Kelly-McHale is less critical of multiculturalism than Ladson-Billings; while she focuses on identifying the most responsible way for teachers to honor their students’ cultural identities, she also embraces the value of guiding them to learn written notation and Euro-American repertoire.

Kelly-McHale and Abril coauthored “The Space between Worlds: Music Education and Latino Children,” in which they “examine the ways current pedagogical practices misalign with the values of many Latino students and families” and assert that “the reliance on Western European

practice, repertoire, and curriculum and course design creates inequitable experiences and contributes to the marginalization of Latino students in music classrooms” (2015: 157). They specifically note problems with the Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze, and Gordon systems, the four most widespread approaches to elementary general music education in the US. These systems are based on musical play ostensibly designed to appeal to all children, yet they are all epistemologically grounded in “the Western European music paradigm, using repertoire, notation, and a reverence for that art music tradition” (ibid.: 158). This has the effect of racializing other musics as “additive” rather than central to their own traditions. The authors come closer to describing the process of that effect here than in their previous work, engaging with notions of color-blindness and their creation of hierarchies of music (ibid.: 160–61).

One valuable aspect of this work is the authors’ emphasis on specific examples of culturally responsive teaching that are more or less effective in part because of the assumptions teachers make about students’ identities. They profile the expanding phenomenon of mariachi programs (ibid.: 165–66), noting that the programs can be successful when they are appropriate for the school community but that they can be alienating in the reverse situation. Some teachers “had little to no understanding of the students’ home culture, especially with regard to music, or made sweeping generalizations that were more closely related to Latino stereotypes” (ibid.: 166), which detracted from the pedagogical effectiveness of the experience for some students. Their conclusion is to emphasize the importance of changing teacher education programs in order to train future teachers in ways of identifying and connecting with families and their values. This echoes much of the previous work assessed, in that the researchers see subconscious racialized assumptions on the part of teachers as a primary impediment to music education that engages students of color and immigrant students.

Much of the work examined here rests on the implicit assumption that teachers will not be fluent in the context of the “culturally relevant” music that they are teaching. This is, for the most part, not true of the organizations and teachers with which and with whom I have spoken so far. While school-based music educators might be called upon to teach a variety of musics, some of them beyond their own direct experience, the educators who teach through small nonprofit organizations or institutions like the Old Town School of Folk Music are generally masters of the cultural context from which the music they teach originates. Many of them grew up with the musical tradition they are teaching or, if not, they have been practicing it for many years. While Abril and Kelly-McHale frame their research in terms of teachers bringing—or failing to bring—culturally relevant musics to their students, the situation in community-based organizations is more akin to parents bringing their children to the music. Does the framework of cultural relevance work in these situations? This is one of the central questions that will animate my analysis of cultural politics in the dissertation. If parents and children are choosing music education experiences based on notions of cultural relevance, how do they determine such relevance? Do teachers and arts administrators adopt certain discourses of cultural relevance or authenticity in order to draw particular populations to their programs? If so, how do they make such decisions? What incentives affect them, and how do they construct ideas of relevance or authenticity? Speaking to Kelly-McHale and Abril’s example of young Latinos for whom mariachi is a meaningless cultural signifier—I might ask, How do musicians determine that an audience exists to support a potential education program? In my fieldwork for this project, I pushed toward a closer analysis of how cultural relevance is both individually constructed and communally negotiated by music education participants.

Part II: Immigration in the United States

Some of the immigration history relevant to this dissertation was already addressed in the first chapter. This section briefly refreshes the reader's knowledge of relevant trends in immigration policy and examines academic immigration research in two areas salient to this project: generational distinctions and immigrant parenting.

Shifts in Federal Immigration Policy and Immigrant Origins

Though there have been immigrants from Latin America and Asia in the US for centuries, those two populations expanded exponentially after the passage of the federal Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Portes and Rumbaut 2014: 1–47). Also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, this legislation did away with a quota system that had been in place since 1924, designed to exclude immigrants from most parts of the world except Western and Northern Europe (even Southern and Eastern Europe had greater comparative restrictions under this system). Prior to 1965, the vast majority of immigrants were from Europe—in the greater Chicago area, the largest groups were from Poland, Germany, Italy, Russia, Sweden, and Ireland.

The post-1965 influx of immigrants from Latin America and Asia is significant in this literature survey for two reasons: first, the expanded population of immigrants became focuses of academic study over the last fifty years, and second, academic disciplines specifically focused on these communities formed and gained power within the academy. Such disciplines are variously referred to as Latino studies, Chicano studies, Asian American studies, and ethnic studies. The

emergence of these academic units—sometimes couched in disciplinary terms, sometimes as interdisciplinary centers—formalized the study of Latin American and Asian immigrants in the US. It also provided institutional support to increase the amount of scholarship on these groups, thus allowing for the proliferation of related work within the musicologies over the past two decades.

The following figures provide a visual sense of how the broader Chicago area’s population has shifted since 1850. The data for 1850–2000 come from the decennial national census; the data for 2010 and 2018 (the most recent year available) come from the American Community Survey (ACS), which replaced the long-form decennial census starting in 2005. Though more recent surveys provide data at the level of the city (and much more detail), older censuses provide specificity only to the level of the county. Because of this, I have used Cook County (which contains Chicago) as the stable unit of analysis in these comparisons. For most of its history, Chicago has made up the majority of Cook County, and for the purposes of this broad demographic examination its population is similar enough for our purposes.

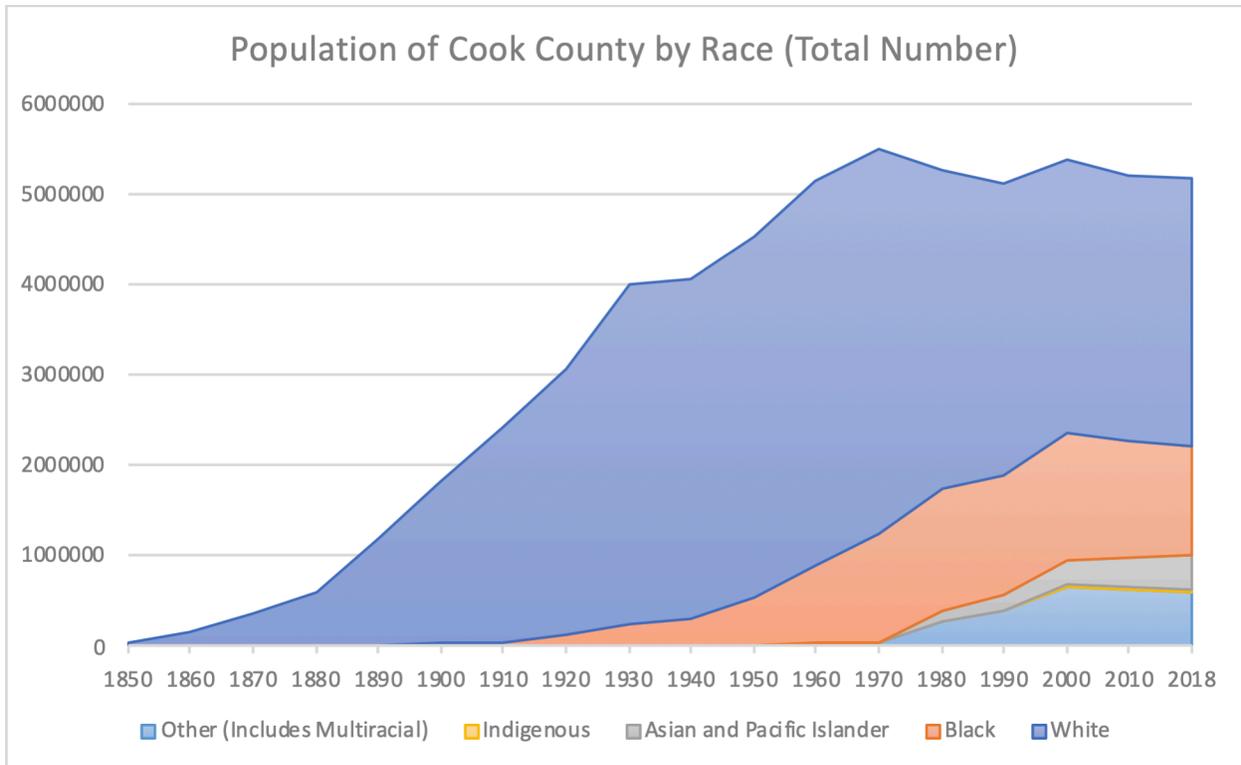


Figure 2.1. Population of Cook County by Race (Total Number). Data from US Census, accessed via Social Explorer. Image by author.

Figure 2.1 illustrates Cook County’s population from 1850 to 2018 broken down by race. This illustrates two major population shifts: the massive growth of Black residents starting in 1940, driven by the Great Migration, and the growth in residents of Asian descent starting in 1970, driven by the 1965 federal immigration legislation. Figure 2.2 illustrates the same data displayed proportionally rather than in terms of total number of people, allowing the reader to see how the relative composition of Cook County has changed over time.

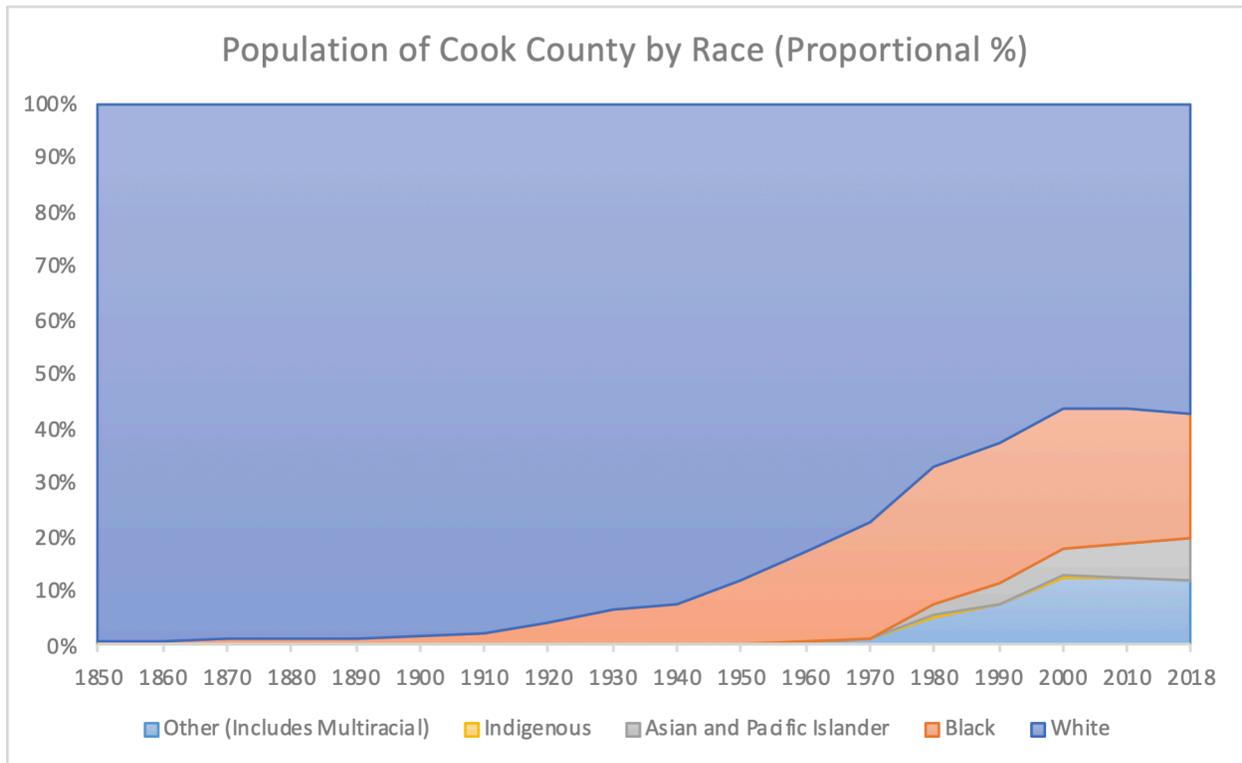


Figure 2.2. Population of Cook County by Race (Proportional %). Data from US Census, accessed via Social Explorer. Image by author.

Starting in 1970, the census began to ask about “Spanish” or “Hispanic” origin. The census designers conceived of Hispanic identity as a separate category from race. Thus, someone could be White and Hispanic, Asian and Hispanic, and so on. As such, one cannot simply include Hispanic or Latinx in these charts since the category as measured on the census overlaps with each of the racial categories. Figure 2.3 juxtaposes the data from Figure 2.1 with the data on Hispanic/Non-Hispanic origin. The latter is illustrated with bars overlaid on the racial data.

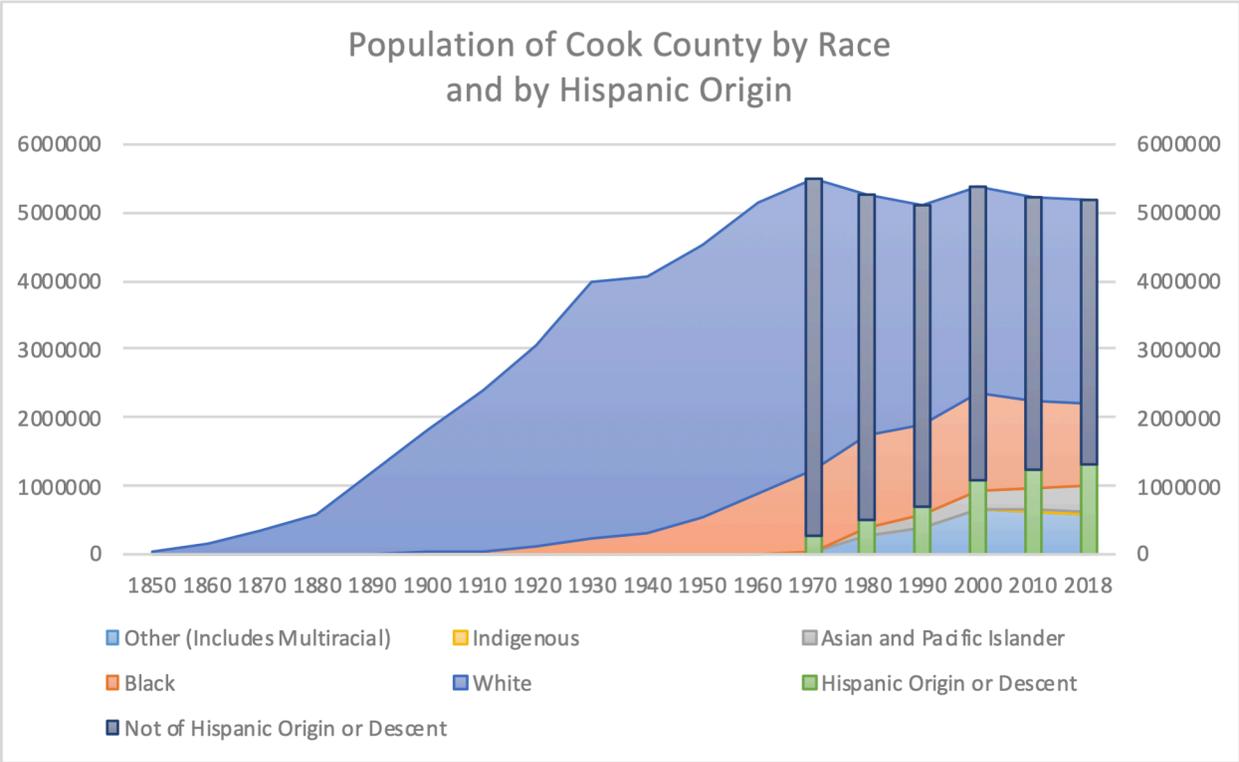


Figure 2.3. Population of Cook County by Race and by Hispanic Origin. Data from US Census, accessed via Social Explorer. Image by author.

The census measures first-generation immigrants with decent accuracy by asking about native or foreign nativity. Figures 2.4 and 2.5 illustrate Cook County’s population over time—first with raw numbers and second as a proportional balance between native- and foreign-born residents.¹

1. There is an unfortunate gap in these charts for 1950 and 1960 due to problems with the nativity data from those censuses.

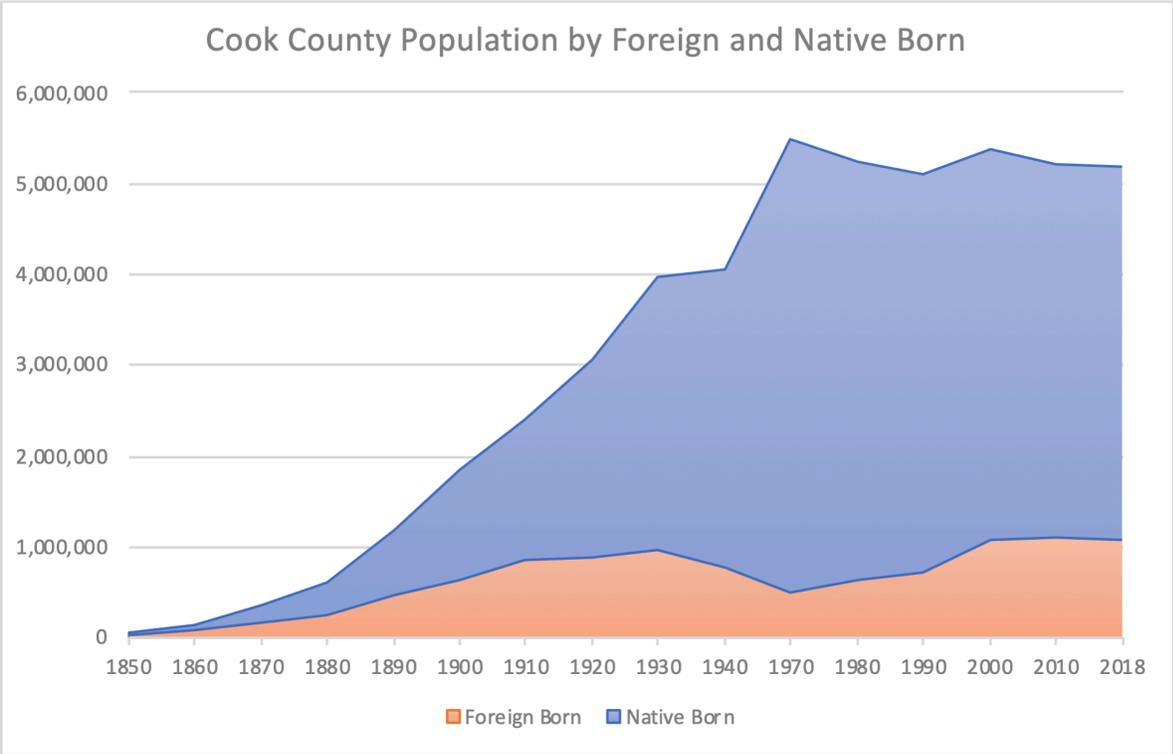


Figure 2.4. Population of Cook County by Foreign and Native Born (Number). Data from US Census, accessed via Social Explorer. Image by author.

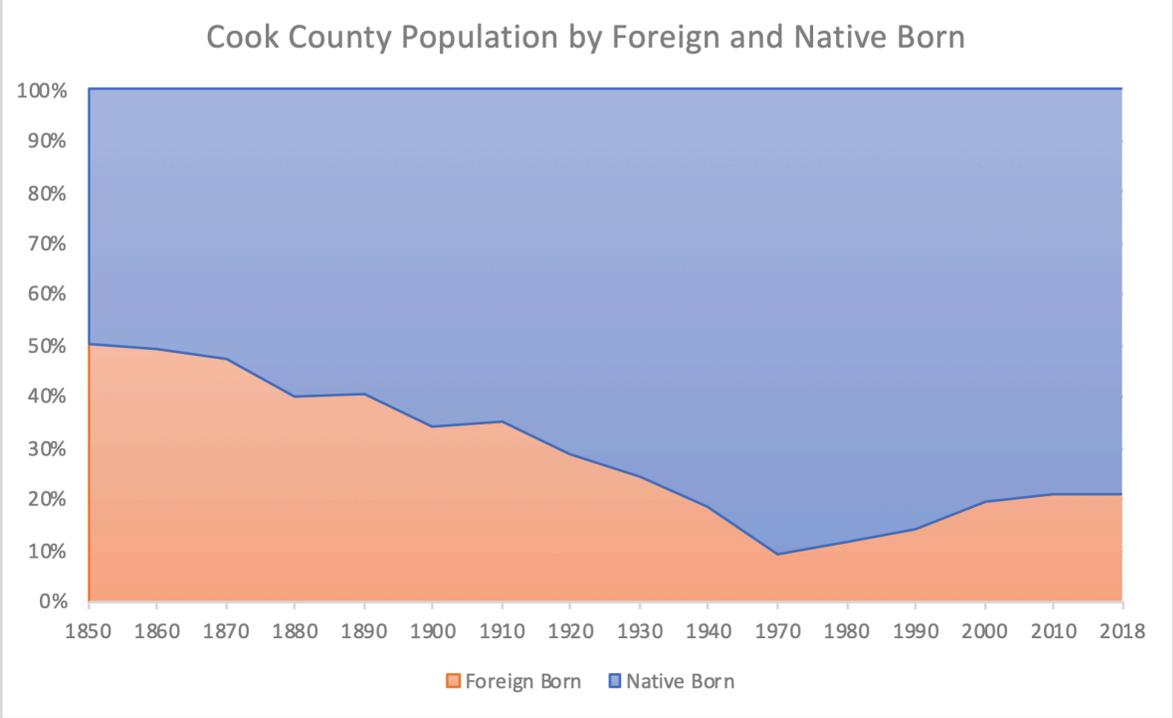


Figure 2.5. Population of Cook County by Foreign and Native Born (Proportion). Data from US Census, accessed via Social Explorer. Image by author.

Figure 2.5 makes the trend particularly evident. Many of the initial settlers to Cook County were immigrants; from 1850 to 1920 the proportion declined from 50% to 29%. The 1924 restrictionist federal legislation accelerated this decline and by 1970 the proportion had fallen to just 11%. The implementation of the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act led to a rebound to 20% by the year 2000. This proportion has stayed steady for the twenty years since. Nativity data are not disaggregated by race, but one can see the shifting nature of who these immigrants are in Figure 2.6, which juxtaposes the data from Figure 2.5 with a separate data series (represented by bars) showing the increase of people of Asian and Hispanic descent as a portion of Cook County’s population. As a caveat, these categories seem to appear rapidly in 1970 and 1980—this is largely because there are data missing from 1950 and 1960 and “Asian” data missing from 1970 (otherwise there would be a more gradual ascent there).

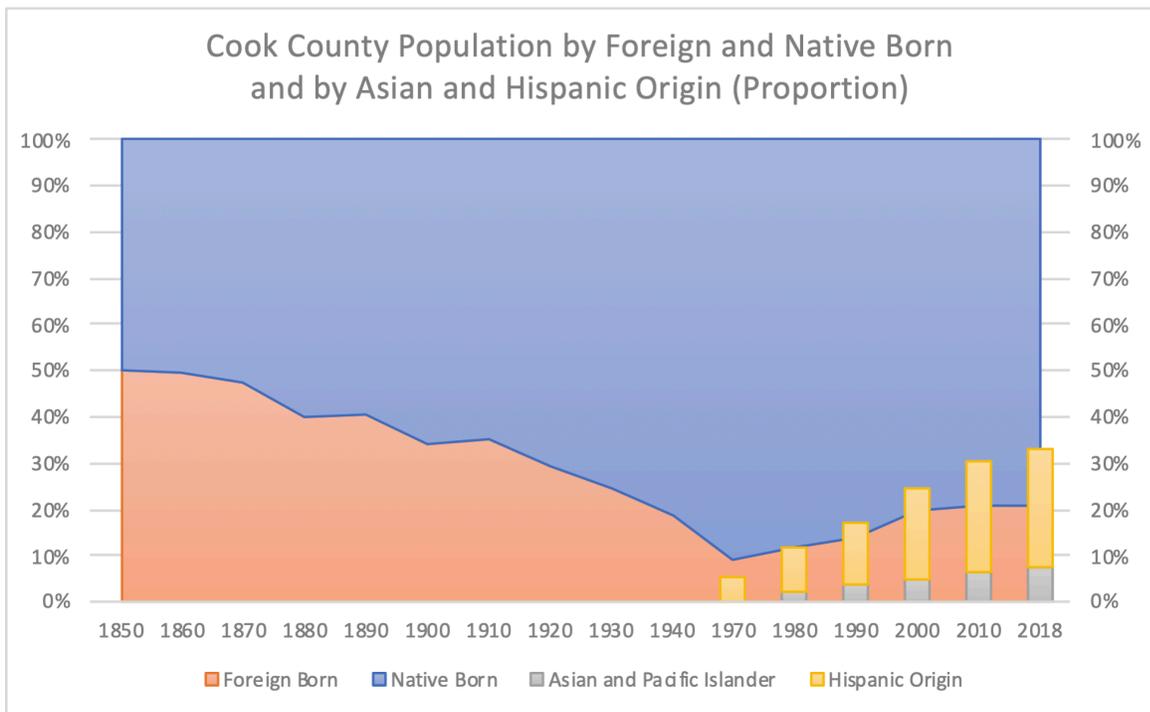


Figure 2.6. Cook County Population by Foreign and Native Born (Proportion) and by Asian and Hispanic Origin (Number). Data from US Census, accessed via Social Explorer. Image by author.

The Asian and Hispanic origin populations increase proportionally more rapidly than the “Foreign Born” category. There are two reasons for this. First (perhaps most obviously), these racial and ethnic origin categories encompass the children of foreign-born immigrants—thus, the rising bars signify both immigration and the growing families of those immigrants. Second, roughly 20–30% of the people in the “Hispanic Origin” category are from Puerto Rico and thus “Native Born” due to the island’s status as a US territory. Of course, the “Foreign Born” category is not solely made up of people from Latin America and Asia, but they do represent the majority (roughly 73% in 2018), a stark difference from the pre-1965 immigrants who were almost entirely from Europe. For context, in 2018, of Cook County’s foreign-born population, 45.9% originated in Latin America (Mexico: 36.2%; other Central America: 3.2%; South America: 3.9%; Caribbean: 1.7%); 28.2% from Asian (India: 7.1%; China: 5%; Philippines: 4.5%; Korea: 2.2%; all others below 2%); 22.4% from Europe (Poland: 9%; rest of Eastern Europe: 8.2%; Western Europe: 1.6%; Northern Europe: 1.4%); and 3.6% from Africa (Nigeria: 1.1%; the rest evenly split between Northern, Western, and Eastern Africa).

The practical significance of this population shift is that the past fifty years in Chicago have witnessed a new and growing population of people with Latin American and Asian family origins. As the second and third generations of these families have come of age, there has been growing demand for cultural programming, including music education programs. The following section explains the notion of immigrant generations in greater detail.

Generations

Within the sociological literature on US immigration, “generation” is a widely used analytical

category. Most often, “first generation” refers to people who came to the United States as adults— from a developmental perspective, this means they grew up and came of age, or at least experienced adolescence, in their country of origin, with the assumption being that they internalized behaviors, mindsets, and ways of being particular to their childhood environment. “Second generation” refers to children born in the United States to first-generation immigrants. They are citizens (by virtue of birthright citizenship) and typically socialized to the norms of whatever US community that they live in. The third generation is the children of the second generation, and so on. Sociologists have used these generational frameworks particularly to propose theories of assimilation. These generational concepts are not only used by researchers but also taken up in some cases by immigrant communities themselves in order to understand common shared experiences. For example, Japanese Americans often use the terms Issei, Nisei, and Sansei to refer to (respectively) the first, second, and third generations.

Over the past decade, increasing analysis has focused on the “1.5 generation,” a term coined by sociologist Rubén Rumbaut in the 1970s (Rumbaut 2004: 1166) to describe people who immigrated to the US as children—he uses age 12 as the cutoff. This separate category is meant to analytically capture the group “pre-adolescent, primary-school-age children who have learned (or begun to learn) to read and write in the mother tongue at schools abroad, but whose education is largely completed here” (ibid.: 1167). Rumbaut has also proposed the categories of 1.25 generation (arrived during adolescence, ages 13–17), and 1.75 generation (arrived ages birth–6, before entering school in the country of origin), though these categories have not gained the same widespread usage as 1.5 generation. In an empirical test of the analytical validity of these “decimal” generations with regard to language acquisition, Oropesa and Landale demonstrated that the “1.5 and 1.25 generations are considerably less likely than the 1.75 generation to be bilingual and English

monolingual. The odds of bilingualism and English monolingualism for the 1.5 generation are only about one-fourth the odds for the 1.75 generation” (1997: 468).

The “1.5 generation” concept has come into popular consciousness (though not typically under this name) through immigration activists’ focus on the “dreamers”—named after the DREAM Act, a piece of federal legislation first proposed in 2001 and not yet passed—a term more or less synonymous with undocumented members of the 1.5 generation (who make up roughly 2 million of the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the US). Activists and legislators determined that this cohort could better elicit public sympathy and support because arguably they came here (as children) through no choice of their own and should not be penalized for their parents’ inability to secure legal status for them. Other activists have pushed back against this strategy as promoting a variety of respectability politics in lieu of the vital need to support documentation and legalization for all undocumented immigrants. The “dreamer”-focused approach nonetheless won out and has received extensive media coverage.

Due to continual legislative intransigence around the DREAM Act, President Barack Obama in 2012 instituted an executive branch policy called “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” (DACA). “Childhood arrivals” here indicates the 1.5-generation status of the immigrants targeted by DACA, which was designed to enable undocumented 1.5-generation immigrants to work legally without fear of deportation for a limited time (renewable two-year periods). These undocumented 1.5-generation immigrants have also been the subject of extensive sociological research, most notably Roberto Gonzales’s qualitative study of 150 Southern California Latinx young adults (2015).

This study did not seek to recruit participants of a particular generational cohort, but it does draw on generational analysis concepts from the sociological literature in order to analyze the

divergent experiences of different immigrant groups. The majority of participants in this study are first, 1.5, or second generation, though there were several third-generation youth, particularly at the Sones de México Ensemble guitar school (a topic of analysis in that section of this dissertation).

Part III: Ethnicity, Panethnicity, and Music Research

Ethnicity is a malleable framework, used to many ends both in everyday life and in academic research. This dissertation is particularly concerned with ethnic experience as mediated by musical teaching and learning activities—and still further, ethnic experience for people of Asian or Latin American descent. As such, this section examines the variety of ways that scholars have analyzed the intersection of ethnicity and music among these groups in the US. Moreover, I endeavor to acquaint the reader with approaches to “panethnicity,” the notion that macro-ethnic solidarity identities have cohered—at various times in history, for various cultural and political reasons—between people of ostensibly different ethnic backgrounds (e.g., solidarity between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans as Latinxs with typically distinct experiences in the continental US). In part, panethnicity as an analytical project is an attempt to move “Asian American” and “Latinx” away from dominant US understandings “race” and to find new ways of analyzing these categories. This becomes relevant later in the dissertation as I examine, for example, non-Mexican Latinxs studying *son* or non-Korean Asian Americans studying *p’ungmul*. I also build on—and attempt to expand—panethnicity theory through a broader notion of pan-immigrant solidarity in my chapter on HANA Center.

“Asian American” and “Latino” as Panethnic Musical Categories

While people have come to the US from all over the world since its inception as a nation, racially motivated immigration policies meant that until the mid-twentieth century, the vast majority of these immigrants came from Europe. This trend shifted substantially toward immigrants from Asia and Latin America after 1965, when the US Congress passed a bill changing the nation’s immigration policy. Over the decades, “Asian American” and “Latino” have become useful panethnic identity categories used to refer to Americans by their ancestral continent of origin. Such terms emerged for a variety of political, social, and cultural reasons (Espiritu 1992; Gutiérrez 2013; Mora 2014; Okamoto and Mora 2014). This section is intended to examine music scholarship about Asian American and Latino cultural formations and evaluate the ways in which scholars use notions of ethnic, panethnic, and national identity. I expect that the tension between ethnic and panethnic formations will be relevant throughout my project.

“Asian American Music” vs. “Asian Americans Making Music”

Much scholarship before the 2000s examining music made by Asian Americans focused on relatively narrow immigrant communities, particularly as defined by nation of origin (e.g., Chinese American music, Japanese American music, Indian American music). During the 1990s and 2000s, scholars began to bring a pan-Asian diaspora focus (common in more politically focused Asian American studies) to the study of music. Some of these early studies struggled over the term “Asian American music.” Musicologist Joseph Lam’s article “Embracing ‘Asian American Music’ as an Heuristic Device” offers a comprehensive assessment of the term. Lam’s article is also the most oft-

cited of these early terminology debates in subsequent works addressing the music of Asian Americans as a panethnic category.

Lam begins his essay with a summary of the problem at hand: "Many musicians, audiences, and scholars, including those who are sympathetic to Asian American causes, would doubt if Asian American music exists. Others would ask what it means, and how it demonstrates ethnic identities with distinctive styles and aesthetics" (1999: 29). Lam's central motivation in arguing for the use of "Asian American music" is the desire for analytic tools to delineate Asianness and Americanness vis-à-vis the musical practitioners' experiences of those concepts. In making this case, he argues against the isolated study of individual traditions: "[T]he musics have developed different strategies to integrate various Asian and American musical elements, adjust to the social and political environment of American society, and express minority experiences directly and indirectly. Without broad and coordinated comparison of those strategies, there is no telling what is unique to specific ethnicities, and what is common to all of them" (ibid.: 42). On a broader scale, this is similar to the logic animating my selection of field sites. The breadth of his heuristic label is meant to reflect the reality of Asian American musical experience, allowing for the inclusion of "traditional," adopted, and "hybrid" varieties of musical performance. His definition for the desired heuristic category is: "music that expresses, implicitly and explicitly, Asian American experiences in a large variety of musical styles, genres, repertoires, performance practices, and aesthetics" (ibid.: 44). This category is so broad as to be unwieldy and of dubious analytical value.

Lam's approach has not been taken up by most prominent scholars studying these musics. The most comprehensive and oft-cited work in Asian American musical scholarship is Deborah Wong's *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*. As her subtitle implies, the work represents a shift from Lam's questions of category to questions of process and creation. Wong has "little

interest in asserting a new category of ‘Asian American music’” (2004: 11). In Wong’s view, “quite a bit of work exists on music in Asian America but very little of it is inflected with the issues or methodologies foregrounded in Asian American studies. To put it another way, a lot of research has been done on Asian music in America and most of it treats the performers or the performance event as artifacts of authentic Asian practices” (ibid.: 11–12). Her work attempts to shift that scholarly focus.

Speak It Louder is the first major work that attempts to study Asian-derived (or influenced) musical practices by bringing together the language and methodology of ethnomusicology, area/ethnic studies (specifically Asian American studies), and performance studies. Drawing on George Lipsitz, Wong notes that “the tension between American social movements and the (re)definition of American studies is, in fact, the lifeblood of this area studies” (ibid.: 13). The study of American music has been slow to adopt this scholarly approach, yet Wong’s observation is central to my inquiry here. Of course, the notion of “American music” is itself contested, and Wong emphasizes that her “considerations of Asian Americans making music call the very idea of American music and Americanness into question” (ibid.: 338). To be sure, “American music” is just as suspect as “Asian American music.” However, the term is in active use both in global society and in the academy. As such, I want to emphasize here that the question of Americanness is both problematic and central to my dissertation. In examining it, I aim not to reify it as a signifier of some sort of authentic belonging to a geographic location or nation state entity, but rather to question its application (or lack of application) to ethnic minority musics outside of the White-Black binary.

One of the limitations of *Speak It Louder*’s examination of “Asian Americans making music” is in the peoples and musical styles surveyed. Wong focuses on Americans of East Asian and

Southeast Asian descent, largely neglecting those of South or Central Asian descent. This omission is evident in other work on Asian Americans and music (e.g., Joseph Lam's 1999 article), and it raises the question of South and Central Asian inclusion in notions of Asian Americanness. In terms of musical style, Wong omits the study of Asian American participation in the European art music tradition. As elaborated by Mina Yang (2008) and especially Grace Wang (2015), classical music has been a major arena for articulating musical identity for many Asian Americans. This observation is not meant as a criticism of Wong; representing every facet of Asian Americanness within one volume is likely an impossible task. Rather, it is meant to highlight the difficulty of writing case studies of panethnicity. Panethnic categories are capacious by design, and as a result it is difficult to capture the variety of experiences they contain. Wong's approach of focusing on processes of formation over the thingness of the "Asian American" category is helpful in evading claims that one has failed to fully define the category-as-object. One can note, nonetheless that even thorough examinations of Asian American formation processes often focus on certain ancestries over others.

Su Zheng's *Claiming Diaspora: Music, Transnationalism, and Cultural Politics in Asian/Chinese America* follows in a similar vein to *Speak It Louder*. Like Wong, Zheng seeks to avoid categorization, instead focusing on people and their relationships with music. She opens the book by highlighting the persistent omission of Asian Americans from various representations of Americanness (e.g., an annual Washington, DC "American Roots Fourth of July" concert) (2010: 4–9). The first section of the book assesses the history of Asian Americans (primarily Chinese Americans) and their music in the US, while the latter portion is based on Zheng's extensive fieldwork with Chinese immigrants in New York City. Her titular notion of "Claiming Diaspora" is in part inspired by Chinese American musician and writer Fred Ho. Zheng notes that Ho, in his later work, moved away from a

stance of “claiming America” to one of “transforming the very conception of ‘American’” (ibid.: 61). The most valuable portions of Zheng’s monograph are the ethnographic accounts of New York City’s Chinese Americans. Because this material is so focused in time and place (and occupies the majority of the monograph), her broader theorizing about Asian Americans and music is somewhat less effective than Wong’s.

Grace Wang’s *Soundtracks to Asian America* approaches this question from the standpoint of American studies. She explicitly follows Wong’s model in her thinking around Asian Americans and music (Wang 2015: 4). This monograph is particularly valuable in two ways. First, Wang’s explicit attention on Western classical music as a ground for articulation of Asian American identity is an area notably left out of many prior works. Second is Wang’s attention to transnational cases like Leehom Wang, an American who has become a wildly successful Mandopop star in China. As the author argues, Leehom Wang’s career in Asia represents a certain articulation of Chinese American identity while also emphasizing the musical limitations still in place for Asian Americans in the US.

Asian American Jazz

Ethnomusicologist Susan Asai’s “Cultural Politics: The African American Connection in Asian American Jazz-Based Music” provides an overview of Asian American political music as inspired especially by “the Black Arts movement’s platform of cultural nationalism” (2005: 98). This is exemplified in the case study of Fred Ho (a persistent presence in discussions of Asian American music). Asai notes that,

Ho identified his music as jazz up until 1986. Since then he has continued to develop a music “that would be transformative of American music as well, and not simply be subsumed in one or another American musical genre such as jazz” . . . his use of Asian folk

melodies, traditional Asian instruments for their timbre and non-tempered tuning, and Asian themes and stories woven into jazz-based harmonies and structures are intended to re-create the continuum [of Asian American culture]. (Ibid.: 98)

Asai's approach is designed to highlight political resistance as an undercurrent of Asian American cultural expression:

The political drive of the Black Arts movement and the Third World Liberation movement created the momentum for Asian Americans to forge their own way, proclaiming their ancestral past and raising their sense of worth in countering their emasculation of being "other." Yet it is also a framework for revealing and bringing recognition . . . the contributions of Asian Americans to the national culture historically and culturally. (Ibid.: 104)

Asai's argument is most relevant to these highly visible examples like Ho and Glenn Horiuchi (her second case study), nationalists strongly influenced by the Black Liberation Movement. Perhaps a slightly different model for assessing relationships between Blackness and Asianness in music might be more relevant in cases of less overtly political musicians.

An example of such an approach is provided by David Stowe in "Jazz That Eats Rice: Toshiko Akiyoshi's Roots Music." Akiyoshi provides an interesting case: she was a Japanese national (not Japanese American) working in the United States in a primarily African American musical idiom (2006: 281). In an effort to express her identity, Akiyoshi began to incorporate "Asian" elements into her music, especially sonic markers of Japanese flute timbres and tone colors (ibid.: 280–84). Stowe frames his study of Akiyoshi through his concept of the "unstable ethnic triad." Stowe suggests that markers of Asian Americanness in jazz are part of a tradition of disrupting "the dominant American black/white racial binary" through the introduction of a third racial element (ibid.: 277–78). In Stowe's estimation, Akiyoshi's "effort to align her musical styles with her ethnic background collapses, as it usually does, under the weight of its own historical and logical contradictions" (ibid.: 292). I find it helpful to juxtapose Asai's and Stowe's case studies of

Asianness and Americanness in jazz—the case for Asian Americanness as expressed through a jazz-influenced idiom makes the most conceptual sense when there is a parallel Afro-Asian connection vis-à-vis political radicalism. Stowe’s chapter offers a compelling argument against identifying jazz made by Asians/Asian Americans as representing “Asian/Asian American” identity simply because of sonic borrowing from Asian idioms.

In Asai’s earlier and topically broader article, “Transformations of Traditions: Three Generations of Japanese American Music Making,” she draws on historical and sociological work to assess Japaneseness and Americanness in three generations of music. She covers tremendous ground, and the article is valuable for its breadth if not its depth. One inconsistency (perhaps intentional) is Asai’s use of the term “folk music”: at first, she uses it to refer to “traditional” Japanese music (1995: 430), but in describing the music of third-generation Japanese Americans in the 1960s, she instead uses “folk music” to refer to the popular acoustic style emblematic of the ‘60s American folk revival (*ibid.*: 438). The Asian Americanness of this “folk music” seems to have stemmed solely from the political ideology expressed through its lyrics (*ibid.*: 438–39). Ultimately, Asai’s narrative of the three generations in her article is one of increasing hybridity (her term) between Japaneseness and Americanness (*ibid.*: 450). She also makes the case that “jazz-based music continues to make the greatest impact as a vehicle for the third generation in expressing their social and political view and shaping a Japanese American identity” (*ibid.*). It seems that Asai is eliding “Japanese American identity” with “political views,” and I am not fully convinced by this assertion.

Musical Theater and Taiko

Ethnomusicologist Lei Ouyang Bryant's article "Performing Race and Place in Asian America: Korean American Adoptees, Musical Theatre, and the Land of 10,000 Lakes" provides a different variety of case study, both in population and musical idiom. The article focuses on *The Walleye Kid: The Musical*, a work out of Theater Mu, an Asian American theater company in Minneapolis (2008: 4). Bryant makes a compelling argument for *The Walleye Kid* as Asian American theater, but to understand its songs as Asian American music requires a definition focused on the people making the music rather than its stylistic influences. Like the "folk songs" of *A Grain of Sand* (Asai 1995), these songs in *The Walleye Kid* are Asian American solely due to their performers and lyrical content. This meets Joseph Lam's heuristic model of "Asian American music," but Bryant notes that "the so-called lack of 'traditional Korean or Asian music'" (2008: 21) in the work apparently bothered some audience members. While the composer/lyricist was Asian American, his training was in Western European art music (ibid.). Bryant's wrestling with this question highlights the challenge and contradiction of "Asian American music": how does one make music that is sonically, and not just lyrically, Asian American without being reductive or essentializing the "Asian" of Asian American as inherently foreign?

Paul J. Yoon's "Asian Masculinities and Parodic Possibility in Odaiko Solos and Filmic Representations" provides a valuable study of Asian American masculinity. Particularly interesting is his examination of the uniquely American form of taiko drumming that has developed in the US. As Yoon outlines, in some cases American taiko practices have begun to influence taiko groups in Japan (2008: 124). However, as his other case studies make clear, this sense of "American" taiko

only exists for those knowledgeable about Japanese taiko—to non-Asian Americans in the US, taiko, even in its American form, is still strongly coded as Japanese (ibid.: 114–116).

California as Paradigm of Asian Americanness and US Latinness

Mina Yang's *California Polyphony* juxtaposes the musics of White, Black, Latino, and Asian American subjects. In doing so, and in centering her work on California as an entity, Yang is attempting to examine “interracial encounters that transpire outside the reductive strictures of the black/white paradigm” (2008: 5). At the time of her writing, Asian Americans had just passed Blacks to become the third-largest ethnic/racial group in California (as recognized by the US census). Yang argues that Californian music as an entity has been largely ignored in scholarly discourse because of “its refusal to conform neatly within the narrative structure laid out in conventional, Atlantic-centric American music surveys. It comprises too many different subcultural groups jostling to have their voices heard, too many hybrid and crossover experiments that cannot be contained within the usual dichotomies of European/American, black/white, or cultivated/vernacular categories that structure most histories of American music” (ibid.: 2). Her central goal in the monograph is “to identify and make transparent the ways in which musical development and racial projects have been and continue to be closely entwined” (ibid.). Her results, however, are at times unsatisfying.

The primarily Asian American chapter of *California Polyphony*, “After *Sa-i-ku*: Korean American Hip-Hop since the Rodney King Uprising,” (ibid.: 118–36). summarizes the social and musical relationships between African Americans and Korean Americans in Los Angeles in the 1990s-2000s. Yang's discussion of Korean hip-hop does not make a convincing argument about the ways in which the music articulates Korean American identity, instead merely mentioning the

inclusion of some traditional Korean musical elements (ibid.: 127-128). The primarily archival approach limits this work; ethnographic research with artists or fans would have improved this analysis.

Similar problems trouble Yang's Latino-focused chapter, "From the Mission Myth to Chicano Nationalism: The Evolution of Mestizo Identities and Music" (ibid.: 98-117). She draws on George Lipsitz's argument that Chicano Angeleno music represents intertextuality and the juxtaposition of identities/realities in an effort to pose as a counter-hegemonic force, but she does little to build on his argument (ibid.: 116-17). Overall, Yang's monograph is valuable as an attempt to address complex interethnic dynamics, but her focus is too broad and the analysis at times too methodologically limited to produce compelling conclusions. This is something I have considered in my project as I evaluate the kinds of evidence necessary to make my own convincing arguments about multiethnic Chicago. My methodological argument in this dissertation is that focusing on a particular musical context—nonprofit youth music education—in a particular city, through fieldwork all in the same time period, allows for greater consistency across the data and thus enables more convincing examination of musical and social phenomena across ethnic groups.

US Latino Musics

Scholarship examining the music of Latinos in the United States serves as an interesting counterpoint to work on Asian Americans. "Latin(o) music" is simultaneously more and less of a viable concept than "Asian American music."² Latin rock and Latin pop have achieved a level of

2. In this section I follow Maria Elena Cepeda's spelling of Latin(o) when referring to the broad category at hand. This is meant to recognize that the categories of music being discussed (and often

commercial success in the US unmatched by any Asian or Asian American musicians. Figures like Carlos Santana, Shakira, Ricky Martin, and Enrique Iglesias are widely known and popular even among non-Latino English-speaking American audiences. Furthermore, “Latin music” is a much more broadly used term than “Asian American music,” institutionalized through organizations like the Latin Grammys. However, in most of these usages, “Latin(o) music” is a transnational category, encompassing Latin America, the United States, and sometimes Spain and Portugal as well. There is comparatively little attention to US Latino music as a panethnic US category. One of the confounding factors is the relative ease of travel between the US and Latin America.³ As a result, musical exchange moves much more quickly and expansively than between the US and Asia. The sorts of transnational musical artists studied by Grace Wang (2015) are much more common within Latino music for the same reason. As a result of all this, most of the scholarship on Latino music distinctive to the US focuses on particular genres rather than creating a panethnic category comparable to Joseph Lam’s “Asian American music” heuristic term. Even many studies examining

the people practicing them) most often refer to themselves as “Latino” and are most often referred to in the broader media/society as “Latin.” When referring to specific commercial genres like Latin pop or when referring simply to people who identity as Latino, I use the spelling without parentheses. On a broader note: these terms are in constant flux during the early twenty-first century as US residents with Latin American origins gain a political voice and new generations assert themselves. During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the preferred term to refer to US-based people of Latin American descent has variously (at different points, for different groups) been “Latino,” “Latin@,” or “Latinx.” The first term (the most widely used) is popular as a Spanish-language alternative to “Hispanic,” which many people perceive to be anglocentric and top-down bureaucratic in nature. The second term was a feminist attempt to include both men (Latinos) and women (Latinas) through the use of the @ symbol. This was briefly popular but has largely been supplanted by Latinx—the “x” being a variable symbolizing gender neutrality. Though the term has its critics, it tends to be widely used among young people and in the academy. “Latine” is also used by some young people as an alternative to Latinx.

3. Of course, this relative ease of travel has begun to decline with the increased militarization of the US-Mexican border in the past two decades, and it may decline further if the isolationist policies of the current US administration are expanded and kept in place.

the musical practices of Latinos firmly settled in the US tend to adopt frames of transnationalism and “the border” rather than focusing on Latino panethnicity in the US as a distinct phenomenon. This is in part a result of the disciplinary focuses and approaches of Latino studies in the US academic context.

In *Música Tejana*, Manuel Peña draws on ethnomusicology and ethnic studies in addition to history. While the bulk of the monograph focuses on three styles within música tejana (corrido, conjunto, and orquesta), Peña’s larger theoretical argument is about the nature of cultural production: “use-value and exchange-value are not simple antinomies but *dialectically* driven polarities in a complex, perpetual process of cultural *mediation*” (1999: 214).⁴ He uses this binary as a framing device to highlight the ways in which “Texas-Mexicans increasingly have succumbed to the pressures of ‘late capitalism’ and its decentering effects” (ibid.). Peña’s portrayal of Tejano as torn between communal and commercial economic models is a bit too rigid. It is reminiscent of the first two branches of Booth and Kuhn’s (1990) economic model of folk/popular/art music, in that Peña makes distinctions between genres based on both musical and financial attributes. However, rather than using these ideas as a heuristic guide, he shoehorns his conclusions about the nature of música tejana as a symbol of “tejanoness” into the model. Overall, his ethnographic work is insightful, and his argument about capital and cultural production in this musical community is a useful example of Marxist approaches to US Mexican American music if not a perfectly successful model.

4. In Peña’s book there is an important distinction between tejano and Tejano: lowercase, it refers to the Mexican American residents of Texas and their diverse assortment of music (música tejana), while capitalized it refers to the commercial music genre that grew in large part out of música tejana.

Christopher Washburne's *Sounding Salsa* is a more tightly focused work, detailing the New York City salsa scene primarily through close ethnographic description of the lives of working salsa musicians in the 1990s. His stated goal is to develop a nuanced understanding of cultural issues surrounding salsa by studying performances and rehearsals, the music itself, and discursive practices among the musicians. The primary triad of cultural identity in the case of salsa is the New York-Puerto Rico-Cuba connection. Washburne analyzes salsa's relationship to these three identities, though he also emphasizes the Colombian, Venezuelan, and Dominican voices in the mix, affirming that the panoply of cultural influences "imbues [salsa] with a wide range for interpretation and inscription, making it pliable to serve as ethnic code, nationalistic pride, and essence for a wide variety of peoples" (2008: 206). *Sounding Salsa* provides one possible answer to the question of why salsa is more often associated with the world music stage than the folk festival stage (despite being homegrown in New York City): the nature of Latin(o) music's rapid transnational spread. Despite the fact that salsa developed in New York City and many of the musicians profiled by Washburne are firmly rooted in the US, salsa spread quickly throughout Latin America, changed, developed, grew, and now has too many layers of meaning and influence to be claimed as an "American" creation.

American Studies

Departing from Peña and Washburne's ethnomusicological models, María Elena Cepeda's *Musical ImagiNation* draws on cultural studies and media studies to argue that "Colombian popular music provides a common space for imagining and enacting Colombian identity outside traditional national borders" (2010:13). Her analysis of "gender, ethnoracial identity, and transnational

migration” (ibid.) in the music and videos of artists like Shakira and Carlos Vives is interesting, though it is less relevant to ethnomusicological work than Peña’s or Washburne’s monographs due to Cepeda’s heavy reliance on media analysis. Perhaps more interesting for our purposes is Cepeda’s broader disciplinary argument, in which she carefully analyzes discursive flows in Ethnic, Area, and American studies. In Cepeda’s view, American studies is moving in the direction of transnational approaches to scholarship, a shift evident in the explicit transnational foundation to her monograph. However, she cautions that American studies scholars run the risk of reinscribing notions of American exceptionalism through their work if they pursue transnational theories and studies decontextualized from the long legacy of transnational scholarship in ethnic studies.

Transnationalism, Regionalism

Deborah R. Vargas’s article “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom: Selena and Tejano Music in the Making of Tejas” from *Latino/a Popular Culture* argues for Selena’s popular style of Tejano music as a place-making cultural project. “Tejas is both the discursive and geopolitical ‘place’ representative of Texas-Mexican cultural production,” she writes, “a site of ‘third space’ cultural production that emerged in conversation with the discourses of Anglo-Texas colonialism and Mexicano nationalism” (2002: 118). In this sense, Selena does not represent the narrative of “Latin American influence coming into the US,” but rather a project of building a musical concept of place, Tejas, through the musical influences already present in that region of the US. Vargas argues that “Selena’s music and racialized representation as an English-speaking brown woman from the United States introduced audiences in Latin America to the cultural, historical, and political context of Tejas, thus introducing a different racialization of ‘Mexicana’ or ‘Latina’” (ibid.: 120–21).

Not all readers are pleased with this line of argument. José E. Limón, in his essay “‘This Is Our Música, Guy!’: Tejanos and Ethno/Regional Musical Nationalism,” highlights arguments against this “ethno-nationalist” (his term) Mexican American Tejano movement. In emphasizing the role of the English-speaking (and largely UT-Austin educated) Tejano intelligentsia, Limón argues that their dominance of “Tejano music” and Tejano studies discourse is alienating to their Mexican neighbors and is “in some sense reproducing the racial and class dominance of the larger Anglo society against the most vulnerable sector in American society, the Mexican immigrant” (2011: 124). Limón therefore pushes for a shift in Tejano studies and Tejano music toward a “more fruitful and progressive relationship” (ibid.) with their Mexican neighbors.

Cathy Ragland’s “Communicating the Collective Imagination: The Sociospatial World of the Mexican Sonidero in Puebla, New York, and New Jersey” from *Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre* examines the deejay-driven sonidero among first- and second-generation Mexican Americans in the New York area. Ragland adopts a transnational framework for understanding the articulations of identity in the sonidero scene, even though many of its practitioners are settled in the US (2013: 121). The sonidero as practiced in the US is an outgrowth of both the Colombian *cumbia* scene and the Mexican adaptation thereof, one in which its practitioners, “having varying degrees of actual memories of Mexico, develop a new sense of personal and national history, both imagined and real, based upon Mexican and American myths, their own experiences, and those of relatives and friends” (ibid.: 134).

Vargas’s, Limón’s, and Ragland’s essays demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of transnational models, which capture the multiplicity of influences in musical idioms yet lock their discourses in modes of examination that focus on movement between nation state entities.

Rejecting the Nation as a Frame

In “Sonic Geographies and Anti-Border Musics: ‘We Didn’t Cross the Border, the Borders Crossed Us,” Roberto D. Hernández assesses the border concept articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa and the ensuing “Borderlands academic complex”: the “politically safe and institutionally supported adaptations of Anzaldúa’s border that, even if inadvertently, conceal power” (2012: 237).

Hernández argues that “Although the metaphor of the border has generated several insightful analyses, some applications of it instead obfuscate the workings of power and violence formative in the work of Anzaldúa” (ibid.).⁵ Hernández analyzes corridos and popular songs (in the context of the political rallying cry from the chapter’s title) to support his argument against framing “border” concepts through nation state contexts, imposing notions of immigration and state borders when the deeper issue is one of colonization:

To ground “We didn’t cross the borders, the borders crossed us!” in a narrative that only replaces one colonial nation (the United States) with another (México) or simply blends the two into a new hybrid and unproblematized aural border, as does the Borderlands academic complex, is to underestimate the slogan’s political trajectory and implications . . . [failing to] interrogate México’s own erasure of indigenous peoples within its juridical boundaries. (Ibid.: 251)

Hernández’s assessment is a vital counterpoint to the much more nation-state-focused analyses examined in previous sections.

In *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora*, Roberto Avant-Mier analyzes the unheralded history of Latino influence within American rock ‘n’ roll. The monograph is thorough and convincing, but the most valuable aspect of Avant-Mier’s work here is his treatment of concepts of nation and ethnicity. In a sense, Avant-Mier returns to Joseph Lam’s argument for

5. He particularly criticizes Joshua Kun’s work on “The Aural Border” for following this tendency.

heuristic categories. For Avant-Mier, his “‘diasporic view’ of Latino/a and Latin/o rock music is, admittedly, an essentializing theoretical formulation . . . a research heuristic through which one can demonstrate the issues, complexities, and nuances related to Latino/a identities” (2010: 200). For his purposes, this “flattening out of ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, sexuality, etc.” (ibid.) through use of heuristic terms like “Latino/a identity” allows him “to challenge the stubborn Black/White dichotomy that persists in so many academic studies, historical assessments, and mainstream constructions of ‘American’ nationalism, ‘American’ popular culture, and rock ‘n’ roll lore” (ibid.). In a broader sense, Avant-Mier’s title has a third meaning beyond the two more obvious ones inasmuch as the monograph itself is meant to disrupt the discursive concept of “the nation” as a category for grouping and analyzing people or musics.

I carefully observe which frameworks are most salient in the lives of my interlocutors and consider the ways in which those frameworks work to provide analytic meaning in contexts beyond the individual. In reading the sociological literature on panethnicity, particularly the work of Yen Le Espiritu (1992), G. Cristina Mora (2014), and Dina Okamoto (2014), it becomes evident that panethnic categories like “Latino” and “Asian American” can be just as contentious as nation-based ethnic categories. This may come as no surprise, but it bears mentioning. Ramón Guitiérrez describes the “exuberance of Latino cooperation” (2013: 32) in 1970s Chicago, as Puerto Ricans and Mexicans united in order to achieve shared political and economic goals. That *Latinidad* had evaporated by the 2000s, however, as antagonism replaced solidarity. This serves as a reminder against teleological narratives of increasing cooperation and commonality. Throughout the history of Chicago and the US, meaningful frameworks for community identity have shifted—sometimes nationality is salient, sometimes panethnicity is expedient, and often the most meaningful framework is something else entirely. This observation is meant to emphasize that ethnicity and

panethnicity are tools of analysis in this dissertation, not the objects of analysis themselves. The mobilization of ethnic heritage narratives or interethnic solidarity projects are useful in understanding how music education organizations come into existence and why people pursue the musical training that they do. In the end, however, I use that information to contextualize and clarify the musical and community processes that craft young people into civic subjects of Chicago and the United States.

People, Musics

This section has examined music scholarship approaches to ethnicity and panethnicity in the US so as to set a foundation for the reader as I approach these topics through my own fieldwork data. Following Deborah Wong's lead, I focus on people over categories—who is practicing what musical form, and why are they doing it? In my fifth chapter, I ultimately move toward a panethnic construction broader still than Latinx or Asian American. There I examine pan-immigrant solidarity as constructed through *p'ungmul* drumming between immigrant youth with origins in Latin America, Asia, and East Africa.

Part IV: Heritage, Tradition, Revival

These three concepts may be the most fraught within my dissertation. Omnipresent both within and without of the academy, heritage and tradition are treated as commonplace by those in the latter category and regarded with an exhausted skepticism by many of those in the former. Any

graduate student in a field that touches on sociocultural topics rapidly becomes familiar with the countless critiques of heritage and tradition is categories so unstable and mutable that they seem to approach uselessness. Revival, while perhaps a more stable concept, acquires some of the instability in its reliance on cultural objects and practices drawn from categories like heritage or tradition. The following section lays out my understanding of and approach to these concepts and argues for their usefulness in this analytical project.

Heritage

One challenge of examining heritage as an academic concept is that it is used by many disciplines to varied ends. Within my own home discipline of ethnomusicology, the most prominent theorization of the heritage concept comes from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's "Theorizing Heritage," adapted from her Seeger Lecture at the 1994 annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett proposes heritage as a valuable replacement for "folklore" as the dominant object of study for scholars examining the practices traditionally labeled as such. She charts the history of folklore as a term; long held in disrepute, academic folklorists attempted to valorize it during the mid-twentieth century in part by distinguishing themselves from "the popularizers, whose worst fault was the liberties they took with tradition and the uses to which they put it: very successful anthologies of folklore, commercial recordings, the folk song revival, folk festivals, careers as performers, and the like" (1995: 367). In the late twentieth century, as they sought ways to study contemporary society, she argues that folklorists continued to redefine the object and meaning of the term "folklore" rather than search for a new way of framing the discipline. Despite these efforts, she argues, the field failed to constitute "a truly contemporary subject" (ibid.: 369).

Heritage, she proposes, solves this problem in its ontological bridging of past and present: “Despite a discourse of conservation, preservation, restoration, reclamation, recovery, recreation, recuperation, revitalization, and regeneration,” she argues, “heritage produces something new in the present that has recourse to the past” (ibid.: 369–70). That is, heritage—unlike folklore—is inherently of the present. Central to her argument are the actors producing the engagement with the object at hand—in other words, the different actors implicated in folklorization vs. heritagization. In the case of the former, folklorists are first and foremost those who create folklore, in their identification and valorization of the objects in the label as such. Thus, “the discipline is deeply implicated in the historical unfolding and political economy of its subject” (ibid.: 369). This makes that subject less suitable for those seeking to study contemporaneity, since its very nature in the present has been constituted by the discipline attempting to study it. Heritage, by contrast, is produced to a greater extent outside the academy. In Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s understanding, the heritage industry itself “is a new mode of cultural production and it produces something new” (ibid.: 370). The heritage object, though identified with the past, is inherently of the present, for “if heritage as we know it from the industry were sustainable, it would not require protection. The process of protection, of ‘adding value,’ speaks in and to the present, even if it does so in terms of the past” (ibid.). It is thus conducive to the study of the contemporary moment, for it allows scholars to examine the people and processes protecting, enacting, and experiencing the heritage.

Beyond just folklore and ethnomusicology, heritage studies is a burgeoning field. Sørensen and Carman argue that heritage studies has developed as an explicit area of research in response to growing recognition of its societal influence, seen “in the strong links between identity formation and heritage, in the changing valorisation of the tangible as well as intangible heritage, and the increased links between heritage and the leisure society” (2009: 3). Though they emphasize both

the tangible and intangible, the former occupies a greater portion of the dominant heritage studies literature. Unlike the study of folklore, whose disciplinary roots focus on the explication of folklore objects and practices in and of themselves, heritage studies is premised on analyzing relationships with the past. David Harvey suggests that the study of heritage lies in understanding any particular person or group of people's relationship with the past. In laying out an agenda for studying "heritage pasts," he does not mean the historical precursors of present-day heritage practices, but rather the ways that people in the past constructed relationships with their own pasts. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Harvey argues, heritage studies was overly concerned with "present-centred cultural, leisure or tourism studies" (2001: 320). In laying out a more diverse scope for heritage scholars he suggests engagement with the past: "every society has had a relationship with its past, even those which have chosen to ignore it," and heritage scholars can apply their analytical skills to any era by studying "the meaning and nature of what people tell each other about their past; about what they forget, remember, memorialise and/or fake" (ibid.).

In this academic sense, then, studying heritage means studying processes and beliefs, practices and relations. For my project, heritage is less about the nuts and bolts of Korean *p'ungmul* drumming than about the reasons that youth organizers at Chicago's HANA Center use *p'ungmul* to build community among immigrant teenagers. It is less about the rhythms and harmonies of Mexican *son* than about what motivates Mexican Chicagoan parents to bring their children to Sones de México's *son*-based guitar classes.

Tradition

To what extent is tradition different from cultural heritage? Music scholar Alejandro Madrid

suggests that the two have conventionally been homologized (2008: 52). One can seek to draw distinctions, but in practice some of the differences come down to disciplinary pragmatics—for instance, heritage as a framework is more widespread in the UK and Australia than in the US, where tradition is a more dominant framework. Heritage generally has a narrower range of meanings, while tradition is particularly capacious.

Oft-cited in the humanities is the “invented tradition” concept popularized by historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983). Hobsbawm, Ranger, and their colleagues analyze cultural practices conventionally viewed as long-standing traditions but which in reality have relatively recent origins—for example, the Scottish highland tradition or various rituals of the British monarchy. This analysis of “invented tradition” focuses on those traditions whose practitioners claim ancient origins, not those traditions whose adherents acknowledge the recent provenance of their practices. These invented traditions, in Hobsbawm and Ranger’s analysis, are prevalent in nationalist contexts over the past two centuries, as they can be useful in constructing a sense of shared national identity. Hobsbawm and Ranger’s popularization of this concept has led to a sea change in the study of historical culture—speaking of her own training, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett noted that “as a folklorist, I was trained to study tradition. In the sixties in the United States, tradition was still a given. It was not yet invented” (1995: 367). This captures a crucial point—prior to the 1980s, the dominant thrust of scholarship on tradition was the substance of the tradition itself. What were its details, who were its most historically authentic practitioners, what was its repertoire, and so on? Since the 1980s, there has been an overall shift toward scholarship examining the social contexts and foundations of tradition. My dissertation is very much of the more recent school—less concerned with the particular practices of its subjects than their goals, philosophies, desires, and motivations for engaging with a musical tradition.

In music studies, this “invention of tradition” concept has received varied reception. Neil Rosenberg critiques the use of “invented tradition” to describe or analyze folk music revivals, as he argues that there is a greater deal of truth in folk revivalists’ claims to the historicity of their music (1993: 20). Philip Bohlman advises caution when studying folk music revival in too quickly applying critiques drawn from Hobsbawm and Ranger’s theory or Benedict Anderson’s (1983) often-paired notion of “imagined communities” (Bohlman 1988: 108–9). Both of these frameworks were developed predominantly with application to nationalist contexts, often with an emphasis on top-down decisions by those in government or media to promote a sense of shared national identity for their own purposes. Bohlman notes that the success of folk music revivals depends on the successful creation of a folk music canon—which depends in part on real connections to people and community contexts. Thus, one should not overstate the top-down nature of tradition within folk music revivals. This sort of assumed unidirectional influence misses the bottom-up influences that make revivals successful.

Beyond the folk revival context, music scholars have used the tradition concept to analyze music participants’ construction of self. Alejandro Madrid’s early-2000s study of *Nor-tec*—a dance genre transforming *norteña* with electronic dance music technology—examines notions of heritage and tradition in Latinx Chicago. In studying the heterogenous dancing styles of young people in a Chicago dance club, he argues that,

In order to negotiate identity niches, Latinos must engage the discourses of representation on *Latinidad* . . . and at the same time they must resolve the contradictions that arise when those discourses clash with larger discourses on US modernity, equality, independence, opportunity, and individuality. Furthermore, Latinos need to resolve issues of identity politics within their own communities and understand their own relations to their parents’ or grandparents’ heritage and tradition while dealing with mainstream pressures for assimilation. (2008: 183–84)

Madrid concludes in part here that this complex process of negotiation results in a wide range of

individual outcomes. More broadly, he suggests how scholars of music might examine contemporary practices in the context of tradition. Drawing on Hobsbawm and Ranger, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and architecture scholar Nazer AlSayyad, he argues that “a contemporary approach to tradition should take into account not the place or location claimed by any given tradition but rather the actual information it provides for the definition and refinement of cultural identities according to specific power struggles in the present” (ibid.: 52). This represents the predominant academic view, that tradition as it is discussed and practiced by regular people has less to do with empirical description of the past than interpretation of the present. In applying this understanding to present-day music traditions, Madrid argues for a historical analysis contextualized by present-day contestations of identity. As applied to his own case study, this means that “in order to respond to the questions at stake in Nor-tec’s modernist articulation of popular *norteña* musics, it is necessary to perform a genealogy of these traditions in accordance with the idea that traditions are the ‘foil for exploring the contested subjectivities involved in producing and/or occupying space’” (ibid.: 53). The text he quotes is drawn from AlSayyad, who goes on to suggest that “the tangible products of tradition are those processes by which identities are defined and refined” (AlSayyad 2004: 6). In a piece of auto-ethnography, he considers his own formative experiences with *norteña* while growing up in northeastern Mexico in the 1970s. The style was his grandfather’s favorite, and Madrid quickly learned that it functioned as a marker of regional identity. His family’s engagement with the music served in part to “culturally separate [them] from Mexicans from the center of the country” (Madrid 2008: 53), while for his grandfather’s generation “*norteña* music was clearly a marker of northeastern identity, one that should not be confused with that represented by northwestern *banda* music” (ibid.). His own generation, “eager to find its own personality, rebelled against the music of their elders in two ways: upper-middle-class youngsters

shifted toward rock and preferred to listen to American radio stations, while lower- and lower-middle-class youths tended to embrace one of the most representative Latin American popular music trends at the end of the twentieth century, *onda grupera*” (ibid.). Through this example, Madrid provides a sketch of how music scholars might consider tradition as a practice that people use in different ways to navigate contested subjectivities or define and refine identities.

Ultimately, Madrid arrives at a usage of tradition not dissimilar from the approach to “heritage” suggested by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett or Harvey. In my project, I understand both heritage and tradition in these practice-based frames. Lacking a clear academic distinction between the two, I default to the distinction in common usage—with tradition as the broader category, and heritage being a subset of tradition with greater connotation of generational familial connection.

Revival

Revival grows logically from the supposed existence of heritage and tradition. History shows the inexorable change of societal and cultural practices over time. While there may be underlying patterns and tendencies, the majority of specific practices that any particular person experiences will tend to be different from the practices that most other people throughout history experienced. With historical documentation, however, humans have developed the ability to revive practices that are no longer prevalent in their own time. This, at least, is the premise of cultural revivals. Music revivals exist across geographic, cultural, class, and stylistic borders—for example, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* (Bithell and Hill 2014), a fairly comprehensive volume on the topic, examines revivals of several dozen music traditions including Renaissance and Baroque Western

European art music, American folk music, Korean drumming, Transylvanian string bands, Indian *kathak* dance, Iranian classical music, South African jazz, and more.

A revival is the collectivized implementation of ideas like those analyzed by AlSayyed and Madrid. Rather than simply practicing a tradition with some sort of embedded claims regarding its historical provenance, a revival moves from practice to evangelism. Crucially, the revival's members seek to expand the practice. This often plays out in similar ways across revivals. The tradition can no longer live in the memory of its current practitioners, and to expand with any kind of speed it is best to not stick with oral transmission. Thus, the practitioners must record and disseminate the tradition—whether through sheet music, lyrics sheets, audio recordings, or videos. These artifacts now become commodities to be consumed by new members of the tradition. As the popularity of some examples rise and others fall, a functional canon forms. In different revivals (or even within the same revival) this may be variably guided by top-down curation—as with O'Neill's *Music of Ireland* (1903)—or by bottom-up taste-based selections of the revival's members—as with the popular intermingling of historical source material and contemporary folk-rock works by Stan Rogers in the US sea music revival. In the former case, the particular guiding beliefs of the curators may profoundly shape the revival. US folk song collectors John and Alan Lomax are critiqued by some scholars who suggest that they “were less interested in defining an existing canon than in shaping one of their own” (Filene 1991: 619). In the latter case, when the performance tastes of enthusiasts on the ground come to shape the revival's canon, the source material and practices may move further away from historical source material, toward an emphasis on the musical elements that, returning to AlSayyed and Madrid, help to define and refine the participants' senses of cultural identity (AlSayyed 2004: 6) “according to specific power struggles in the present” (Madrid 2008: 52). This is a theme that will recur through the case studies in the present dissertation—that the

practice of tradition, whether or not in an overtly revival-focused context, often becomes a means to explore present-day issues of identity and power.

Heritage Construction and Placemaking in Chicago

In the first chapter's analysis of media representations of immigrant youth music-making, the dominant notion of heritage is constructed with relation to a distant homeland. One of my arguments in this dissertation is that immigrant heritage, for young people in present-day Chicago, is constructed through a multiplicity of relational frames. The discursively omnipresent frame of personal ancestral heritage is central but often not dominant in young people's construction of personal identity. Of my three field sites, Sones de México Ensemble adopts the most traditional lens, emphasizing educational content that connects children specifically to information about Mexico that adds texture and nuance to their vague understandings of this distant country. At the Chicago Mariachi Project, Mexico is farther in the background. Mariachi is framed in part with regard to prominent Mexican musicians, but the group tends to avoid an essentialized notion of authenticity via direct homeland connections. Indeed, when the group brings in expert practitioners to lead master classes, they are often US-based musicians from places like San Antonio. In this sense, heritage looks not just to Mexico but to the US Southwest as a sort of mariachi mecca. This mecca, however, is not raised up as a required model for authenticity—rather, it is a source of information, mentoring, and inspiration, while Chicago stands in its own right as a site of mariachi performance capable of setting its own path. HANA Center moves furthest afield in terms of heritage construction, as the majority of youth participants have no Korean ancestry. Instead, “immigrant heritage” becomes its own macro frame. *P'ungmul* drumming becomes a means for

young immigrants and children of immigrants from Tanzania, Bangladesh, Mexico, or Thailand to connect with each other through a shared immigrant identity. That identity is built in part on a shared experience of immigration or family immigration, but it is strengthened primarily through a shared sense of Chicagoan identity. Indeed, when the young drummers chose their issue of focus in 2019, they selected the Chicago gang database. Returning to AlSayyad's notion that traditions are the "foil for exploring the contested subjectivities involved in producing and/or occupying space" (2004: 6), *p'unngmul*—as contextualized for them by their teachers at HANA Center—is a vehicle for exploring their subjectivities as young men, women, and nonbinary people; as immigrants or children of immigrants; as people of color. Furthermore, each of these subjectivities is explored in the context of producing and occupying space as teenagers in Chicago. In this way, the triad of heritage, tradition, and revival become useful analytical tools for exploring these very contemporary phenomena. Though *p'unngmul* is not part of these non-Korean students' heritage in the conventional sense, it is transformed through various means into a tradition with great personal meaning for many of them.

Part V: Nonprofit Organizations

One of my goals in this dissertation is to build an analytical understanding of nonprofit organizations' role in urban music education. There are several dimensions to such a goal; in this section I seek to break it down into constituent questions. These include: How has the institutional location of youth music learning changed over time? What are the economic, political, social, and

cultural forces shaping nonprofit organizations (as opposed to governmental or for-profit organizations)? My dissertation is focused on immigrants, so I aim to explain the specific dimensions of immigrant-founded and led nonprofits; however, in order to do this I first seek to understand the broader contours of this sector. Some of these data may seem atypically quantitative for a piece of ethnomusicological research; it is meant to contextualize my ethnographic case studies so that the reader can understand their size, scope, leadership, structure, and financial situations vis-à-vis other nonprofit arts organizations in Chicago. This should also help the reader to understand the broader decision-making context for the leaders of the organizations I study.

Why Focus on Out-of-School, Community-Based Contexts?

Recent scholarship on the educational experiences of immigrants and children of immigrants in the US generally focuses on public education contexts. Language acquisition has been a primary research topic (Valdés 2001; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004), while other core research areas include the experiences of the children of immigration in public schools (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011) and the application of Critical Race Theory analysis to the (im)migrant educational experience (Yosso 2005). Scholars in sociology have also sought to explain the broader social experiences of the children of immigrants and the role of education in their lives (Kasinitz et al. 2009).

For the most part, the education-focused sections of these studies focus on formal school-based education. Often there is also a discussion of the informal learning that takes place at home or in young people's organic social environment—for example, among their friends. However, much education literature suggests that community-based learning programs can also have a substantial

effect on youth development (National Research Council 2002; Eccles et al. 2003; Fergus and Zimmerman 2005; Smetana et al. 2006). This suggests that the education field's understanding of immigrant and children-of-immigrant youth development would be enhanced through concerted study of such community-based learning environments.

Music Education and “Arts Education” as a Sector in Chicago

The best comprehensive analysis of recent Chicago music education history is Meredith Aska McBride's *City with Lifted Head Singing: The Practice and Politics of Music Education in Chicago*. McBride focuses primarily on municipal cultural policy and the music teacher labor market through historical and ethnographic case studies of several organizations. McBride compared the public, private, and nonprofit music-learning sectors. As of her 2015 study, she calculated that the Chicago Public Schools “provide far greater access to the arts than do many large urban school districts, but pursuing a rigorous and comprehensive program of musical study remains out of reach for most students” (2015: 26). The private music education market primarily consists of individual lessons with independent teachers, with a median rate of \$45–\$60 per hour (ibid.: 28). Such lessons provide access for affluent and middle-class families, though they remain out of reach for many in the city. The nonprofit music education sector contains a great deal of diversity. There are basically two models for reaching students: operating in an institutional location to which students go for lessons, or partnering with CPS schools to offer in-school learning opportunities.⁶ Some nonprofit

6. McBride conceives of the taxonomy of music education opportunities differently for the purposes of her study, which is focused in large part on the rise of the “teaching artist” as a labor category for music teachers.

organizations operate primarily within one or the other of those two models, while others exist along a spectrum between the two. For example, Lyric Opera’s “Lyric Unlimited” program exists only to offer in-school opera residency programs, while the Old Town School of Folk Music exists primarily as a brick-and-mortar location to which students go for lessons. On the spectrum in between, the Merit School of Music has a physical hub where most students go for lessons, but their “Music in Communities” program partners with several dozen local schools, as McBride notes, to “increase access to their offerings along race and class lines” (ibid.: 26). In some cases, as at Merit, the school partnership/outreach programs serve as an entry point to the organization’s other programs; on their website, they state that, “the *Merit Music in Communities* program serves as the first step for students in Merit’s comprehensive continuum of instruction. Motivated students are encouraged to continue their studies at Merit’s Joy Faith Knapp Music Center” (Merit School of Music 2019). Merit offers need-based tuition support and other efforts to remove barriers to access for low-income students.

Just as these nonprofit organizations exist on a spectrum between in-school and out-of-school services, there is a broad range of scale, from tiny programs that primarily consist of one or two administrators and a small cohort of teaching artists, to massive organizations like the Old Town School or Merit, with multi-million-dollar budgets. Data on this sector have been notoriously lacking, and the past ten years have seen an increase in efforts to measure it. Chicago has benefited from one of the country’s most comprehensive approaches to data and research in this sector. In 2011, a coalition of philanthropic arts education funders, nonprofit leaders, and CPS officials collaborated to form Ingenuity (formerly called Ingenuity, Inc.), a nonprofit organization

responsible for coordinating citywide initiatives in the arts education sector.⁷ For a comprehensive history of developments leading to this point, see McBride (2015: 99–105). Ingenuity’s work officially falls into four areas: Data & Research, Partnerships & Professional Learning (this entails facilitating partnerships between nonprofits and CPS schools as well as offering professional development to the nonprofit arts education sector), Advocacy (with a focus on municipal, state, and national arts education policy), and managing the Creative Schools Fund (a grant-making partnership between Ingenuity, the Chicago Mayor’s Office, and CPS that offers seed funding for partnerships between nonprofits and schools). Ingenuity’s public data portal, “artlook,” tracks program offerings at schools and “arts partners”—which could be any kind of organization, but in practice are primarily nonprofit arts or arts education-focused organizations (Ingenuity 2020).⁸ Ingenuity also tracks a wide range of other data, including the connections (residencies, field trips, etc.) between specific schools and arts partners, though these data are not publicly available. Since Ingenuity is the primary centralized source of data, I use it as a jumping-off point.

The Economics of Arts Education in Chicago

It is challenging to find comprehensive data on arts education as a sector—this should be no surprise, given the institutionally fragmented structure described in the preceding section. In this section I survey the data about money and arts education in Chicago, describing its contents, organization, and limitations, and I describe the economic facts of this sector to the extent I am able

7. In the interest of full disclosure, in the past I have worked for Ingenuity as a researcher on two arts education research projects, and from 2018–2020 I served on their Data & Research advisory panel.

8. These data are self-reported, and Ingenuity offers a range of incentives to both schools and arts partners to ensure the comprehensive and accurate reporting of data.

based on that data. Here I look primarily to three sources of data: Ingenuity’s annual “State of the Arts in the Chicago Public Schools” report, the now-defunct Sustain Arts Initiative, and the National Center for Charitable Statistics.

Ingenuity

Ingenuity’s annual report “State of the Arts in the Chicago Public Schools” offers a comprehensive snapshot of arts education teaching and funding, primarily in CPS though also to a lesser extent among nonprofit “arts partners.” Published each year since 2012–13, the report also offers a short longitudinal view. For the 2017–18 school year (the most recent year for which data were available at the time of writing), there were 1,463 full-time equivalent (FTE) arts teachers in the Chicago Public School system (Ingenuity 2018: 24). Though this represented a slight decrease from 2016–17, the overall pattern since 2012–13 has been a steady increase, from 1163.4 FTEs—an increase of 25.8% in just five years. This is matched by a commensurate increase in funding, from \$113.1 million in 2012–13 to \$147.9 million in 2017–18—an increase of 30.8% (*ibid.*: 49). The vast majority of this CPS arts education funding goes to teacher salaries. The second, much smaller category of funding goes to schools’ dedicated arts budgets. The final, tiny slice funds the district office for the Department of Arts Education. Publicly available financial data are not disaggregated by artistic discipline. In order to approximate the state of music, one can assume that the proportion of the district budget that goes to music activities is roughly equivalent to the proportion of FTE arts teachers who teach music. There is likely not a 1:1 correlation here, but there is no reason to believe it is not relatively close. Of the 1,463 FTE arts teachers in 2017–18, 34% taught music; thus we can assume that the district spent roughly \$50.3 million on music learning (*ibid.*: 26).

Ingenuity also surveys major arts education funders, asking them to self-report their donations to arts education activities. For the 2017–18 school year, these funders reported giving \$8.2 million to community arts partners (nonprofit organizations). Assorted other sources of funding, including the City’s “Year of Creative Youth” initiative, the Creative Schools Fund, and other donations totaled around \$3.3 million (Ingenuity 2018: 50). Such data, limited as they are to thirteen self-reporting foundations surveyed by Ingenuity, nonetheless offers insight into city-level funding of the nonprofit arts education sector. Local foundations support to nonprofit arts education makes up roughly 5% (\$8.2 million out of \$159.4 million) of the citywide funding to all forms of arts education (including CPS) that Ingenuity could identify.

Sustain Arts Initiative

From 2012–2019, the Sustain Arts Initiative gathered a wide range of arts funding and participation data from fifteen different datasets, integrating them into an online public data portal through which one could examine various aspects of Chicago’s arts landscape.⁹ Unfortunately, the analytical capacities of the online platform are limited and there are no options to export the data to conduct one’s own analysis. I have reached out in an attempt to gain more substantive access to this data set, but I have not yet been successful. The data publicly available online offers some limited insight into this sector—with a caveat that the data are for all arts activity, not just education.

First are data on the range of arts organizations. Sustain Arts found that over the roughly fourteen years covered by their dataset (2001–2015), there were 445 music organizations in Chicago. Of these, 203 were for-profit and 242 were nonprofit. Of the nonprofits, 132 had budgets

9. All the data described in this section are available online, though this site will become defunct at the end of 2020: <http://chicagoland.sustainarts.org/#/Chicago>

under \$800 thousand, fourteen had budgets between \$800 thousand and \$2 million, and eleven had budgets above \$2 million (the remainder did not have budget information available). The largest entities funding these nonprofit organizations during the period were the MacArthur Foundation, Illinois Arts Council Agency, Chicago Community Trust, Grainger Foundation, Polk Brothers Foundation, Pritzker Foundation, Alphawood Foundation, Zell Family Foundation, Harris Family Foundation, and Joyce Foundation. All ten of these organizations are based in either Chicago or in Illinois outside the city. Most focus their grantmaking on Chicago or a slightly broader region (e.g., Illinois, or the Great Lakes in the case of Joyce), with MacArthur being the only nationally oriented organization (though it retains a focus on the priorities of its home city).

National Center for Charitable Statistics

The National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) is a clearinghouse for data on nonprofit organizations in the United States. It is part of the Urban Institute, a DC-based think tank established by Lyndon Johnson to study urban social service issues and evaluate policy initiatives. NCCS functionally works as a translator between the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the broad ecosystem of stakeholders interested in the nonprofit sector—including researchers, foundation staff, and nonprofit workers themselves. NCCS collates all of the IRS financial data on the nonprofit sector and makes these data free to download as .csv files in a variety of formats. They also publish their own research. Readers may be familiar with the better-known Guidestar platform for nonprofit data. While Guidestar offers user-friendly access to detailed information about individual nonprofit organizations (including their IRS 990 forms), NCCS's data files offer an easier look into macro questions about the sector as a whole.

While offering highly comprehensive financial data, the NCCS data files have several limitations. A primary challenge for a project like my dissertation, which seeks to examine a particular subset of the nonprofit sector, is the question of categorization. The IRS uses a nonprofit categorization system developed by the NCCS called the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE). At first glance, the NTEE system would be helpful for asking questions about particular subsections of the nonprofit world. Organizations are divided into broad areas by letter and sub-areas by number. For example, NTEE code “A” signifies “Arts, Culture & Humanities,” while subcodes include “Alliances & Advocacy (A01),” “Folk Arts (A24),” and “Performing Arts Centers (A61).” This system is limited, however, by the multiplicity of functions that each organization serves. Most organizations have one NTEE code, for whatever they have communicated to the IRS is their primary purpose. Such commissioning can lead to challenges when one attempts to sort by NTEE codes. Of the three organizations that serve as ethnographic case studies in this project, only Sonos de México Ensemble is classified as an “arts education” organization under this system. HANA Center is listed as “Ethnic/Immigrant Services (P84)” (under the broad category of “P: Human Services”). This makes sense, as their youth *p’ungmul* drumming programs, while important, do not constitute their primary activity. The Chicago Mariachi Project (CMP) is categorized as “Youth Development Programs (O50)” (under “O: Youth Development”). This does provide insight into the organizations self-concept—despite the fact that their activities entirely revolve around youth music learning, when filing with the IRS they decided that “youth development” better described their mission than “arts education” or “music” or “bands & ensembles” (all of which are options under the NTEE). Unfortunately, this presents a challenge when attempting a sector-level study—if one relies on the IRS’s NTEE codes, CMP and HANA would be left out of analysis of “Arts Education” or even “Arts, Culture & Humanities” more

broadly. This is still a challenge with organizations that have multiple official classifications, as they do not necessarily transfer between data sources. In the Guidestar database, Sones de México has three classifications: Arts, Cultural Organizations—Multipurpose (A20), Cultural, Ethnic Awareness (A23), and Arts Education/Schools (A25). In NCCS’s data, however, it is classified as Folk Arts (A24). I have not yet been able to find an explanation for this disparity.

Since its inception, researchers of the nonprofit sector have worked to measure and ensure the accurate application of this taxonomy (Grønbjerg 1994). To the present day, however, the taxonomy continues to present challenges for researchers, including but not limited to those I have described. Nonprofit policy researchers Fyall, Moore, and Gugerty recently published the results of an experiment to better classify nonprofit organizations (2018). By using an automated dictionary method to analyze mission statements of nearly 10,000 nonprofit organizations in Washington State, they found that the NTEE code for “Housing & Shelter”-focused nonprofits missed nearly 50% of organizations that seem to do Housing & Shelter work—organizations that their mission statement keyword search captured. This approach is highly promising for future studies of nonprofit arts education, but it is beyond the scope of this project. Thus, to the extent that I can provide a sector-level snapshot here, I offer it with the strong caveat that it should be taken as a rough outline of the sector’s economy rather than an authoritative quantitative assessment. All the figures summarized here come with this caveat.

The following analysis is based on the NCCS IRS Business Master File from 2018.¹⁰ This is based on IRS tax records for every legally registered nonprofit organization in the country; the full file contains information for over one million organizations.¹¹ In the city of Chicago, there are 4,780

10. The file can be downloaded at <https://nccs-data.urban.org/data.php?ds=bmf>.

11. These data are processed by NCCS in an attempt to make them more accurate. For a full

nonprofit organizations with financial information recorded in this data set¹². Of these, 598 are classified as “Arts, Culture & Humanities” organizations. In terms of the distribution of money within the sector, it is quite top-heavy. Figure 2.7 illustrates this imbalance—around 85% of the organizations have revenue below \$1 million, while revenue skyrockets at the top of the distribution. The top five organizations by revenue are no surprise: in order, the Field Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Science and Industry, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and WTTW (Chicago’s PBS Station). Just these top five constitute 43% of the revenue in this sector—ranging from \$100,508,012 for the Field Museum to \$53,989,205 for WTTW. Total revenue for the “Arts, Culture & Humanities” nonprofit sector is \$961,413,463.

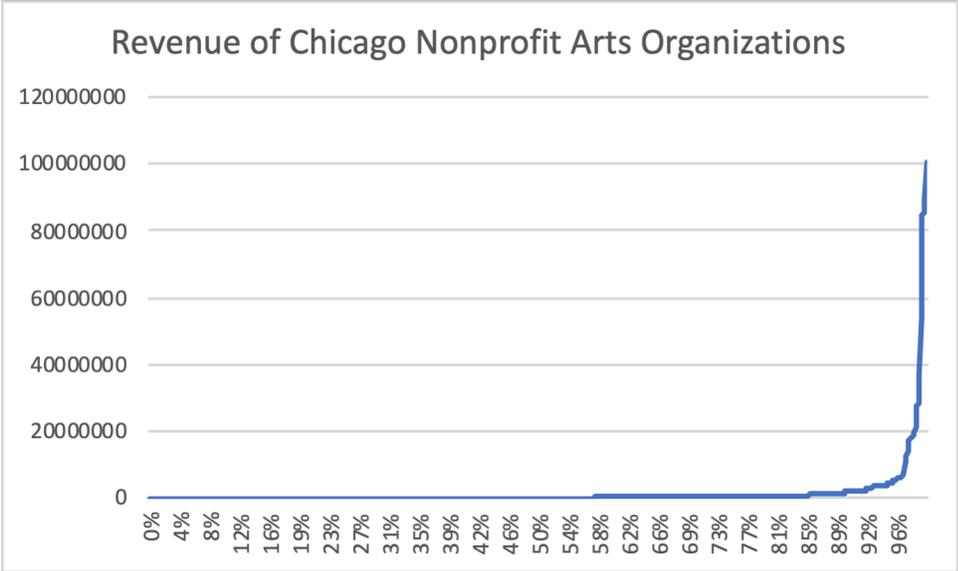


Figure 2.7. Revenue of Chicago Nonprofit Arts Organizations in 2018. The y-axis indicates revenue; each of the 598 Chicago Nonprofit Arts Organizations is represented, sorted by revenue. The x-axis indicates percentile distribution of the organizations. Image by author.

description of how these data are generated, see “Guide to Using NCCS Data,” <https://nccs-data.urban.org/NCCS-data-guide.pdf>.

12. There are some organizations that are legally registered but functionally inactive. Some are still present in the data set, so I filtered out all organizations with blank financial data.

Cutting off the top 20% of this distribution allows one to see more detail. Figure 2.8 shows this. Roughly 42% of organizations have revenue below \$100,000, 59% are below \$200,000, and the curve continues accelerating from there.

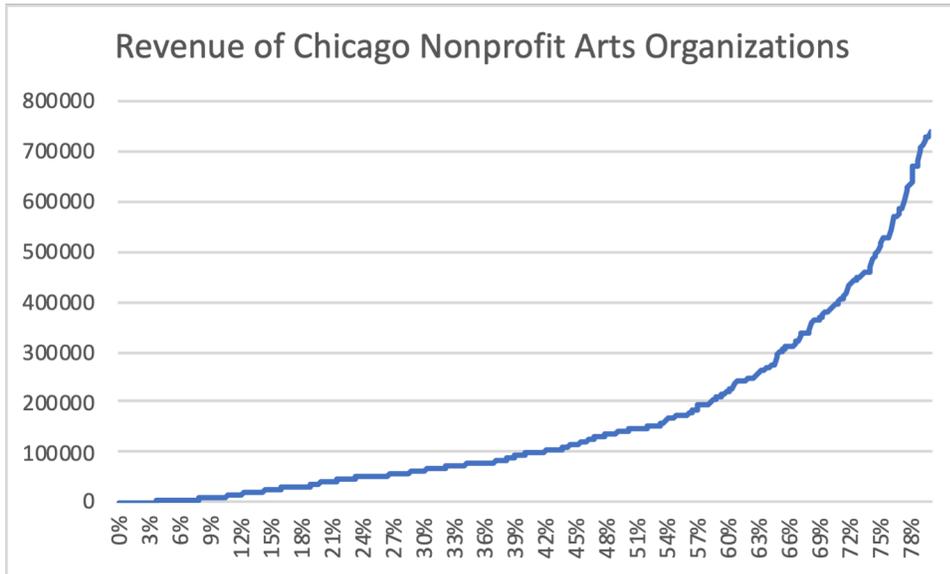


Figure 2.8. Revenue of Chicago Nonprofit Arts Organizations in 2018, cut off at 80th percentile. The same chart as Figure 2.7 with the top 20% of the distribution removed (i.e., showing the 2018 revenue for the bottom 80% of arts nonprofit organizations). Image by author.

The largest organization (by revenue) with a primarily educational focus is the Old Town School of Folk Music (revenue of \$12,757,811). The Old Town School is classified as a “Performing Arts School.” There are nine such organizations in Chicago that teach music.¹³ Figure 2.9 illustrates that the sector-wide revenue distribution phenomenon is replicated in this sub-sector. The Old Town School and Merit School of Music dominate the “performing arts school” category. Each of the remaining organizations (with revenue below \$2 million) has a more specialized mission—including the Lyric Opera’s professional artist-training school, the People’s Music School (a social-justice oriented free program), Suzuki-Orff (now known as Chicago Center for Music Education,

13. For this analysis, I excluded several organizations—some seemed to be misclassified (e.g., a recording studio), while two dealt with art forms other than music (dance and circus performance).

which focuses on early childhood and music therapy), and Intonation Music Workshop (focused on popular music). Rounding out the list are three tiny programs (revenue below \$120,000): Musical Arts Institute (focused on cultivating artistic excellence in Black youth on the South Side), a school for piano technicians, and a leadership program for church musicians.

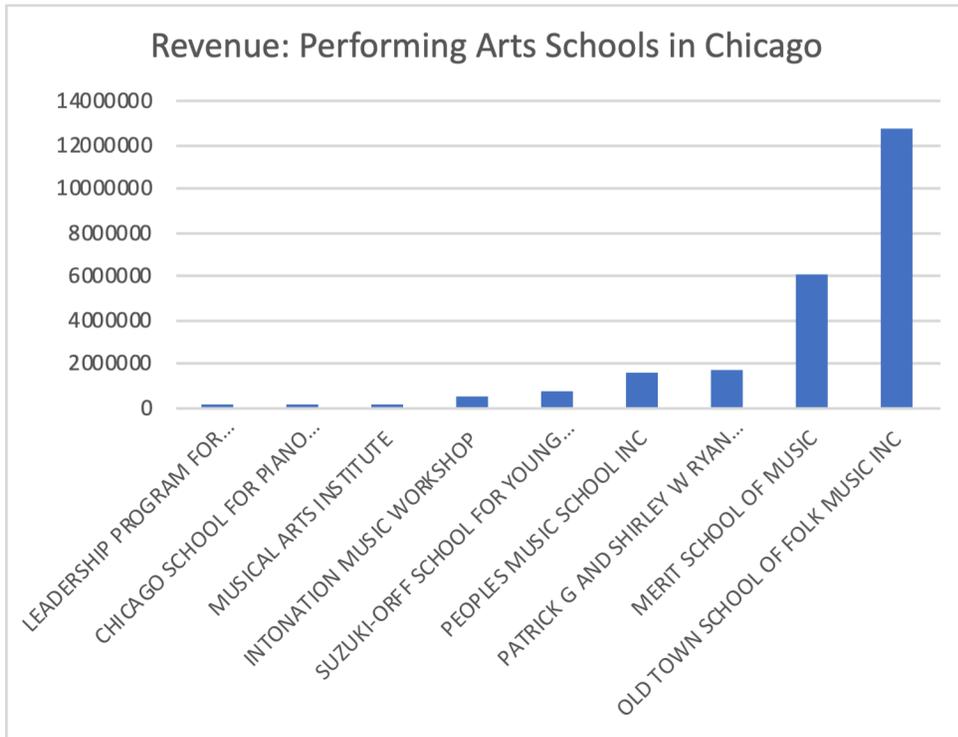


Figure 2.9. Revenue of Performing Arts Schools in Chicago. Image by author.

The revenue figures offer insight into the distribution of money in the sector and the concentration of financial resources into a small cohort of very large organizations. The example of performing arts schools illustrates just one type of organization. As I have established, there is no efficient means at this time to sort out arts education organizations in so far as to provide a clear macro-level picture of the sector. In lieu of this, I shift to a set of case studies illustrating a variety of organizational models for nonprofit arts education and explain the attendant issues of funding

and leadership. Thus far I have only discussed revenue; shifting to specific examples will also allow us to examine other aspects of the financial picture.

Money, Leadership, and Making Music Education Happen

In order to contextualize the work of the organizations I examine in the project, the reader should understand the relationship between money and other factors such as organizational mission and leadership. Questions of scale and funding have a back-and-forth relationship with mission and leadership—if an organization’s decision-makers desires a certain level of scale and funding to achieve their mission, they need leadership with expertise to secure that funding. Conversely, if high levels of funding are not required to achieve their mission, leadership may have more flexibility in their choices regarding organizational structure and program design. Here I examine several case studies to illustrate this point. The financial and leadership information is drawn primarily from Guidestar and the organizations’ IRS 990 forms.

Large Education-Focused Organizations

First, I examine the Old Town School of Folk Music. There is quite a lot of information available—in part because it is a large, old, famous organization. It is primarily focused on music education, so it provides a useful example of how such an organization handles money and organizational leadership. Over the past five years, its revenue has been relatively steady between \$11.8 and \$12.8 million, and its expenses have varied between \$10.7 and \$12.5 million. Most revenue, ranging from 70–79%, comes from program services (primarily lesson fees and concert tickets, along with a few

other minor sources). Another 4–5% comes from memberships, 1% from government grants, and 10–20% from “other grants and contributions.” In 2017, roughly 5% of those other grants and contributions came from fundraising, while another 10% came from “all other contributions, gifts, grants”—unfortunately, this category is not broken down on the IRS 990 form, so one cannot see its precise composition. It is likely, though, that a decent portion came from foundation grants for particular programs or initiatives (e.g., the arts partnership programs described here). A final 4% comes from sale of inventory in the school’s store. Around 68% of expenses are for personnel, while the remainder goes to paying concert performers (10%), advertising and promotion (4%), concert production (2%) and miscellaneous categories including office expenses, IT, royalties, occupancy, and depreciation of assets.

Because the Old Town School is a professionalized organization (in that it operates at a scale where it can hire financial professionals to do accounting and file taxes), it includes fairly comprehensive details in its IRS 990 form. For example, it includes detailed participation numbers: during 2017 (the most recent 990 form available), the school had 15,000 students who made 25,300 registrations for group classes, 6,600 for private lessons, 2,300 for workshops, and 200 for summer camps. At the school’s 165 concerts there were 45,500 attendees, in addition to 30,600 attendees at the annual Square Roots festival. They also offer detailed numbers for their arts partnership activity: 8,600 students attended field trip events, 9,700 attended world music and “global dance party” concerts, and 33,100 attended events booked through the school’s artist engagement/referral program. The school also received Creative Schools Fund support to offer artist-in-residence programs in the Lawndale and Englewood neighborhoods of Chicago, attended by 4,400 students. Further insight can be gleaned from their financial aid documentation: in 2017, 490 students received a total of slightly less than \$200,000 in financial aid—this equates to roughly

3% of students. In other words, the vast majority of students are paying full price for music lessons—not including student participation in arts partnership programming, which is more often grant-funded.

Given this large-scale and complex financial picture, how does the Old Town School structure leadership? Their Executive Director from 2007–2019 was James “Bau” Graves. During Graves’s tenure, the school seemed to weather the 2007–2009 financial recession, registering a \$2 million surplus in 2011 and completing construction of a new class and performance center in 2012. A recent investigative piece by Mark Guarino (2019) has called into question this positive narrative, arguing that poor decisions by both Graves and the school’s Board of Directors have led to a present-day fiscal crisis as enrollments are falling and the school is moving to sell one of its historic properties. Guarino questions whether Graves had the requisite expertise to manage such a large and complex organization as the Old Town School. As the Old Town School is not a focus of this dissertation, I do not detail this critique at length here—however, this case aptly raises the question of leadership in the world of arts education. Most organizations do not grow to the scale where they might require or even be able to attract experienced executive leadership from outside the arts education sector. Given this, how do various types of organizations determine leadership, and how do those leaders manage small- and medium-sized organizations so as to stably maintain their education programs over time? The following examples seek to answer this question.

Small Education-Focused Organizations

The Old Town School exists at what I referred to as a professionalized scale—they can hire professional office staff for functions like business management, accounting, program registration, and so on. I would argue that there are two other categories for arts education-focused

organizations. It is easiest conceptually to move here to the opposite end of the spectrum. The “small” organization is familiar to anyone who has interacted with the nonprofit arts world as a student, parent, or teaching artist—run by a small cohort of staff, each person operates in multiple domains—as teacher, administrator, fundraiser, promoter, recruiter, and more. Roughly 42% of arts organizations in Chicago have revenue below \$100,000 and thus cannot afford more than a few staff in addition to their program budget. If they achieve longevity at this size, it is because their leaders have created a reliable funding and organizational model to keep their programs affordable.

To illustrate this type of organization, I examine the finances and leadership of the Chicago Mariachi Project, one of my ethnographic case studies in this dissertation. Between 2016 and 2018, CMP’s revenue ranged from roughly \$36,000 to \$54,000. There are two primary sources of revenue (in addition to general donations): parents pay a yearly fee of \$250 for their child’s participation in the Saturday Mariachi Academy, and local businesses and other institutions make donations to the group when CMP’s students perform at their events. This is effective from both financial and pedagogical standpoints: CMP’s advanced performing group has a great deal of experience thanks to their frequent public engagements, and the resultant donations are able to keep costs for parents lower, enabling a socioeconomically diverse student membership. CMP further keeps costs low thanks to an entirely volunteer leadership team—neither Obregón nor Alba receive any payment for their administrative work. The Mariachi Academy teachers, on the other hand, do receive payment. Obregón, Alba, and the teachers distribute leadership responsibilities. Obregón serves as the guiding energy behind the group’s activities—finding new opportunities and setting the aesthetic course in terms of the group’s vision of mariachi as an art form. Alba comes in with an education administrator’s attention to details including accounting, managing parent relationships, keeping forms organized, and so on. The teachers focus on the day-to-day musical instruction. The group’s

leadership is unchanged since its founding, though there has been some turnover in the third teacher position.

Medium Education-Focused Organizations

Between “small” and “large” are mid-size organizations with a slightly different organizational model, sharing characteristics of both of the previous categories. Operating with mid-sized budgets, they typically depend on some mix of grants from large foundations and reliable donations or program fees. Both of these revenue sources rely on a higher level of professional expertise—at grant writing, fundraising, program management, and the like—than required in small organizations. These “medium” organizations, however, do not reach the scale where they can afford large devoted professional staffs. Thus, in order to operate sustainably over a period of time, they require leadership that is adept at both the artistic/educational side of the work as well as experienced in grant writing, fundraising, and program management.

Sones de México Ensemble is clear example of this model, having operated for over twenty years with revenue and expenses in the vicinity of \$150,000–\$250,000, reliably receiving mid-sized grants (in the tens of thousands of dollars) from entities like the Chicago Community Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Joyce Foundation. The majority of these revenue and expenses are not associated with their music school. In 2017, for example, the group’s revenue of roughly \$254,000 came from government grants (\$44,000), contributions (\$86,000), and program services (\$124,000)—some of which included lesson fees from parents, but most of which included payments for performances. The majority of expenses go to paying the musicians and buying equipment. Unlike in the case of CMP, this is Juan Días’s full-time job, so he receives a salary.

Education Programs Within Large Presenting Organizations

Many arts education programs operate as constituent components of larger presenting organizations. Some of these are highly professionalized, as in the case of Lyric Opera's Ryan Opera Center, which "prepares emerging singers and apprentice coaches for careers in opera by providing unique, comprehensive training" (Lyric Opera 2019). My focus here is on programs that aim to reach large numbers of students and bring new practitioners into the artistic discipline rather than programs like the Ryan Center that focus on specialized learning for advanced students. Many programs in the former category operate using an arts partnership model. Examples of this include Lyric Opera's Lyric Unlimited, the Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Auditorium Theatre's in-school education programs. Though embedded within sometimes massive organizations, these education programs themselves may be quite small. Lyric Unlimited's school partnership program, for example, has just two administrative staff and a small cohort of teaching artists. There are no such programs that I'm aware of that focus on immigrant musical traditions—logically, as there are no large-budget immigrant presenting organizations in Chicago. It seems relevant, nonetheless, to mention this type of program as it drives a fair amount of nonprofit music education in the city.

Education Programs Within Non-Arts Organizations

The final type of program of interest here is the arts education program that exists within an organization primarily dedicated to non-arts activity. This type of program is hard to track, for reasons described in the previous sections. A common example of this model is a community center or cultural center that offers a wide variety of programming, arts education among it. As such, these entities are often categorized as social service or ethnic/neighborhood community development

organizations. When funding their arts education programs, any model could prevail: lesson fees, grant funding, or allocating budget from the organization's other sources of revenue. From a leadership standpoint, staffing a full-time arts education expert is unlikely to fit within the broader organization's budget, so decisions about the program are likely to be made by a staff member who is not an expert teacher or practitioner of the art form and instead brings in contract staff to teach the arts program.

HANA Center's HANAsori *p'ungmul* program, one of the ethnographic examples studied in this dissertation, follows this type of model. HANA was formed in 2017 through the merging of two predecessor organizations the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center (KRCC) and Korean American Community Services (KACS). Its current leader, Inhe Choi, was chosen in 2017 in large part due to her diverse range of political experiences in Chicago and her vision for executing the merger of a social service organization with a cultural center. HANA's revenue of roughly \$2.7 million comes from a mix of government grants, private donations, and program services. The organization is large, and youth organizing constitutes a relatively minor portion of the budget. The HANAsori *p'ungmul* drumming program is almost entirely supported through grant funding from After School Matters (ASM), which pays for student stipends, drumming teacher payments, and snacks. HANA owns a large collection of instruments (the group has had them for so long that no one I spoke with could remember how they were initially purchased), so there are seldom costs for new instruments. The primary expense HANA pays for is the salary of youth organizers, who devote some of their time to mentoring students in the *p'ungmul* programs. The existence of umbrella funding organizations like ASM enable this sort of program to operate within a large non-arts organization.

Chapter 3

Sones, Revival, and Parenting in Mexican Chicago

Juan Díes (JD): You know, I wasn't interested in Mexican music when I first arrived in the United States. As an immigrant, I took this for granted. I didn't need to go have someone teach me my own culture, which I had fresh. I wanted to learn reggae and jazz and blues and all the new stuff that was available to me here. So I think this [music school] might be aimed not to the new arrival but to someone who begins to have that need, to not lose the connection. . . . In Mexico, they might not be interested in this. If I taught this type of thing back in Mexico, it may not be as popular. 'Cause their culture is not under threat, it's everywhere. (Interview with author, November 20, 2017)

The past decade has seen growing scholarly interest in US-based branches of the international *son jarocho* revival. This folkloric music and dance form, originating in Mexico and practiced in the US primarily by first- and second-generation Mexican Americans, has been analyzed through lenses of revival (Madrid 2013), resistance (Hernández 2014), community-building (Williamson 2018), university-community partnerships (Daria 2018), and political organizing (Hernández-León 2019) in cities and towns across the US. This scholarship primarily focuses on the transmission of *son jarocho* through *talleres* (workshops) and *fandangos* (celebrations), two common community-based contexts for performing and learning this music.

This chapter examines the US-based revival of Mexican *son* traditions through a new lens by examining a very different music-learning context. In 2016, Sones de México, a Chicago-based music ensemble, opened a “Mexican Music School” with two locations in the city’s neighborhoods of Pilsen and Rogers Park. Sones de México Ensemble was founded as a performance ensemble in 1994 with a mission is to promote Mexican folk music—particularly, to keep alive the many regional traditions of Mexican *son* (of which *son jarocho* is but one). The group’s first performance

took place that year in a Pilsen art gallery, at the opening of an exhibit commemorating the death of Emiliano Zapata. Since then the group has performed constantly throughout the city and country, released six albums (earning nominations for a Grammy and a Latin Grammy), and pursued an extensive public education program. As such, the group has been for several decades one of the prime proponents of the *son* tradition in the US. The founding of their own music school nonetheless marks a shift for the group—and potentially a shift in the broader educational landscape for immigrant folkloric and traditional musics.

The Sones de México Mexican Music School, aimed at children ages nine to fourteen and their parents, seeks to accomplish the group’s goals through a combination of technical instrumental instruction, regional repertoire, and explicit historical, cultural, and linguistic lessons. Over their first four years of operation, the classes have proved popular, drawing families from across Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. In this chapter I argue that Sones de México’s nature as a nonprofit organization helps one to understand the “third space” it is carving in the US Mexican traditional music scene. Neither an outgrowth of a traditional public school, nor a community space driven by politically engaged young adults, it is serving a population of parents—many of them not particularly engaged in politics—who want activities for their children that serve multiple educational goals. Understanding these parents, their goals, and their choices regarding their children’s out-of-school activities, helps to explain how second-generation Mexican Americans are choosing to engage with music and notions of tradition.

Readers familiar with Chicago may already be thinking of analogies to the Old Town School of Folk Music and the mid-twentieth-century American folk music revival. There are many connections, to be sure, between Sones de México and the Old Town School, which I lay out in this chapter. I also make the case, however, that Sones de México and its school is of a different moment

and a different phenomenon. As the descendants of the post-1965 immigration boom become an increasing sector of the population, and as artistic and cultural programming is slow to respond, nonprofit organizations like Sones de México has in many cases risen to meet the needs of this population. In this case study, examining Sones de México's school within the broader context of a US-based *son* revival, readers will see both echoes of and divergences from the well-known model of twentieth-century US folk music revival.

I have already provided a brief introduction to Sones de México in the first chapter of this dissertation. In the present chapter I expand on the group's history and influence on music in Chicago, and I describe the growth, reception, and influence of the group's youth education programs.

Part I: The *Son Jarocho* Revival the United States

Son (plural: *sones*) encompasses a range of genres in Mexico. Broadly, it refers to mestizo rural or peasant music with Spanish, West African, and Indigenous influences—as distinguished from colonial art music, traditional Indigenous forms, and national genres of folk (e.g., *rancheras*, *corridos*, *canción mexicana*) or pop (e.g., *tropical*, *boleros*, *baladas*) (Juan Díes, interview with author, March 5, 2020). Mexican *son* is distinct from the more famous Cuban *son*, from which salsa music derives. Mexican *sones* are sub-categorized by geographic region. The most prominent genre in the US is *son jarocho*, which originates in southern Veracruz, a southeastern state that stretches along the Gulf of Mexico. Distinctive instruments include the *arpa jarocho*, a thirty-two- to thirty-six-stringed harp and the *jarana*, a percussively strummed chordophone with eight strings in five courses. *Son jarocho*

is often played at *fandangos*, musical gatherings where people play, sing, and dance the percussive *zapateado* on *tarimas*, resonant wooden platforms. Other prominent *son* subgenres include *son huasteco* and *son jalisciense*. *Son huasteco* is from the Huasteca region, the historical lands of the Huastec Indigenous people. This includes northern Veracruz as well as parts of the states of Tamaulipas, Puebla, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro, and Guanajuato. *Son huasteco* tends to be distinguished by elaborate, lively violin parts and vocal falsetto. *Son jalisciense*, named for the western state of Jalisco, is generally seen as the precursor or foundation of contemporary *mariachi* music. As *son jalisciense* ensembles—consisting of violin, guitar, bass *guitarrón*, and *vihuela*—began to include brass (trumpets) and expand their repertoire to include *rancheras* (love ballads), *corridos* (narrative story-focused ballads), polka, and boleros, they transformed into the urban popular *mariachi* ensemble (Koetting 1977: 163).

Son Jarocho has experienced a transnational revival between Mexico and the US since the late twentieth century. Despite this growing revival, it received relatively little academic attention until the past ten years. The first major English-language work on the genre was Daniel Sheehy's landmark dissertation, "The Son Jarocho: The History, Style, and Repertory of a Changing Mexican Musical Tradition." Though the majority of this work is devoted to cataloguing the musical characteristics and repertoire of the genre, Sheehy's last chapter documents the "greying out" of *son jarocho* in Veracruz from the 1930s to the 1970s, as driven by socioeconomic changes in the state including urbanization, the rise of radio and the recording industry, and tourism-driven performance practices (Sheehy 1979: 280–94). Sheehy noted the standardization of the genre—a phenomenon typical to many folk music traditions in the mid-twentieth century: "The commercialization of folk music through the record industry established a market for *música jarocho* [jarocho music] and further supported the professional existence of the *músico jarocho* [jarocho

musician] and the commercial viability of the *son*. The electronic media, spreading the sights and sounds of the *son jarocho*, though in an altered, stylized form, to the farthest corners of the nation, ensured a place for the *son* in the popular conception of national identity” (ibid.: 293). Sheehy predicted that as “the last generation familiar with the traditions of the *fandango* passes on,” the traditional practices and repertoire would fade, “following which the tradition may stabilize and look even more toward the professional urban musicians as models” (ibid.: 294). This prediction would prove prescient.

There was little scholarship on *son jarocho* throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This was an active time period for the *jarocho* revival, however, and there has been an explosion in *son jarocho* scholarship over the past decade, including at least seven doctoral dissertations or master’s theses covering topics including social and spatiotemporal changes in the genre (Bearn Esteva 2011); immigrant and diasporic performance (Balcomb 2012); festivals in Jarocho, Mexico (Gonzalez-Paraiso 2014); social movements, transformation, and reinterpretation of the genre across Mexico and the US (Hernández 2014); mobility and circulation across Mexico and the US (Nieto 2015); transcendence and *son jarocho* in the San Francisco Bay Area (Sacolick 2016); and revival, reinvention, and community building in New York City (Williamson 2018). Alongside these major works there has been a growing handful of journal articles on the topic.

Recent scholarship has tended to focus on mobility, circulation, genre transformation, and questions of individual and group subjectivity. Much of this scholarship has emerged through the authors’ own involvement in *son jarocho* revival activity, and consequently much of the fieldwork research has taken place among communities of young adults in Mexico and the US. This is valuable and important scholarship, but I argue in this chapter that it has missed a crucial site of revival activity among Mexican American parents and young children, as exemplified by *Sones de México*’s

Mexican Music School. This setting perhaps appears less dynamic from a political standpoint; rather than activist-oriented young adults looking to reclaim cultural identity in the US city, the activity at a youth guitar school might seem more mundane.¹ I argue here, however, that the shift of urban US *son* activity into the sphere of less politically engaged young families signals its move toward wider societal adoption. The parents whom I profile in the following sections of this chapter have a wide range of backgrounds and motivations—Sones de México’s ability to serve these diverse parental motivations and keep many families coming back for session after session speaks to the capacity for this nonprofit school-based model to bring the *son* revival beyond the young adult activist communities in which it has thus far flourished.

Part II: Sones de México: Performance and Education

JD: There are many local cultures in Mexico that our group happens to represent. This is not typical of a group to do that. Mostly these groups are rooted in their own particular traditions and they play only that. We have chosen to be kind of a smorgasbord of Mexican—like a pan-Mexican folk music. A big challenge, because we try to keep them separate, not mix and match thoughtlessly. So yeah, we take that message out there. Mexico is very diverse, and we present ourselves not as the experts but as students. We are still mining this treasure trove of incredible musical wealth that will have something to offer us for eternity. And we keep digging in there because we’ve chosen such a large field. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

1. This is not to say that there are not activist-oriented young adults reclaiming *son jarocho* in Chicago. The most prominent are the Jarochicanos, a group of young Chicagoans who have been organizing *fandangos* and *talleres* in Pilsen for some years. They are briefly profiled in Chapter 1 of Alejandro Madrid’s *Music in Mexico* (2013:11–36). They were still active as of 2020.

Musician, Ethnomusicologist, Educator, Administrator

Juan Díes has become one of the central figures not just of this chapter but of the dissertation as a whole. This is reflective of his position at the intersection of so many phenomena of concern in this dissertation, as a long-time Chicagoan, immigrant musician, performer, educator, ethnomusicologist, and nonprofit administrator. My conversations with him over the five years that this project gestated and developed helped to shape my understanding of and approach to many topics. As such, it may be helpful for the reader to understand his own path. One focus of this dissertation is understanding the formation and choices of immigrant music education organizations. Juan has been the visionary force guiding Sones de México's education programs, and I believe that examining his life path through a variety of institutions can help to explain the choices he has made in shaping his own organization. As a methodological note, I quote Juan at length in this section in part to foreground his intellectual contributions to my dissertation.

Juan grew up in San Luis Potosí, Mexico and came to the US in 1982 at age eighteen. He was musical from an early age, with eclectic tastes:

JD: I grew up playing popular songs on the guitar, then picking up stuff from records, all kinds of—you know, anything that a teenager would listen to, from Mexican folk music to rock and ballads, samba, bossa nova, whatever—jazz, anything that was taking off. I wasn't really considering this as a career, I was just a big avid fan of playing guitar. And it stayed to this day, I've always had a musical activity on the side. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

His second lifelong interest has been people, culture, and society. Our conversations about music and education digressed often into social theory, ranging from Durkheim's functionalism to contemporary immigration theory. As an undergraduate at Earlham College in east central Indiana, Juan initially focused on anthropology:

JD: When I was studying anthropology as an undergrad student, invariably I was doing projects with music, then I learned what ethnomusicology was, and I thought it was great, that it would combine both of my interests. It kind of folded the musical part into my field of interest. And I got a music degree too, I got a second major in music, so I studied part-writing and composition and all that stuff. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

He went on to earn a Master's degree in Ethnomusicology and Folklore at Indiana University, studying with Ronald Smith, Dorothy Lee, John McDowell, Henry Glassie, and Ruth Stone. Though he came for the ethnomusicology, the program's dual focus on folklore began to shape his interests:

JD: The Folklore part was kind of an accident. I was recruited by ethnomusicologists (Anthony Seeger) and brought to Indiana University for that. And when I arrived I discovered that I had to go through the folklore institute. And folklore was a new thing to me. Especially—I found there was a lot of English majors in the room, a lot of people interested in mythology and oral literature. So that was really foreign to me. With English being my second language, I felt a little bit out of my territory with those people who were excelling in the language arts. . . . So yeah, that's how I came into folklore. I had to take the core courses. And in retrospect, I'm glad. I was happy to have that perspective from the folklore, rather than anthropology or musicology. It was a slightly different perspective that emphasizes the individual artist and the small community, rather than a sociological or anthropological approach. So more rooted in humanities. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

This education not only equipped him with an extensive knowledge of the US folk music revival and figures like John and Alan Lomax, it also helped guide his focus to an emphasis on individual artists and communities, as he notes in the penultimate sentence above. In 1993, as Juan was finishing his Master's degree at Indiana University, he applied for a newly-created job at the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago. During the 1980s, the Old Town School had hired a new executive director, Jim Hirsch to overhaul the institution. One of his goals was to reconceive of "folk music" as it was framed for the school's activities. They had seen financial struggles since their initial success in the 1960s, and he saw a need to market folk music to different audiences in Chicago's changing population. The school started an annual festival of Latin music, opened a children's division (under the leadership of Michael Miles, Director of Education), and overall

endeavored to reach new audiences—both for performances and for classes. However, “He figured they didn’t have the expertise to talk to all these different ethnic audiences. They could organize a successful festival of Latin music once a year, it would draw the people, but then they wouldn’t see them for the rest of the year. So they needed someone on staff who could see to it that these audiences would be involved year-round” (Juan Díes, interview with author, May 5, 2015). Juan applied for this position, competing against marketing professionals, but as he put it, “I convinced them that it’s easier for me to learn the basics of marketing than for a marketing person to learn the basics of ethnomusicology” (Interview with author, May 5, 2015).

Juan’s job allowed him to cultivate a wide range of skills, from booking and promoting concert series, to creating programs and classes, to recruiting teachers. As the school taught to convert Latino concert attendees to students, they ran into challenges of curriculum development:

JD: We had to take that popular toddlers class that they had (Wiggleworms) and then come up with songs from the Hispanic folklore that could be taught to the children, you know? And we couldn’t find teachers who already knew how to play those things, we found Hispanic musicians and trained them in those songs and then we would set them loose on teaching the children. So it took a while to get those things off the ground. So I did teach, in a way, I taught some of the teachers. (Interview with author, May 5, 2015)

The job presented further dynamic challenges for Juan to solve. He sought to diversify the concert programming and class repertoire beyond the Mexican majority so as to reach audiences of other Latin American descent: “So we say, okay, let’s present a Guatemalan artist, we’ll take out an ad in that little [Guatemalan community] paper, maybe they were only reaching like 5,000 people, but they would respond” (ibid.). He was able to extend his influence throughout the school, looking at the effort to diversify the institution as a holistic project—even down to details like making sure that the school’s voicemail had a Spanish language option. As the school grew, however, he found that it became more compartmentalized and he was pushed to focus on his

concert series, with less opportunity to work across departments. He chose to leave the job in December 2005 so as to focus his full efforts on Sones de México.

Juan had cofounded Sones de México shortly after his arrival in Chicago and had kept up an active performance career during his time at the Old Town School. While Juan provided much of the organizational drive behind the ensemble, the music direction came from his cofounder Victor Pichardo, who arrived in Chicago around the same time as Juan.

JD: [Victor] had the knowledge, direct knowledge of this style of music, *son*. So when I met him, I was fascinated by it. By the music that he knew. I mean, I was familiar with it from records and from being part of the culture, but I never knew the techniques or the skills to play it. So, I think we all learned a lot from him, from what he brought to the table. And my contribution to the group was more—I guess on the curatorial end. From my experience in ethnomusicology, bringing it to bear with certain cultural dynamics, creating educational programs. And also I had some business experience with being an arts administrator [at the Old Town School], putting it together, incorporating, and bookkeeping and all that stuff. (Ibid.)

This partnership continued to the present, with an interruption from 2014–2018 when Victor returned to Mexico for four years and Juan took on the majority of both administrative and music direction duties for the group. The ensemble has typically consisted of six members, who have shifted over time. Each musician is a multi-instrumentalist, playing over eighty instruments between them—ranging from guitar, violin, and harp to traditional Mexican folkloric instruments like the *quijada*, or donkey jawbone. From 2006 to 2016, Juan’s primary job—in addition to actually performing—was administrating Sones de México’s performances, recording production, and education programs. In 2016 this expanded to include the Mexican Music School.

This survey of Juan’s personal and professional path is meant to emphasize the interplay between a person’s interests and how they are shaped by institutions. His initial love of music was supplemented by an interest in social theory fostered by the liberal arts college that he attended. These combined to guide him toward ethnomusicology. When this led him to Indiana University,

the institution pushed him to supplement his interest in ethnomusicology with a folkloric analytic framework. This training was parlayed into a job at Chicago's largest institution of folk music.

While he had not set out to be primarily an educator, working in a school of music guided his focus more and more toward the education of children in musical and cultural traditions. To be sure, such a narrative drastically simplifies Juan's decades-long life story, eliding many details and moments of transformation. In boiling it down so far, I mean to emphasize Juan's core essence as a leader constantly balancing identities—musician, ethnomusicologist, educator, administrator. The following section examines how education has been embedded in Sones de México's performance work from the beginning, before moving on to discuss the Mexican Music School initiative in greater detail.

Educating Audiences

Sones de México's mission has always included an educational component. In a 2015 conversation, Juan explained the rationale for the dual focus, since their founding, on performance and education.

JD: Yeah, well the education part was a very logical development because we immediately, as soon as we formed the group, we got calls from teachers and schools. There's a very large Mexican population in Chicago, most of them children, and the teachers were very interested in bringing resources to their schools that were relevant to their students that would keep them in touch with their parents' and grandparents' culture. So yeah, we got calls immediately. Plus, I was working in an educational institution, the Old Town School of Folk Music, and Victor [Pichardo] was working for Urban Gateways, which was also sort of a music education outlet for schools. So we were kind of in the crossroads of a lot of educational—and that's about the time when we decided that it was best for us to incorporate as a nonprofit organization with an emphasis on education and performance. And eventually we developed recording as well, you know, music production. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

There are several elements of note in Juan’s initial answer. First, he immediately emphasizes school partnerships. Recent scholarship (McBride 2015: 26–27) has examined the rise of arts partnerships in Chicago since the 1980s. This phenomenon has seen a proliferation of community-based arts organizations whose model to some degree depends on periodic short-term performances, workshops, and residencies in Chicago Public Schools. The second element of interest is that Juan and Victor (the cofounders and leaders of Sones de México) were both working for major arts education institutions concurrent with their early career as Sones de México Ensemble. The Old Town School and Urban Gateways are two of the largest nonprofit arts organizations in the city; they would have provided Juan and Victor with a model for nonprofit arts education in Chicago. The third element of note is the framing of students’ need for Mexican folkloric music as a resource for “keep[ing] them in touch with their parents’ and grandparents’ culture” (ibid.). The second chapter of this dissertation examined some of the differences between the “multicultural” music education movement and the “culturally relevant” or “culturally responsive” music education movement. Briefly, the former movement was oriented toward exposing students (implicitly framed as white, middle-class children) to “musics of the world,” while the latter was a countervailing movement intended to challenge dominant music curricula by focusing on musics of relevance to student populations predominantly made up of working-class children of color. The activities Juan describes tend to be aligned with the latter—collaborating with teachers who are seeking culturally relevant art forms for their students to learn. Sones de México also does programs for people not of Mexican descent, however.

JM: So the education part has kind of been there from the start.

JD: From the very beginning, right. And I think it works very well, because part of the cultural mission of preserving this music and fostering greater appreciation of it has to do with developing the knowledge necessary to appreciate it. So it’s intrinsically educational.

When we perform, in order to dispel certain stereotypes that may exist about Mexican music, we may come out and we'll be wearing sombreros and traditional outfits. In a sense, if you just walked out looking like that, you would be reinforcing possibly some stereotypes that people already have. But we contextualize the stuff we do. With a little introduction, without turning into a lecture, but we'll point out that maybe "Yes, we are wearing sombreros, but these particular sombreros are from this part of Mexico, and did you know there are many kinds of sombreros in Mexico that would identify where you come from" for instance. So one of the big overarching lessons, messages that we take out is that Mexico is a diverse country. That Mexican folk music is not one but many. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

This is one area where Juan's identities other than "musician" come into play. While many performers seek to focus on "their own particular traditions," Sones de México seeks constantly to expand their repertoire and do justice to regional styles that are not necessarily part of the personal or familial history of any members of the group. Though Juan did not articulate this dynamic in academic terms, it resonates with early methodological literature in ethnomusicology on the dynamics of insiders and outsiders to a tradition. Non-Mexican audience members see Sones de México as insiders, performing "their" traditional music. Juan is aware that in many respects they are in fact outsiders—not the experts but the students, "mining this incredible trove of musical wealth." The approach he describes also resonates in many ways with ethnomusicological discourses around the ethics of representation—he emphasizes the group's self-representation to audiences and the ways in which they seek to embed lessons into their concerts that will teach lessons musical, cultural, social, historical, and geographic in nature. In these ways, his academic training has equipped him with an understanding of sociocultural nuance that enables him ethically and compellingly to teach audiences without, as he says, "turning into a lecture." These educational goals extend to audience members of Mexican descent as well:

JD: Our audiences are very mixed. I think a lot of people, Mexicans included, are sometimes not familiar with all these regional styles. I mean, certainly to the depth that we are familiar with them. So many people learn, whether they are Mexicans themselves or not, always get a lot of new information from our presentations. Last night we gave a show to a group of

students and parents out in Berwyn. And this was aimed at maybe children, elementary-school level, and their parents. Many of their parents were Mexican. And as we were presenting these songs to the children, we were talking about this Afro-Mexican tradition, and you could see some parents who were kind of paying attention, possibly learning that there was such a thing as Afro-Mexican music. They may not have been exposed. Like I said, there's regional cultures, and the fact that someone is from Mexico doesn't mean that they have a thorough knowledge of the entire diversity of cultures in Mexico. So they may be from Zacatecas and all of a sudden be presented with something from Guerrero that's entirely new to them. (Ibid.)

This awareness is not, of course, something unique to people with academic training. Many people are aware of the differences between regional and national cultural practices. The point here is that Juan's academic training and his professional experience presenting performers from many different cultural traditions at Old Town School concerts has made him unusually adept at this task. Not only does he understand cultural nuance, he has an encyclopedic knowledge that enables him to articulate these points in clear, accessible language to audiences—whether at a performance or in a music classroom. For example, this is how he summarizes the tension between national and regional culture in Mexico—as well as the difference between understandings of cultural meaning among Mexicans in Mexico compared to those in the United States:

JD: There is a national culture in Mexico, popular music that you will hear anywhere. You go to Mexico, there is standard mariachi or *ranchero* repertoire that you hear pretty much anywhere. Or stuff you hear on the radio. But once you start digging into local culture and local festivals, patron saint holidays, once you dig into that you come into a different layer of culture. . . . So the emphasis on—you asked earlier about the immigrant aspect, and education. I think it takes a special, like an additional layer of cultural preservation that is not present in Mexico as much. I think immigrants—you know, as immigrants we have to deal with a balancing act of two cultures—from assimilating the general culture where we live and interact with people from other cultures, and our identity, that's rooted in our birth culture, or the culture of our parents and grandparents. To not lose ties with that heritage. So with that dynamic, you see many parents, for instance, who form folkloric dance companies in the churches, without any special or elaborate training, they find the resources to sew costumes and find recordings and put on productions, and they get the children involved. Precisely out of the need to preserve the culture. . . . And in Mexico, perhaps that emphasis on folk culture, whoever participates in that, they come more from a nationalistic emphasis, or a civic pride, or maybe local identities. Preserving their local culture at a state fair, for instance, you come in from your village and you want to show that this is how we

do things over here. But here it's almost like a defense of this culture that's in some ways under threat of being assimilated. (Ibid.)

The key element here is contrast: one's "culture" is determined in large part through the frame of comparison one is trying to make. In Mexico, a person might identify with the standard mariachi or ranchero repertoire if she conceives of herself as a national subject—someone who identifies with Mexico as a nation-state. At the hypothetical state fair, a musician may seek to highlight the musical subtleties that exist even between musical practitioners of the same style in different parts of a state. For the Mexican immigrant in the United States, the largest contrast is with those who have no Mexican ancestry. For those who immigrated when they were old enough to remember significant experiences from Mexico—or for those with parents who have those memories and are invested in passing them on—one might be able to continue particular regional practices. For those who came as young children, or for second-generation children whose parents did not pass down specific practices, the "musical tradition" option tends to be the standard mariachi or ranchero repertoire that has been constructed as national heritage (Jáquez 2003; Clark 2005; Mulholland 2007; Henriques 2011). With the exception of *son jarocho*, Mexican *son* has not been nationalized to the same extent and consequentially is not as accessible for those immigrants who are seeking to reconnect with or discover a musical tradition that is culturally "theirs." In a subsequent conversation, Juan went on to add that his thinking here was influenced by the intellectual approach of folklore, which "sheds light on how these dynamics of preserving traditions and identities vs. assimilating play out on an individual level without the need to discuss 'culture'" in an abstract sense (Juan Díes, interview with author, March 5, 2020). Thus, people within even small communities navigate a wide area of identity frames, bringing multiple types of diversity to the group.

Juan has put great thought into his own path to *sones*, since he did not grow up playing them but rather learned most of these styles as an adult:

JD: In my case, with Sones de México, I've reflected on my motivations for, you know, why am I playing this, instead of playing in a jazz band, or a reggae band, or something else? Why did I gravitate to this in particular? And some of it was, I was angered, or upset by people's ignorance about Mexican culture, in a way. Or reacting to certain stereotypes that people had. People would think of Mexico and what would pop in their minds would be tacos, margaritas, beach parties, you know, and my wish for them to—since I grew up there, to say “Well yeah, those are fun things, I like margaritas, Corona beers, why not? I like tacos, but there is so much more.” (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

This frustration came not just from the fact that people were ignorant of Mexican culture or stereotyped it as just being about alcohol, food, and partying. A further aspect of Juan's frustration came from his perception that many of these simplistic stereotypes also limit people's appreciation for immigrants' knowledge, capabilities, and complexities. He spoke of meeting immigrants who were “under-appreciated,” forced to work menial jobs despite substantial knowledge and skills due to the language barrier. One man was a computer technician in Guatemala but could only find work as a janitor in the US; of him, Juan said, “the way I saw him treated sometimes would make me feel like it was very unjust, in a sense. And in a way, my emphasis on education was my own fight or struggle to rectify that situation, to improve the life and the image of Mexicans in the greater culture” (ibid.). He sees a further result of this phenomenon in many immigrants' low level of civic involvement—both in terms of political participation and in terms of engaging with civic structures like applying for grants. One musical angle through which Juan pursues this goal is the emphasis on stylistic diversity and heterogeneity of Mexican *sones*. Another angle is an emphasis on the complexity of the music:

JD: Sones de México's not aimed only at Mexicans who want to preserve their culture, it's also aimed at non-Mexicans, that they may see and appreciate the wealth of Mexican music. Especially this rural music that we play that many times is not even appreciated in Mexico. You see these poor farmers playing music on instruments that are not very high quality,

they're people who may not have attended a lot of school years, but the quality and the complexity of this music, once you start trying to learn it and—I mean, there's all kinds of people in these communities. There are bad players and good players, but the good ones are really good, and very sophisticated. And the compositions are very elaborate, I would say comparable to art music. So as we explore this, we want to share that amazement and that appreciation for that complexity with other people. (Ibid.)

This is an area where Juan's academic training comes in handy—he has Bachelor's Degree in music, for which he studied part-writing, theory, and composition in the Western classical tradition. This equips him with the knowledge and tools to make the kinds of comparisons he describes; contextualizing ideas of musical complexity for his audiences and challenging preconceptions about the simplicity of folk music.² This attitude toward the complexity—and flexibility—of *sones* has led the group to collaborate with classical musicians like Chicago Symphony Orchestra trumpet player John Hagstrom and his brass quintet, who joined the group to record a *son jarocho* rendition of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, Third Movement in G major (arranged by Victor Pichardo) and a baroqueified rendition of the traditional *son istmeño* song “La Llorona” (arranged by Ricardo Lorenz) for Sones de México's album *Esta Tierra Es Tuya*.

In summary, Sones de México has long included educational components in its mission—one of the reasons that the group is registered as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. These educational components, including school-based workshops and residencies as well as concert/lectures to Mexican and non-Mexican audiences alike, have been guided by the members of the group's vision and experiences and Juan's curatorial execution. His frustration with the depiction of Mexican immigrants in US society and his desire to convey the complexity and depth of

2. Some readers may be wary of justifications for folkloric or popular music styles that compare them to art music. To be sure, there are academic critiques of the societal necessity of such comparisons, but nonetheless they are sometimes chosen as pragmatic by performer/presenters like Juan. This issue is discussed at greater length with regard to mariachi in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

sones provide motivation, while his academic training, musicianship, and administrative expertise enable him to accomplish these goals successfully. Here I measure success by the group's longevity, critical acclaim, and ability to produce high-quality recordings and attract audiences to venues including the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in downtown Chicago's Millennium Park (a venue with a capacity of 11,000, at which Sones de México performed a twentieth-anniversary concert), Orchestra Hall in Chicago, Carnegie Hall in New York City, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

This section has contextualized Sones de México's educational mission and emphasized the guiding vision of having an ethnomusicologist, Juan Díes, at the helm. The next two sections address the group's decision to start their own music school and examine the experiences of parents who bring their children to the school.

Part III: From Educational Ensemble to School: Sones de México's Mexican Music School

From Educational Ensemble to School

I was lucky to begin my conversations with Juan Díes in early 2015, as he and his partners in Sones de México were beginning to lay out plans for their Mexican Music School. Over the course of my conversations with Juan over the next five years, I watched his plans grow and develop. By the time I received IRB approval to begin fieldwork with the school's students, they were entering their second year of operation. Over the next two years, from 2017 to 2019, I observed classes taught by

three different teachers, all cofounding members of the ensemble—Gonzalo Cordoba, Victor Pichardo, and Juan Díes. I spent the majority of time in Juan’s classroom so as to get a strong understanding of his pedagogical approach.

The desire to create a school is a logical endpoint to the goals and path described in the previous section. In a sense it was the culmination of Juan’s career—fusing his musical, educational, and administrative skills in an institution focused on the transmission of *son* to new populations in Chicago. A school of this sort would be able to have a much more concerted effect than the short-term programs in public schools that the group had done in the past. In planning their own school, Sones de México’s structure as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization guided the process. Nonprofits must have a board of directors who guide institutional decision making. Sones de México’s board has seven members in addition to Juan, including leaders from the business, nonprofit, education, and arts sectors in Chicago—for example, the Executive Director Mexican Folkloric Dance Company of Chicago, the Director of Institutional Advancement at the Chicago History Museum, a retired Director of School/College partnership at Truman College, and a principal of a marketing firm specializing in the Latinx market. It is no coincidence, given the tight-knit nature of the city’s Mexican arts community, that one board member is Álvaro Obregón, Executive Director of the Chicago Mariachi Project, subjects of Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Juan’s initial plan for the music school was to “rent a retail space, or buy a property and establish our brick and mortar music school . . . and then figure it out along the way” (Interview with author, November 20, 2017), much in the style of the Old Town School of Folk Music. Juan’s board, however, was hesitant to endorse this plan out of conservative business instincts; they insisted that he do a feasibility study. He applied for and received a \$10,000 grant for such a study from the Arts Work Fund, a branch of the Chicago Community Trust. The plan proceeded in four

parts: first, they hired a research consultant, Jim Hirsch, former Executive Director of the Old Town School and Juan's boss and mentor for eight years. Hirsch would conduct research into other music schools in the city as well as local community leaders in Pilsen; second, they approached Business Volunteers for the Arts (a program of the Arts and Business Council of Chicago), who provided a team of four marketing professionals to conduct focus groups with prospective clients; third, they hired the Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF), a real estate consultant, to examine properties and study the costs renovation or costs of operation of potential spaces; and fourth, they invited students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's Master's program for business in the arts to conduct research projects as a component of their coursework.

On the first front, Jim Hirsch put together a comparative analysis of thirty music schools in Chicago, examining class types, ages of students, location, pricing, teacher salaries, language options, and more. He also surveyed local stakeholders in the neighborhood—for example, aldermen, community leaders, directors of cultural institutions, and foundation representatives—asking about their perspectives on the need for a Mexican music school and their willingness to support it.

On the second front, the team from Business Volunteers for the Arts conducted focus groups with three target populations: Latinx parents, Latinx young professionals, and “culturally adventuresome” non-Latinx adults. Juan characterized the third group as “people who are not necessarily Latino, but they like to dabble with cross-cultural arts experiences, and they're into, you know, learning Tibetan chanting and African drumming and Latino dancing, they're just into cultural stuff” (Interview with author, November 20, 2017). This group turned out to be less willing to travel for classes; they expressed interest but most tended to live downtown or on the North Side and were unwilling to travel as far as Pilsen. The second group, young Latinx

professionals, seemed moderately promising; these were young adults who worked downtown and expressed general interest in learning to play the guitar and connect with heritage that felt distant. Most had been born in the US or brought as children and “never had a chance to really connect with their heritage, and they really wanted to” (ibid.). The most promising group, though, was the parents of young children:

JD: The parents were interested really in having their kids maintain a connection with the culture. As much as teaching them music, they really wanted the cultural component to be something—they liked the fact that we were offering classes in Spanish, even if their kids spoke even better English than Spanish, they didn’t want them to lose their Spanish or their connection or their joy of participating in their own culture. And they wanted some positive cultural elements. Not necessarily what they would get on La Ley, Univision, or mass media. They liked the folk music for that reason. And many of the parents in that group did not live in Pilsen, they had—Pilsen is sort of a new arrivals area, people move on once they become more affluent, they move on to the suburbs, so they’ll move to Elgin, or Berwyn, or Des Plains, or places like that. So traveling back to Pilsen was not as attractive to them. They felt—there was a perceived notion that it might be dangerous, there might be some shootings, or they were worried about the safety of their kids. The actual police data does not support this, Pilsen is a very safe neighborhood. But their perception was that it wasn’t. (Ibid.)

This focus group feedback proved central in guiding the mission and framing of the music school. Juan and his partners decided that targeting this population of parents with young children would prove most fruitful, so they framed the school as explicitly focused on pre- and early-adolescent children, ages nine to fourteen. Over time, they decided to allow parents to enroll as well, and Juan has made a few exceptions for adults in the community—for example, a nurse who has no children of her own but was deeply interested in *son*. Overall, however, he has sought to maintain a curricular focus on young children and to ensure that parents feel comfortable with the class environment for their children (i.e., only occasionally allowing in adults). Juan sees the success of this structure as culturally specific as “the strengthening of parent-child bonds resonates with Mexican culture” (Juan Díes, interview with author, March 5, 2020). The Mexican Music School

further incentivizes this type of participation through family discounts.

The focus group feedback also substantially guided the curriculum design. Juan chose to conduct the classes primarily in Spanish, only using English when students were having trouble understanding a crucial concept. As he notes in the previous quotation, this language choice was not because the youth population predominantly spoke Spanish—rather, the majority of the young people speak primarily or even solely English; for many the Spanish is a new skill that they are learning alongside the music. The third component, extramusical cultural content, played to one of Sones de México’s strengths. They have always conducted educational programs of that sort—for instance, their “Musical Geography of Mexico” program in which they guide the audience through an aural, geographical, and historical survey of regional *son* styles. It was a natural fit for Juan to incorporate content of this nature into the curriculum.

On the third front, finding a space, Juan’s initial goal was to renovate a small church that belonged to the Resurrection Project in Pilsen (a community development organization). The IFF consultants, however, calculated that this would be prohibitively expensive given the renovations needed to meet building codes and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. Juan had to put aside his goal of a brick-and-mortar school for the time being. The team decided that their best bet was to partner with local community organizations for low-cost or even free space. They also decided that this would allow them to operate two locations: one in Pilsen, as planned, which has moved between three different Catholic churches over the past four years, and one in the far North Side neighborhood of Rogers Park, at Centro Romero, a social services community organization dedicated to serving the immigrant and refugee populations of the city’s northeast side. The center is named for Oscar Romero, the Salvadoran Archbishop assassinated during El Salvador’s civil war, who was canonized in 2018. I raise this point to emphasize the pervasive role of Catholic

institutions for Mexican Chicago. Though Sones de México is entirely secular, it is institutionally intertwined with the Catholic Church. In Pilsen, the school's fate has also become intertwined with the current decline of local Catholic institutions—the school's Pilsen location has had to move between three different Catholic churches because each in turn has closed.

Juan's fourth research effort, the team of students from the Art Institute, offered what Juan termed "millennial ideas" to economize their business model. One suggestion was the concept of a "pop-up" school, inspired by "pop-up" restaurants. In this model, which has proved successful, Sones de México Ensemble owns the music stands, an easel with paper, a projector, and its own textbook; the teacher can arrive in any space and set up a classroom. This allowed the group to circumvent the challenges of a brick-and-mortar space. Another avenue was technology solutions to overcome Sones de México's capacity limitations—for example, using an app to manage class registration and information for parents, group texting for information sharing, video tutorials to supplement class, and crowdfunding scholarships for lower-income students.

At the end of this year-long feasibility study, Juan and his team sat down to craft their plan for the school: "we bring all the research together, and we start spinning our wheels, like what do we make of this. And how do we respond to all this data with a school?" (Interview with author, November 20, 2017). They settled on the parents-and-young-children target audience and started to work out systems for class registration and student tracking. For example, the city and the Archdiocese (since they were using space in a church) had strict guidelines for the protection of children, requiring the school to collect information and track attendance carefully. From a financial perspective, group classes, in the mold of the Old Town School, were the most realistic model. They would also offer private lessons, but given the costs of labor for instructors, the majority of parents

would only be able to pay at a level that would necessitate group classes of eight to twelve students. The most important question for Juan, however, was that of curriculum.

Sones de México's Curriculum and Pedagogical Approach

JD: I really liked the model for the Old Town School of Folk Music, but one thing I didn't like about the Old Town School is that it had no real curriculum. There was no measured plan for bringing your students from point A to point B, to a level where they could be—potentially choose that as a career and be gainfully employed as a musician. It was really just, you go there to entertain yourself and to have fun with music, and there's no pressure for advancing. So I needed to build a program that was curriculum-based, with certain levels of expectations, and with a rubric that had a—like a given number of skills on each level. (Ibid.)

Juan was under no illusions that the average student wanted to be employed as a musician—however, this was his way of framing the curricular goal so as to take seriously the question of musical skill development. Some parents in the focus group interviews had communicated a desire for their children to gain a skill out of the financial investment in classes—rather than simply entertainment or socializing. The endpoint of the curricular sequence was the skill level necessary to perform in public with a high level of musicianship. Students could progress as far as they chose to. Juan thought through this goal systematically:

JD: By the first twelve weeks a student would have to learn how to tune his guitar, he would have to learn all the notes in English and Spanish, be bilingually articulate in music. To know the parts of your guitar, and to learn your first six chords and be able to change between them. And then some simple rhythms like a polka and a waltz and some simple songs. But we wanted them to start playing something right away, like in the first two days of class, you would play the simplest of songs, but you would already be rewarded with some music.³ (Ibid.)

3. Juan noted that this came from the Old Town School model.

When I discussed this topic with Juan at his Ravenswood apartment in November 2017, roughly a year into the school's operation, his walls were covered with stuck-on sheets of easel paper covered in scaffolded sequential lesson plans for guitar, violin, *jarana*, and clarinet. For each instrument, the instructors had plotted out how they wanted to move through instructional sequences of rhythm, harmony, and repertoire—including songs from specific *son* styles selected to teach particular musical concepts. Thus far they have only taught group classes for guitar, though they offer one-on-one lessons in other instruments and have plans to develop group class curricula for other instruments as they scale up the program. For the guitar, they translated their curricular sketch into a full lesson book of their own design, including fingering charts, bilingual vocabulary, song lyrics and chords, cultural and historical content knowledge, and worksheets for student completion at home:

JD: We decided to start with guitar classes, and I built, or I drafted one year worth of rubrics for the guitar program. And then we've been polishing it up, while we observe the students and how fast they progress, we've been polishing it up to see what works best. . . . We developed a textbook, so you can see [he takes one out]. This is the rubric, and the student knows everything they need to learn in the first twelve weeks and the point value. So they'll check here as they learn something, they get a little stamp, and they can add up. And these correspond to each skill. So, be able to hold your guitar correctly, learn to tune it, you learn the parts of your instrument in English and Spanish. And it's an interactive book, so you have to connect the dots and write the names of each string in here. All the yellow spots are things that the student has to fill out. So here's the correspondence of the solfeggio system and the cypher system. Here they have a C minor seven [chord], they have to say "do menor séptima" and write it in Spanish. (Ibid.)

This lesson book is quite comprehensive, and has proved to be an invaluable curricular resource, as I discuss further in the following section of this chapter with regard to parental involvement in their children's music learning. The primary point I wish to emphasize here is that the book was designed from the bottom up with attention to both breadth and sequence. Regarding breadth, each section and lesson integrates the tripartite goals of musical ability, bilingual ability,

and cultural knowledge. Regarding sequence, each of these lessons is conceived as part of a path toward expertise in each of those three goal areas—the lessons build cumulatively on each other, and instructors use the point rubric to evaluate students' mastery and decide when they are ready to advance to the next level. The tracking system is also designed to explain in a more objective manner to parents why the teacher is suggesting either that the student advance or repeat a level. There are presently five levels in the guitar program, and students will repeat each level as many times as it takes until the instructor is confident that they are ready to succeed at the next level.

Sones de México's curriculum also emphasizes the communicative and affective side of performance:

JD: Here [indicating a page in the lesson book] they're asked to make a drawing of the character in this song. And that is to really take them beyond just learning like a mechanical skill and to get into the character of the story a little bit, the performance aspect of—you know, conveying the feeling of, this is basically a song about a lonesome cowboy who's very sad, and he lost his wife, or his girlfriend, and he wanders in the mountains by himself. It's a minor key, so we show them it's a melancholic song, and we talked about—when we perform it, we tell them to get into that character. . . . Something I want to get away from is playing music mechanically and not engaging your emotion. (Ibid.)

Each twelve-week class session ends with a public performance where family and friends come to watch the students perform selections that they learned during that session. The sequential nature of the curriculum means that all of the advanced students have already learned the songs that the beginning students are working on; at one end-of-session performance that I attended, the concert progressed from beginner to advanced, with all of the students starting the concert and the beginning students exiting the stage as they moved through more and more advanced repertoire. Though parents may be happy simply seeing their child on stage, for Juan, it is important that the students are not just playing but performing, with the full affective dimensions that he describes in the prior quotation. In a broader sense, this connects to his desires regarding public perception of

Mexican folkloric songs. These are not simplistic tunes providing the soundtrack to parties; they are serious artistic works with the potential for great emotional range. Teaching students this aspect of performance is one element of his broader goal of spreading this understanding.

Heritage at the Mexican Music School

Though *Sones de México*'s broader work embraces non-Mexican audiences, what of the Mexican Music School? I asked Juan if it had attracted any students not of Mexican descent, and he noted that the vast majority have some Mexican ancestry, and all of them have some connection to Mexico:⁴

JD: Yeah, there are a few, there's kids with mixed parentage, . . . I have a student who has an Argentinian father and a Mexican mother. And both parents are interested in getting him—cause the kid's grandparents are Mexican, and they're from Jalisco, and when the kids play Mexican music for the grandparents they get very happy, and they like seeing that connection. And the father, even though he's Argentinian, he's very supportive of that. But the kids, they'll mention something about Argentina—they have questions about “am I Mexican, or Argentinian?” and it's like “well, you're both. And you're American too, and—you don't have to give one up in order to be the other. This is your heritage, this is like an inheritance, a cultural inheritance that you are entitled to if you want it. It's something that is worth a lot, and you can accept it, or you can ignore it, it's up to you. But if you want it, it's there for the taking, and you're entitled to it. So if you have three, it's all the better. More homework for you, you have to learn, take the best of each one.” (Ibid.)

This phenomenon is quite common. Frances Aparicio has written extensively on Latinos of mixed national or ethnic background in Chicago (Aparicio 2019). Juan's pluralistic approach to discussions with such students is representative of his broader attitude toward music as cultural heritage. He threads between the two hypothetical extremes—that of hyper-specific investment in a

4. Juan also emphasized that the Mexican Music School has not had success attracting the “culturally adventuresome” non-Mexican demographic, who are a primary student group for the Old Town School.

singular tradition or that of bland “citizen of the world” pluralism. His approach is to value both the singular and relational value of each tradition, with substantial attention to historical and musical knowledge of the specific distinctive qualities of a particular *son* style, juxtaposed with a willingness to experiment, as on the recordings with CSO brass musicians discussed in the previous section. The group also follows this philosophy with regional *son* styles: “we take the best of *jarocho*, *huasteco*, etc., and manage to keep them separate. We also claim it as our own” (Juan Díes, interview with author, March 5, 2020).

Juan’s final sentence in the previous long quotation encapsulates this philosophy: laying claim to musical heritage entails both responsibility and limitless potential. The student must do the homework and understand the specific nature of the practices that he is inheriting. He is also, however, free to “take the best of each one”—to selectively build a personal musical practice made up of elements from many traditions, provided that he uses those elements with knowledge and respect for their histories.

In this respect, Juan’s musical philosophy and his philosophy of immigrant sociocultural development come together, making him well equipped to talk students through questions both musical and personal:

JD: Kids have those questions. The development of a child, or even an adult, and coming to terms with your own identity, there’s all this cultural information. There’s adults who’ve been denied, as children, access to their own culture. And now that they are independent, they are choosing to regain that connection. And many times they’re embarrassed by the fact that maybe they don’t speak Spanish as well as they should, they have a Hispanic surname and they’re expected, or people speak to them in Spanish and they don’t know how to respond and they feel bad. Sometimes they’re resentful towards their parents because their parents didn’t foster that in them, and they have even greater motivation to make an effort and reconnect with something they were denied earlier on. And we see people like that. (Interview with author, November 20, 2017)

In the next section of this chapter, I break down the experiences of several parents who have

enrolled their children in the Mexican Music School classes.

Part IV: Language, Culture, and Music: Balancing Parental Goals for Music

Education

More than at any other programs I studied for this project, parents take an active role in their children's classes at Sones de México's Mexican Music School. This is for two primary reasons: children's age and program structure. On the first point—Sones de México aims to work with a relatively young cohort of students, ages nine to fourteen. This is roughly equivalent to school grades three to nine. Unlike high school students, who may have access to a car or have the independence to travel to lessons on public transit, children of this age generally require parental transportation to classes. Furthermore, they are much less likely to have the independence to find out about opportunities on their own and engage with them—as is typically the case with, for example, the HANA Center *p'ungmul* program that I analyze later in this dissertation. The program structure also encourages parental engagement, as Juan decided early on to allow parents to actively participate in classes—not just in monitoring their children, but in actively learning musical skills themselves. In most of the classes that I observed, there tended to be around ten students, with roughly a third of their parents actively participating in the class, another third of the parents sitting in the back of the room or outside in the hallway, and the remainder of parents waiting in their cars or attending to errands in the neighborhood while their child was in class.

In order to illustrate and analyze the significance of parental involvement, I use this section to profile several parents. These profiles are meant to illustrate to the reader the experiences and

motivations driving parental involvement with Sones de México's Mexican Music School. I open with an in-depth examination of one parent's story of involvement with music and Mexican Chicago. Building on this example, the subsequent sections examine themes of music, language, and culture across several other parent interviews.

Mari Carmen: Family and Community

I met Mari Carmen and her son Mariano at the Mexican Music School in summer 2019. At the time, the school's Pilsen classes were being held in the rectory of St. Adalbert Church. Mari Carmen is a life-long Chicagoan, and her family is a typical representative of middle-class Mexican Chicago. Educated at the University of Illinois (both Urbana-Champaign and Chicago campuses), she works as a bilingual teacher at a CPS elementary school near Marquette Park in the Chicago Lawn neighborhood. Her husband Eleazar is the owner of Café Jumping Bean, one of Pilsen's oldest coffee shops, which he opened in 1994 (Pupovac 2017).⁵ As a teacher, a second-generation Chicagoan, and a parent who has engaged her child with multiple music education experiences, Mari Carmen had particular insight into Sones de México's Mexican Music School—particular regarding what makes it distinctive and what makes it appealing to some parents.

Mari Carmen's family background is somewhat atypical in that their story extends to the early twentieth century, when Chicago's Mexican population—now numbering nearly 600,000—numbered just a few tens of thousands. Her grandparents were migrant sugar beet workers in the Midwest, and her father was born in Michigan in 1924. Because he lacked birth documentation, he

5. For more context on Café Jumping Bean, see <https://interactive.wttw.com/my-neighborhood/pilsen/jumping-bean-cafe>.

was deported to Mexico at age five, a practice common in the wake of the Crash of 1929 and ensuing Great Depression. During the 1930s, Chicago's Mexican population was roughly cut in half to just 16,000 (Arredondo and Vaillant 2005). Mari Carmen's grandfather managed to stay behind and continue working, settling on the South Side of Chicago. Her father grew up in Salvatierra, Guanajuato and re-immigrated at age sixteen, managing to reconnect with his father in Chicago thanks to the city's network of hometown associations. While visiting his sister, a nun at a convent in Veracruz, he met a young woman who was attending the convent. He arranged for her travel to Chicago and secured her residency status. They settled in Little Village, where Mari Carmen was born and raised.

Mari Carmen's adult life has interwoven with many mainstays of Mexican Chicago. After earning a bachelor's degree in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, worked for five years in arts education at the National Museum of Mexican Art. That work familiarized her with other community organizations, and she went on to work in the youth education program at Instituto del Progreso Latino, a nonprofit based in Pilsen that promotes education, training, and employment for Latinx immigrants and their families. Working with young people who were out of school sparked an interest in literacy development, and she returned to school at the University of Illinois at Chicago to earn a graduate teaching degree. As of 2019, she had been a bilingual elementary school teacher for sixteen years.

The family's approach to music is instructive. Neither Mari Carmen nor her husband Eleazar had any musical training growing up, but they are deeply invested in the musical life of the community they see as theirs. Through Mari Carmen's time at the National Museum of Mexican Art of through her husband's work at Café Jumping Bean they both came to know members of Sones de México—the group even played at their wedding. For Mari Carmen, music is a powerful

signifier of community and family. Growing up, she listened to a lot of folkloric music, *son*, and *salsa* with her family. Many of her musical reference points come from family trips to Mexico—she spoke to me of traveling around Veracruz (where her mother’s family lives) and seeking out traditional musicians: “it’s interesting when we’ve gone to Veracruz, we’ve gone to some of the smaller towns, Tlacotalpan and a few other places, to hear folks still playing *son montuno* and more original forms of the music” (Interview with author, May 18, 2019).⁶ These experiences have layers of meaning for her:

JM: What do you like about that kind of experience?

MC: We enjoy meeting the people. But [laughter] it’s really—I mean, I love dancing to the music. I don’t know, I don’t know if I’ve ever really thought about it. It’s just—it’s something that for me, it feels home. It reminds me of my family and all of—I have a huge family in México, I don’t really have a lot of family here. So for us, it’s the connection to that and the traditions and the celebrations that we get to go to when we go. Because it’s around the holidays and things like that. And then connections to—like, *el Zocalo*, and when they have *la danzonera* in *el Zocalo*, and it’s just—everyone enjoying the music and dancing. And different generations of people too, which is really nice. (Ibid.)

Mari Carmen’s emphasis here resonates with themes that came up across the population of Mexican Music School parents. The importance of children’s ability to connect with family back in Mexico was pervasive. One element of this was the emphasis on intergenerational connection. This was important not just within the family, in terms of connections between children and grandparents, but beyond the family—Mari Carmen here notes the importance of seeing multiple generations at public celebrations, and Erica, the parent profiled in the following section of this chapter highlights the importance to her of seeing multiple generations together in the classroom at Sones de México’s school. Another recurring theme was that of music as a community practice that had fallen by the wayside for the parental generation. This was not in the sense of enjoying music,

6. *Son montuno* of Cuban origin, but it is played in some areas on the Gulf coast of Mexico.

as many parents spoke—like Mari Carmen—of their enjoyment of communal celebrations with music and dancing. The majority, however, did not have any experience playing music or singing themselves and expressed regret about this, as well as a desire to give their children the skills to engage in these communal events in a more participatory musical capacity.

Since Mari Carmen and her husband had the resources to give their son a musical education, they chose to start him young. At age four, they enrolled Mariano in cello classes at the Merit School of Music. He stuck with them for many years, but it was a struggle. He resisted practicing, and Mari Carmen felt unable to assist him in the ways that she observed other parents doing. The decision to enroll in Sones de México's classes was driven by their long relationship with and respect for the ensemble as well as their experiences at Merit:⁷

MC: I would notice that at Merit there were a few kids who did really well, and their parents were musicians or they played an instrument. And when I would talk to them and ask them like “how do you get them to practice so much?” Well it's just, “we pick up an instrument all the time” you know, and dad plays the piano, mom plays this—so everybody played something, and I thought “well maybe if I played something, maybe he's more prone to trying it,” you know? . . . And so I wanted him to have some kind of an experience where it was more tied to the way we celebrate and the way we do things in our family. So anyway, we decided to take Sones because it was in the neighborhood, and it was Sones [i.e., the group, not the genre], and I could take the class with him instead of just watching, which is what at Merit it was, it was watching. Even though I would sometimes practice with him, I just thought I wanted to help motivate him to want to learn more. (Ibid.)

Mari Carmen is effusive in her praise of Sones de México's pedagogical approach. She focused her comments on three areas: their linguistic approach, which she admired as a bilingual classroom teacher; their emotional engagement with students; and the community environment of

7. I wish to emphasize here that Mari Carmen was diplomatic at all points in her commentary on Merit, noting the many strong aspects of the program. In highlighting the appeal of Sones de México's program, however, contrast with the family's experiences at Merit proved illustrative for her because of the different linguistic and cultural experiences that they were able to provide to Mariano.

the group classes. Regarding language, she views their approach as translanguaging—a pedagogical approach to bilingual education in which two languages are used in alternation so as to promote students' bilingual ability.⁸

MC: When we first came to the classes here, the fact that they were able to tie in language so, so well, they were able to break down, like they do connections to culture, and to history, and they're utilizing the Spanish but then they can jump right back into the English. Everything, I guess the way they do their classes is so reflective of what we live in, the space that we live in, and this community, and these communities I should say. For me, I'm a language teacher, right, so this notion of translanguaging, moving back and forth between languages but still the music being tied to our culture is just—is so Chicago and so Mexican Chicago. And I just love being able to be in that space and really learn substantially in terms of music. (Ibid.)

Mari Carmen's praise of the instructors' translanguaging is twofold—she admires its effectiveness from a pedagogical standpoint, as she is an expert in this area, but she also appreciates the way that this linguistic approach feels authentic to her experience of local community. She is glad that Mariano is receiving this pedagogical experience not just for its effect on his language ability but for the way in which it socializes him into the translanguaging norms that she views as symbolic of Mexican Chicago—a community of which she wants him to be a member. The classes also provide a model of generational social relationships that Mari Carmen prioritizes:

MC: I think one of our favorite, well one of my favorite things is we have so many different generations of people taking classes here. So there's a grandfather in the class with his granddaughter, and it's just nice to see that, nice to see men too in the classes with their children, 'cause you don't always see that either. So that's been really nice to see. And I want him to grow up looking at those kinds of models as well. (Ibid.)

Mari Carmen's highlighting of this example further exemplifies the way that she is prioritizing a holistic display of community relations that are present in everything from the instructors'

8. Juan disagreed with Mari Carmen's interpretation of the linguistic pedagogical practices—perhaps an example of different interpretations stemming from different pedagogical vantage points (one musical, one linguistic). In future interviews I will explore this issue further.

linguistic practices to the way that they have organized classes and encouraged family participation. This becomes a self-reinforcing virtuous cycle: allowing parents and grandparents to participate in classes together builds family bonds, strengthens their mutual commitment to the music, keeps Sones de México's classes well enrolled, and creates an environment that is further welcoming and attractive to new parents seeking this kind of holistic sociocultural experience for their children.

In terms of affective relationships between instructors and students, Mari Carmen found Juan and Victor to be quite effective:

MC: I think they do a phenomenal job, and their connection to the kids—because when Mariano first started, he was really struggling. He wasn't used to not knowing anything about the instrument because he'd been playing the cello, and he was reading music, and he felt some success there. But having to start from zero was very difficult for him. So he had Juan in his first session, and Juan took him to the side and would give him pep talks afterward. And he took to that very much. As a matter of fact, when we switched to Victor Pichardo, Mariano had a little bit of a struggle, because he was also used to working with one instructor over a long period of time. At Merit he had worked with this one instructor for years, and so he took to Juan initially and the way Juan approached him. And so it was a bit of a transition for him [switching to Victor]. And now he's kind of gotten used to moving back and forth. . . . I think it's really child-friendly, very family friendly. (Ibid.)

For Mari Carmen, another unexpected benefit was having, in Victor, an instructor with children of his own:

MC: No one ever tells you how to work with your kids. . . . Because, I think a lot of times instructors—they may not always have children themselves. So Victor, for example, here, was the first person to ever be able to give me advice as a parent, for pushing a student. But he's also more of an old school kind of dad [laughter].

JM: And his sons are very musically accomplished!⁹

MC: Yes, yes, yes! And so I was like, I'm all ears, because I definitely want to learn from you! And so, whereas other folks are more like, they grew up, perhaps, playing music. But they don't know what it's like to push a child to play every day. And that's different. (Ibid.)

9. Both of Victor Pichardo's sons have successful musical careers in Chicago, and his son Zacbe performs with Sones de México and several other local groups.

This came to bear particularly regarding discipline—that is, the discipline of practicing each day.

This had been a challenge with the cello, and Mari Carmen was invested in learning how to teach that discipline to Mariano with the guitar:

MC: Victor said, you just have to prioritize it, there's just no way around it, but also in the class, when [Mariano] would tend to struggle and argue with me in the class, he's like "you need to move on and focus on what you're doing, 'cause that's going to help him down the line. But he also needs to start making those decisions." So he was giving me dad advice, and saying . . . you gotta be about the business of sticking to what we have to do. And so, it was good advice. (Ibid.)

Though switching back and forth between Juan and Victor's classes at first proved challenging for Mariano, over time Mari Carmen came to see a substantial pedagogical benefit in the two approaches:

MC: They both approached him very differently. Like [Juan's] more of a pep talk kind of guy, and inquiring more, and Victor's very much like a dad, like handing down "this is the mandate," you know? [laughter]. So that's been interesting as well. But it's a good balance. I think it's a good balance. Actually, when we moved back with Juan for this session—cause we thought we were gonna continue with Victor—I think it's been a good transition. (Ibid.)

One interesting dynamic is in the approach to professionalism. As noted in the previous section, Juan's vision for the curriculum sequence is that a student could hypothetically emerge at the end with the skills to pursue a career as a professional musician. This is often the case with classical pedagogy programs as well—some Suzuki teachers, for example, will cancel a lesson if the student arrives unprepared. Mari Carmen contrasted the reaction to unprepared students between the Mexican Music School and a classical school:

MC: One of the things that I appreciate the most is that there isn't a lot of judgment about whether or not, if you're still struggling through the practice or through the routines and the exercises. It was very different at Merit, they were very much like "if you're not ready, then you're not ready and you need to step out of the group class 'cause you're not ready." And they're very strict about that, and if you're not making progress as well, you need to make a decision. And so it's very black and white, and very impersonal in many ways. Except for his one-on-one instructor, right? But when we had the group classes, and depending on who you had, sometimes they were very, you know, there's no playing

around, there's no wiggle room here, there's no grey area. You're either here to do it, or you need to step out and come back when you're ready. (Ibid.)

This is not to make a blanket statement about classical music instructors in general, nor instructors at Merit particularly—classical music instructors vary in terms of strictness regarding student preparation, and there are certainly pedagogical justifications that instilling seriousness and discipline in students will do much to advance their instrumental skills more quickly. Mari Carmen, however, as the only parent I interviewed who had experience with classical music education in addition to Sones de México, raised an important contrast between this non-judgmental approach and the strictness prevalent in other pedagogical environments. Though Mari Carmen appreciates the attitude at the Mexican Music School, it raises a question of whether this approach will succeed at cultivating the high level of instrumental ability that comes with a more strict demand of commitment to practice. Imagine a hypothetical continuum, between a strict no-excuses environment like Mari Carmen described, and the just-having-fun mindset that Juan saw as prevalent at the Old Town School—is the Mexican Music School in the middle, or closer to one end of the continuum? The efficacy of a strict no-excuses environment is an ongoing pedagogical debate in music education circles, and with time Juan and his fellow teachers will be able to assess the degree to which the Mexican Music School is succeeding at cultivating a high level of musicianship in its students.

I asked Mari Carmen about the notion of progressing to a high level of proficiency in different musical contexts. Regarding their classical music education experience, she saw the private and group lessons as teleologically leading toward their conservatory program; regardless of whether this was the institutional leaders' intent, this was the model she observed from other parents:

MC: They have an approach to the discipline of music that's very much about getting you ready to see if you're really going to take this up, for their conservatory. And so, when you first start out, when he started out as a four-year-old, you're investing financially, unless you qualify for a scholarship. . . . My family doesn't qualify for a scholarship, and we were okay with that, we know that when we were paying the full tuition there that it was hopefully helping other families be able to send their children, that's perfectly fine for us. But it's a huge investment. And so, after so many years, if you don't progress, and you don't ever get to really try out for that conservatory, you have to think really hard about whether or not this is the right route for you, because that's just kind of like the frame, the lens that they put it on. . . . This was completely new to us, no one in our families had ever taken formal music classes, and so it's just been a work in progress for us. (Ibid.)

She also saw Sones de México's curriculum as attempting to cultivate talent, though her deeper understanding of the music's community context informed her perspective on this:

MC: I've known these guys for a long time as a band. . . . There was a period where there weren't a lot of other bands like them here in Chicago. And so any chance we got to see them perform, we would go. [Mariano] grew up seeing their performances, any time they were around. . . . And at some point they have to pass the baton to the younger kids. That's part of why we wanted to take these classes. . . . Part of it is I want this tradition to live on in Mariano's life, I want to make sure he's growing up understanding this music and where the traditions come from, familiarity with particular songs that are important in our culture. But I think for Sones too, it's about creating the younger generations of musicians. And really believing that music education should be a part of your life. Right? It's not something that only certain people can access. And only if you're going to become a professional musician. I think there's obviously a desire to spur that interest in kids . . . should you choose that path, but [for me] it's such a part of our lives, music, *this* music, lives within our daily lives, right? That we should be creating that music. (Ibid.)

To be sure, there are families that incorporate classical music into their daily lives in a holistic way.

For Mari Carmen, however, this path was hard to imagine. It was not part of her experience, and when she looked at other families, their experiences seemed hard to model within her own family.

This is part of the reason that she praises the Mexican Music School so highly. Beyond any particulars of pedagogy, curriculum, or teacher-student relationships, its fundamental contribution is that it is enabling both Mariano *and* Mari Carmen to more fully live the way that she imagines that her family *should* live with regard to music in their everyday lives.

MC: In México, people will pick up whatever they've got around—working class families,

just pick up whatever's around. In México with my family around Christmas time, we do *la rama* . . . it's a caroling tradition, and you just pick up your pots and pans, and you're making music as you go, and you're singing from house to house. . . . And so even if you're not playing an instrument, you're singing. . . . I always remind [Mariano], maestro Pichardo and maestro Díes are big, they're a big deal, you have no idea how lucky you are to be learning from these people because they're very well respected and renowned as musicians. So it's a privilege to be able to come here and learn from there, it's a great honor and we feel very fortunate. But we also believe that we want more kids to be able to access this, so we've talked to them, through our business we want to make sure that we're helping to support their scholarship program, because we want more children to be able to access it. (Ibid.)

Here one can see Mari Carmen synthesizing several important points at once as she connects her relatives in Mexico, *la rama*, professional musicians, Sones de México's renown, and her family's desire to use their resources to bring more of the community into this school. Throughout the interview, her family and experiences like *la rama* in Mexico have stood in as an ideal for the community experience she wants Mariano to have in Chicago. Though she valorizes the amateur participatory nature of communities making music, she also has deep respect for the musical excellence of professionals like Pichardo and Díes—they are exemplars of the community who have the ability to equip everyone with the ability to enact the traditions she views as crucial. She views her husband's successful business in Pilsen as a tool for extending this mission. She sees the ability to learn from Sones de México as a privilege, and her family's financial success endows them with almost a responsibility to extend this privilege to others.

Though Mari Carmen had deep respect for Mariano's cello teacher, Pichardo and Díes occupy a different space in her imagination of Chicago. Elsewhere in the interview, she characterized Sones's efforts as "very much about building community and celebrating that space. . . . They're familiar with a lot more things around here, and the people, right? . . . There's just more interpersonal connections here, they take an interest in people's lives" (Ibid.). She described the school as feeling like home. Ultimately, though, this vision of community returned to her own

home:

MC: We actually, as a family, we've been developing a bit of a tradition—so his uncle, his dad's brother has also taken guitar classes, and we have another close family friend, he plays the guitar and *la jarana*, and he'll do little gigs with friends, and fandangos and things like that. And so he sometimes brings his guitar to the house, or his *jarana*. And we'll just do jam sessions. My husband got me a set of drums, like, percussion, un cajón. . . . We'll start singing and playing songs, and we're just kind of inventing things. So it's become a regular thing now. Whereas before we would just listen to a lot of music, now we're actually playing music. And the children are interacting in that space as well, his cousins are, and sometimes they want to play, sometimes they don't, but they're hearing it, and they're seeing us enjoy it. So it's just—I feel like we've grown in a different way as well. It's just become a richer part of our lives. (Ibid.)

This shift for their family is a microcosm for the shift Mari Carmen seems to imagine for Mexican Chicago as a whole. In juxtaposing “just listen[ing]” with active participation, she emphasizes how richness, for her, comes from collective engagement with *son*. Beyond Mariano's ability to use Spanish more fluently, or his ability to play particular songs on a concert stage, these lessons have equipped him with the ability to engage in new ways with his extended family. The whole family has been brought along on this transformation, driven by the classes offered at the Mexican Music School.

Erica: Culture as a Value vs. Culture as a Practice

Erica: I heard the other day that you were [doing interviews], I'm like, you know what, I would like to get interviewed and just talk about what I—because for us, for me at least, it's a new experience, you know? Coming to this neighborhood and learning more about it. 'Cause I'm like, yes I am Mexican, but did I consider [myself] truly Mexican before? Maybe I would say no. But now that we're raising [our children]? Oh yeah, my whole viewpoint has changed a lot. (Interview with author, May 25, 2019)

A second mother who I interviewed, Erica, was also a CPS bilingual elementary education teacher.

Her path to Sones de México's guitar school differed, however, in interesting ways from Mari

Carmen's. Erica came to Chicago at age thirteen from the town of Taxco in Guerrero, Mexico. Her husband, Roberto (who she met in Chicago), came at age eighteen from Cuautla in Morelos, Mexico. They have four children, aged eight to eighteen at the time of our interview. The third child, Ethan, was enrolled in his second session with Sones de México. Erica told me that she wanted to talk with me in part because she had recently been reflecting on transformations in her own attitude toward the Spanish language and Mexican culture. This shift was prompted by multiple factors, most primarily the family's recent move from Logan Square, on the North Side of the city, to Little Village, on the West Side—west and slightly south of Pilsen. The shift, combined with her recent experience observing her son in the guitar school, had prompted much reflection. In attempting to dissect Erica's experience—and Sones de México's role within it—I first summarize her own description of her changing attitude, describe her analysis of what has driven it, and connect this to the broader analysis of Sones de México's pedagogical position.

Early in life, Erica had a strong assimilationist attitude regarding language, prioritizing English fluency and success within institutions of learning over the maintenance of any particular Spanish language ability:

Erica: To be honest, I was, as a parent, I was one of the people that used to think I want my kids to be in a regular classroom, just because I don't want them to have an accent. Like, I came here, when I was maybe fourteen, thirteen years old, and I still have a very heavy accent. So when I got married and my kids were growing up, and it was time for them to go to school, I said "I don't want them in a bilingual classroom." It's just part of the ignorance, right? Like, "no, I just don't want them to have an accent, I just want them to have perfect English." (Ibid.)

She traces this attitude to her experiences in high school as a new immigrant in the 1990s. Erica attended Roberto Clemente High School, in the Ukrainian Village neighborhood on Chicago's near west side. At the time, she said, the school was "rough": "Either you sink or swim, there were people doing drugs, there were a lot of gangs and stuff like that. I was one of the students like, I

would always do what I was supposed to do. Because I was afraid of the neighborhood” (ibid.).

Knowing that the school has historically had a majority Latinx student body, I was surprised when Erica said that there were not a lot of other Spanish-speaking students. She went on, however, to make an insightful distinction:

Erica: I feel like every classroom would have Spanish speakers, but not newcomers. It’s different between the Spanish speakers when you’ve been here, and you’re raised at home with parents that are talking to you in Spanish, but when you are a newcomer, it’s a different story. Because you’re basically blind, you’re learning a different language from the beginning. (Ibid.)

As a newcomer, Erica felt little solidarity from the bilingual students who had grown up in Chicago. Though Erica did not raise this point, it is possible that some of her alienation at Clemente came from her status as a Mexican immigrant in Chicago’s iconically Puerto Rican high school. Clemente has been characterized as “the property of Puerto Rican nationalists” (Ramos-Zayas 2003:233); the school was named after Puerto Rican baseball player Roberto Clemente in the 1970s, and in the late 1980s the school adopted a multicultural curriculum in response to student and community activism (Perez 2004:157). In terms of timing, response to student activism, and community status, Clemente in many ways parallels the story of Pilsen’s Benito Juarez High School (see Chapter 4). Also like Juarez, Clemente faced academic challenges; during the time Erica was attending, Chicago Public Schools placed Clemente on both financial and academic probation (ibid.). It was also, however, at the beginning of a demographic shift. In 1990, nearly 60% of the school’s students were Puerto Rican, but over the ensuing decade, more Mexicans moved to the surrounding neighborhoods of Humboldt Park, West Town and Logan Square; by 2005, the student body was 36% Puerto Rican and 31% Mexican. According to a Chicago Tribune report at the time, “Many Mexican students say they are looked down on and treated differently from their Puerto Rican classmates” (Banchemo 2006). There is a vibrant literature on the relationships between Puerto

Ricans and Mexicans, the two largest Latinx populations in Chicago, including through lenses of race and citizenship (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003), reactive ethnicity and panethnicity (Gutiérrez 2013), and raciolinguistics (Rosa 2019).

Erica's feeling as a teenager grew into an attitude that she characterizes as a "denial."

Erica: Because of the way I was raised and I was treated going to school, and how people were looking at me, like "she doesn't speak English." It was a denial for me to say "why do I have to have this culture if people don't treat me the same as others?" And eventually I'm like, "I'm pretty sure they never will." I mean, they always, like if I was doing something in Spanish, they were looking at me like "why is she here, why is she talking . . . ?" I feel like it was just the way I was treated at school that made me choose—not a different culture, because we still do a lot of traditions from my culture. But it was just a denial. (Ibid.)

Her penultimate sentence here prompted the subtitle of this section. Erica path was not from "no culture" to "culture." I use the term of "culture" with full awareness of the decades of critique of the term in both anthropological and ethnomusicological literature. Here it does not refer to a reified nation of "Mexican culture" but rather echoes Erica's own phrasing, which foregrounds "culture" for her as both something that she has always practiced and as something that she has recently invested with newfound value. As she notes, this "denial" of language and culture did not mean ceasing to speak Spanish or practice traditions with which she had grown up. Rather, she experienced the denial in more of an emotional and intellectual sense—a feeling of lack of connection, and a desire to craft different experiences for her children. This desire was symbolized in two primary ways that Erica articulated. First, the family lived for many years on the North Side, in an area to the west of Logan Square with a Mexican population making up roughly 20% of the neighborhood (people of other Latinx or Hispanic descent made up another 15% of the neighborhood). Second, she planned to make sure her children stayed out of the bilingual classroom. Furthermore, she and her husband spoke only English at home for the benefit of their children.

The shift away from this attitude was driven by Erica's husband, Roberto. Initially he acquiesced to her desires for their children's experience. He would periodically remind her "your kids are losing the Spanish" (ibid.), but he continued to speak only English with her at home. Things came to a head when the family attempted to buy a home several years ago. Back then, living on the North Side, Erica would only spend time up there, in neighborhoods like Logan Square and Belmont Cragin. She was looking all around, however, and unable to find an affordable house.

Erica: So it gets to the point that we get tired, and my husband says "we need to go to Little Village." I'm like "you're crazy, why are we gonna go to Little Village?!" . . . And then there was a time that he turns to me and said "did you see how you're talking about Little Village?" I'm like "well, I don't like it, there's gangs, and there's this, and there's that." And then he's like, "but I like it. I gave you the opportunity to look around these neighborhoods and you haven't found anything that you liked, so let's try it." (Ibid.)

She asked their realtor to start showing them houses in Little Village. At first the realtor was skeptical—"are you sure?" The realtor's perception was that, while "the culture is really good" in Little Village, the houses were more likely to be in disrepair. This perception is reflective of the broader economic segregation of Chicago; average family incomes are much higher on the North Side of the city than on the West/Southwest Side. Erica saw a house she liked, though, and she decided to give the neighborhood a try. The home is near Little Village Park, which delighted the children. Erica began to notice differences as well:

Erica: When we came here [to Little Village], it was very interesting because we lived on the North side, right on California Avenue, and my husband never liked that neighborhood because the gentrification is moving along. When my parents bought the house, I mean, it was rough. I remember right on the corner there were gang members. But then everything started changing. And it got to a point that it was too many people coming in to the neighborhood, not because of the neighborhood but just because of the restaurants. . . . And when we were outside, the people don't really say "hi" and stuff like that. And then we came to Little Village, and no matter what time you are or what you're doing outside, people will pass by and say "buenas tardes," "buenos días." And people are like—I'm not saying they're like your friends, but at least they welcome you in a sense of "good morning,

good afternoon.” And my kids were like “mami, why are they saying that to us?” It was a shift for them because they were not used to it. I’m like, “when people say good morning, good afternoon, you have to say it back. So that’s how everything began, when it comes to the culture. (Ibid.)

For Erica, this story is a crucial preamble explaining not just how but *why* her family ended up at Sones de México’s music program. This move symbolizes to her the beginning of a broader transformation in the family. She and her husband “started switching gears, and trying to do more Spanish at home, trying to get [the children] more into their culture and stuff like that” (ibid.). When their son Ethan reached first grade, they decided that it was time for him to learn an instrument. Though there were guitar teachers much closer to their home, Roberto discovered Sones de México’s program on Facebook and liked the sound of it. At first Roberto was taking Ethan to the lessons, but one day Ethan asked Erica to help him with his homework. The assignment was to translate song lyrics from Spanish to English:

Erica: But as we were going back and forth in the book, I was flipping the pages, I’m like “this is really good!” That book has a lot of components. So that’s how I got into—oh, it’s not only about learning how to play the guitar, but it’s also learning about your culture. So that’s where I got more into bringing him in [to lessons], listen to the stories and stuff like that.

One component of the Sones de México model is to allow parents to sit in on the group lessons. As Erica started to take Ethan to lessons, she would sit in—learning new things herself, like the geographic origins of different *son* styles. Like Mari Carmen, Erica noted the value of being able to move between different teachers over the course of multiple sessions with Sones de México.

Erica: I feel like it was nice that they did the switch. . . . ‘Cause I feel like with Victor it was more about grab the guitar, play the tunes, and stuff like that. And from [Juan], it’s like doing both. Taking out the book and doing this and doing that, it was more about—I feel like it’s more about culture with Juan and more technical with Victor. And I like that! . . . I don’t know if it was intentional to do it like that, I don’t know their philosophy or how they organize the classes, but as a parent, I think it was a great opportunity for me to say, ok, we’re going to stay on the same level, he did the basic part of the guitar and playing songs and stuff like that, and then he brought how to play the guitar but also the culture

embedded in that, that was good. (Ibid.)

For Erica, this experience with Sones de México's pedagogy has produced a broader consciousness of and desire for culturally and historically contextualized artistic education. Her daughter had been taking ballet lessons at a dance studio on the North Side, but Erica recently decided that she wanted to enroll her daughter in a Mexican folkloric dance program. When we spoke, she was searching for an appropriate program. She expressed this newfound preference in terms of richness of experience: "On the North Side, there's a lot of programs, there's dance, there's piano lessons. But I don't feel like it's as rich as this kind of Sones de México [program], to be honest" (ibid.). She extended this observation beyond Mexican artistic programs, noting that her son Ethan had been taking breakdancing lessons for three years and only in a recent session had a teacher discussed the sociocultural origins of the style and how that influenced their performance choices. Sones de México's pedagogy had not only opened her eyes to the potential for Mexican folkloric arts education, it had taught her to critically evaluate her children's other artistic experiences—with a preference for pedagogies grounded in historical detail.

This is undoubtedly a profound micro-story of personal and familiar transformation. The larger, significance, though, is in the insight this provides regarding how people are recruited into projects like the revitalization of Mexican *son* in Chicago. When Erica was simply *practicing* culture, it took the form of habit—that is, continuing practices that felt familiar to her without any significant reflection on them, for example, listening to *banda* or *cumbia* on the radio. When her framework shifted to *valuing* culture rather than simply practicing it, she began to reflect more on what practices she actually wanted to transfer to her children. This led her and her husband to incorporate folkloric *sones* into their family's practice of culture. On an individual level, this was not

particularly a “revival,” as *sones* had never previously been a significant part of Erica’s life. Rather, it was a reclamation of collective heritage that was newly imbued with personal meaning:

Erica: I’m like, just learning about culture and how Pilsen and Little Village—it’s everything around them. So now it’s like, we’re looking forward to seeing what else can we get them into here. Because they’re still going to the school in the North Side, they’re still going to—I teach in the same school that they’re going to. . . . Before you used to have a lot of Hispanic popularity there, but now they’re moving into more, you know, white people, Caucasian, Asian. So the whole atmosphere at school, it’s moving. So they still have that experience, but we’re moving into here so we can continue growing our culture, and *value* our culture. I don’t want them to grow up as I did. Saying “no, no, no, no, no.” I want them to embrace our culture and where we’re coming from. (Ibid.)

Throughout our conversation, Erica continually contrasted the North Side with Pilsen and Little Village. With the former symbolizing diversity and assimilation and the latter symbolizing vibrancy of culture—both in a daily sense, exemplified by the strangers greeting her children in Spanish on the street, and in an institutional sense, exemplified by the availability of programs like *Sones de México*. Though she had initially valued the former more highly, she now sees them in balance. She emphasizes that her children “still have that experience” of exposure to diversity in the form of their multicultural school. Her new enthusiasm for programs like the Mexican Music School are not a hard shift away from her earlier views but rather a discovery of balance—a way for her children to build skills for navigating a multiracial English-speaking society will also maintaining a firm connection to their chosen form of Mexican identity.

Coda: Chicago, Ireland, Mexico

It is fitting that Chicago is home to one of the premiere hubs of Mexican *son* revival in the United States. Over a century earlier, the city birthed another music revival with global implications. The

often-told story of Irish dance music's revival has its roots in Chicago, where many tunes still used today were first recorded by immigrant police chief Francis O'Neill (Carolan 1997; Dillane 2009: 45–82). He and his assistants transcribed thousands of tunes, published first in his monumental *Music of Ireland* (O'Neill 1903). Through the advent of wax-cylinder recording technology, he also captured several dozen recordings of master musicians, which have since been digitized and are available online (Ward Irish Music Archives 2010). O'Neill's transcriptions went on to influence the next century of global Irish music revival activities—in addition to echoing down the century within Chicago's large Irish-descended population.

There are parallels between the Chicago Irish traditional music project and the Chicago Mexican traditional music project. Like *Music of Ireland*, which has become the first resource for “most musicians who want to learn a handful of jigs and reels in order to participate in a session” (Stokes and Bohlman 2003: 18), *Sones de México*'s lesson book serves as a material resource for students of a tradition that lacks both substantial documentary history (outside the academy, at least) and available teachers in the cold Midwestern diasporic city of Chicago. O'Neill was able to assemble his collection of tunes representing the geographic breadth of his island country of origin in part because he was no longer there: “Ireland came to O'Neill, it is often argued, in relatively undisturbed social totality in the shape of a large and representative migrant community in Chicago, allowing for a view of the island that would have been more or less impossible back at home at this particular time” (ibid.). In other words, the diverse assemblage of Irish immigrants in Chicago exposed O'Neill to regional variations he would have been unlikely to encounter back home, where it was rare for people to move around between different regions. Similarly, *Sones de México* has an audience for their diverse range of regional *sones* in part because the city's Mexican population represents such regional diversity. One material symbol of this is the prevalence of

hometown associations—clubs where people from particular regional origins in Mexico congregate for social bonding and to raise money to pool and send home to provide assistance to relatives and friends still living in their towns of origin. Such clubs in Chicago exist for immigrants from towns all across Mexico and are sponsored by “Programa Paisano,” a matching funding program of the Mexican government that funds public works (Juan Díes, interview with author, March 5, 2020).¹⁰

Much like the Irish immigrants a century prior, Mexican immigrants in Chicago come together at institutions like the Mexican Music School in a collectivity representing many regional lineage—some of the parents I interviewed at the school, for example, either had been born in or had parents who came from Guanajuato, Jalisco, Veracruz, Guerrero, and Morelos, representing a broad swathe of the most populous central areas of the country from the Pacific Coast to the Gulf of Mexico.¹¹ Juan noted that other parents immigrated from Michoacán, San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas, and Durango. This family history is often expressed as regional pride, though Juan noted that while many children know what state or states their family originated from, they often cannot find the state on a map. *Sones de México*’s geography lessons thus serve multiple purposes, contextualizing the regional origins of different *son* styles while also equipping students with information to contextualize their family history and identity.¹²

10. Oral histories drawn from some members of these Chicago-based hometown associations can be heard at <https://publications.newberry.org/digital/mexican-hometown-associations/oral-histories?path=index>. Accessed February 26, 2020.

11. I did not meet any parents who trace their family histories to either the Yucatan region or the more sparsely populated northern states. This could be a reflection of many factors, including the relatively lower population of those areas of Mexico, the lower representation of those areas among immigrants to Chicago, and the limited nature of ethnographic fieldwork.

12. Juan added the caveat that they are careful to avoid fostering nationalistic pride or flag waving, as he sees this type of nationalism as shallow and unhelpful. Instead, they seek to cultivate a positive sense of self-worth through these musical, historical, and geographic lessons.

One question that remains open is what trajectory the Mexican *son* revival will take. In examining the Irish music revival's Chicago origins, Martin Stokes and Philip V. Bohlman note a tension between two ideological narratives. On the one hand, Francis O'Neill's collection of traditional Irish music in Chicago revealed a "hitherto 'hidden' Ireland" that had been poorly represented by "the messy, opaque, and crypto-colonial efforts of the Victorian collectors" who preceded O'Neill (2003:18). On the other hand, the collecting project represented the ideologies of "rationalism, zoning, monumentalism, and modernist appeal to scientific disinterest, starkly embodied in the urban design of O'Neill's adopted city, Chicago" (ibid.). Stokes and Bohlman raise this contrast to highlight the duality of "traditional" or "folkloric" music—while these musics sometimes do have historical lineages stretching back to rural, pre-industrial roots, the music in present-day Chicago is of the city, not in opposition to it. Juan Díes understands this, as shown in his articulation *sones* as both heritage with a history that must be studied and a living practice of the present to be pushed, experimented with, and transformed:

JD: I think there is a constant tension between tradition, keeping with the tradition, honoring the tradition, learning the tradition and also contributing to the tradition and innovating. So the way we've dealt with this is we refer to our tradition as a living tradition and as an organic entity that you can—very much like an academic field, where you inherit this knowledge that's been accumulated over years, and you have to read all the masters and all the people before you, and once you've proven that you've mastered this knowledge, then you get licensed to contribute to it. Or you can start contributing to it before you learn anything that people have said before you. You may be repeating stuff that's already been said, or making mistakes that have already been made and thoroughly debated. So there's always amateur academics that will pontificate on their blogs or whatever, without the academic discipline. So I think preserving a folk tradition is the same. You can be a student of the masters and really pay homage to the people that came before you, and either agree or disagree with them as you continue developing your own continuation of the tradition. Some traditions are more conservative than others, some people, some cultures are preserving eleventh-century traditions almost unchanged. And there's something to be said about that, it's really remarkable that people have focused on that, and that's fine. And then there's other people who really innovate and—you know, in American folk music there's a lot of singer-songwriters out there. They call themselves folk musicians but they're really generating new material—a lot of fusion elements, of all sorts. So there's a range. I think

we're aware of that range, where it's a constant balancing act for us. It's a source of debate even after 20 years of being in the ensemble. Debating whether we went too far with this, or on the other end of the spectrum, why are we gonna try to do this the way so and so did it, they already did it. We can't possibly improve on that, let's try differently, let's offer something to it. So it's a tension, a creative tension that exists. (Interview with author, April 29, 2015)

This experimentation has included several genre-bridging collaborations over the years. In addition to their work with the brass quintet from the CSO, Sones de México has put on large-scale concert collaborations with blues musician Billy Branch, the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, and the Yellow River Ensemble. One of their particularly interesting collaborations, from the standpoint of the analytical comparison at hand, has been with Seán Cleland and the Irish Music School of Chicago. The two groups have worked together many times over the years, initially brought together when both Juan Díes and Cleland worked at the Old Town School. One of their notable collaborations took place at the School in 2015, when they staged a concert telling the story of Los San Patricios (Saint Patrick's Battalion)—a group of predominantly Irish American soldiers who fought for Mexico during the 1846–48 Mexican–American War. These historical figures proved an ideal vehicle for Irish-Mexican musical collaboration, aided by elements that Juan viewed as musical affinity between the two traditions: “6/8 time, fiddle tunes, marches, harps, foot-tapping and a rich balladry tradition” (PRWeb 2015). It also served as rich symbolism of collaboration between the city’s largest present-day immigrant group, and the musical descendants of the immigrant group that dominated the city a century earlier. Readers can see an earlier collaboration between Sones de México, Seán Cleland, and John Hagstrom on YouTube, where the group has published video excerpts from their twentieth-anniversary concert in Chicago’s Millennium Park (Sones de México Ensemble 2015). Another notable guest joining this collaboration was Alex Chávez, a huapanguera player and anthropologist who produced the first comprehensive study of *huapango arribeño* (also

called *son arribeño*), a style from north-central Mexico and widely practiced on both sides of the US-Mexican border.

One hundred years after Francis O’Neill, there are Irish sessions in pubs throughout Chicago, massive annual festivals devoted to Irish cultural practices that music prominently, a wealth of professional ensembles and soloists, and numerous educational institutions. What is the trajectory for *sones* in Chicago? In this chapter, I have sought to argue that Sones de México, through their Mexican Music School, are playing a crucial role in shaping that legacy—bringing *sones* beyond the purview of youth activists and professional musicians to parents and children. These parents—who are often trying to balance work and multiple children while pursuing artistic, linguistic, cultural, and personal development goals for each child—are often unassuming, but their values and hopes for their children are shaping the future of *son*.

I have also sought to demonstrate how individual actors—like Juan Días—and institutions—like Sones de México, the Old Town School of Folk Music, and the Indiana University Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology—are mutually co-constitutive. There are many accomplished Mexican musicians in Chicago—and there have been for over a century. In explaining how revival movements shift and how institutions like the Mexican Music School come into existence in a particular moment, I have come to conclude that much can be explained by examining how key figures like Juan developed the skills and perspectives to drive the development of such an organization.

Juan did not do it alone, as he has orchestrated the creative input of the other members of Sones de México, and I do not mean to say that only he could have accomplished this. I do think, however, that his particular approach to and understanding of music, folklore, educational institutions, and pedagogy equipped him to be particularly successful at taking advantage of the

current moment, when parents like Mari Carmen, Erica, Gregorio, Alicia, Veronica, Donna, Juan, Silvia, and Francis are trying to find convenient, affordable, and accessible ways to give their children music and community.

Chapter 4

How to Build a Mariachi Education Pipeline

On the Way to the Puerto Rican People's Parade

Saturday, June 16, 2018, 1:48 pm¹

Yazmin and Rudy were growing increasingly stressed as we sat stuck in traffic on a blazing hot June afternoon, attempting to make our way to the other side of Chicago's Humboldt Park. All around us were cars waving large Puerto Rican flags—on their way to witness or participate in the Puerto Rican People's Parade, part of the city's annual weekend-long Puerto Rican Festival. We were on a more focused mission: on our way to meet the rest of the Chicago Mariachi Project students who were supposed to be performing in a music video shoot with a local artist who wanted to take advantage of the festive atmosphere.

Everyone was stressed over the logistics of transporting a dozen-odd teenagers to the middle of an event where there would not be any parking. This was compounded by a miscommunication that had sent our car halfway to Diversey Ave. before receiving an update that our destination was actually two miles away on Division St. As Yazmin and Rudy debated routes to avoid the parade traffic, I sat in the back with Edwin and Maria, who were debating the proper tempo, vihuela strumming pattern, and chord changes of "México, Voz Que Canta," the Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán song blasting from the car's speakers.

• • •

1. Italicized passages like this are narrativized excerpts from my field notes.

These four young people had come together from different neighborhoods and different schools. They may never have known each other if not for the Chicago Mariachi Project (CMP). The moment itself was both everyday and notable—these four teenagers were in the process of spending an entire summer Saturday driving around the city together to perform mariachi music. Not only were they performers, they were quite skilled. How were they brought together to become so committed to this musical pursuit? That day in June was in a sense a microcosm of my time spent with CMP. The day started with a typical Saturday-morning rehearsal of the full fifty-odd-member group, after which the advanced students broke off for an afternoon of performances. The music video shoot (see Figure 4.1) was followed by a block party in Pilsen honoring a young musician from the community who had passed away, then a private graduation party a few blocks away. Throughout the day I tagged along with Yazmin and Rudy as we drove or walked from event to event, watching them navigate the balance between being peers to the young performers—as recent alumni of CMP—and being mentors—as college students who served as volunteer musical coaches with the high-school-aged members of the group. In figure 4.1 one can see on the right in the background wearing navy blue t-shirts (L to R) Yazmin, Rudy (back to camera), and Phil Olazaba, lead teacher of CMP. The CMP students preparing to perform are dressed in white shirts with navy pants or skirts and *moños* (bow ties). On the left in the navy t-shirt is Álvaro Obregón, founder and leader of CMP.



Figure 4.1. CMP arriving at music video shoot. Photo by author.

Music—and mariachi primarily—was the substance undergirding the myriad social relationships on display that day. Mariachi had brought these young people together, forged bonds of friendship (and more, for those who had begun dating a fellow member of the group), and given them a context in which they could navigate their own senses of community, history, respect, professionalism, and creative expression on shared terrain. “Mariachi,” however, is not an agent capable of deliberate action—it is deceptive to say “mariachi” brought these young people together when in fact it was the long and deliberate work of several key adults who had set out to create the Chicago Mariachi Project.

This chapter takes CMP as a case study to examine questions of individual people and organizational structure—following the dual focus of this project on the musical lives of young immigrants and second-generation Americans in Chicago as well as the structural dynamics of immigrant music traditions in a nonprofit music education system. In this case, that means exploring the interplay between CMP and its young members’ interests and development as well as the structural challenges faced by its leaders in their attempt to create a youth mariachi education infrastructure in a city that lacked one.

With this case study, I use the metaphor of an educational “pipeline” to focus on the emergence of an artistically and musically rigorous program. The metaphorical pipeline is the sequence of opportunities from childhood to adolescence that allows young musicians to develop a level of skill necessary to produce artistically respected renditions of their musical form. This pipeline to artistic excellence is distinct from “exposure” models in which young people are exposed to diverse musical genres without the expectation that they will advance to a high level of skill. My goal here is to answer several questions—posed as specific to this group, but with the potential for broader relevance to other contexts.

- How did a group of educators and community leaders successfully build a mariachi program that brings together young people from across the city?
- What beliefs or principles about youth education and mariachi have guided the group to a level of musical excellence receiving national recognition?
- From an institutional standpoint, how have the leaders of CMP achieved so much on such a limited budget?

In answering these questions, I do not mean to position CMP as unique in its success—to be sure, there are other successful mariachi programs across the Southwest, and there are even

several other burgeoning groups in Chicago. The emergence, rapid growth, and artistic success of CMP, however, offers insight into the factors that allow a music education organization to do these things with limited resources. In the following sections I lay out an argument that this was accomplished in large part due to the guiding principles of the group's leaders and the dense network of connections between people and institutions that provided the leadership, instruction, and space necessary for the group. Together, these people and institutions constitute the "pipeline," the established pathway along which students can travel to reach the destination—a high level of musical and performative skill, genre knowledge, and dedication to mariachi. This case study is broadly relevant to any group of people seeking to establish a rigorous music education program in a genre that lacks existing youth education infrastructure.

In the first section of this chapter, I contextualize the history of mariachi education in Chicago and introduce CMP. In the second section, I examine the group's guiding ideologies and values. The third section digs into the dense social and organizational networks of people and institutions that, I argue, enabled the rapid success of CMP. The fourth section moves into an exploration of the young musicians are shaped by both CMP and mariachi more broadly, through an examination of the group's annual trip to the Mariachi Spectacular conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The fifth section builds on this through an examination of gender as a pedagogical and performative dimension within mariachi education. In the sixth and final section, I return to the broader question of how this kind of experience affects the young participants.

Part I: Background and Context

Mexicanidad in Twenty-First-Century Chicago; or, Why do young people play mariachi?

Yazmin (Y): I think I was always aware that I was Mexican in the sense that my parents have always brought up—like, I knew I was different, I think because of media in the sense of television, I’m like “oh yeah, I’m not like them.” I was aware of the differences I had from what was traditionally American. And so, because of that, I was able to distinguish what was Mexican and what wasn’t. So like, learning about different artists at the time, when I was taking the Arte class, learning about artists like Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, and what they did in the art community. And bringing those projects to life. It was definitely different, and it definitely made me aware of being Mexican. Like “these are specifically Mexican things.” And I liked doing it. It was great, because I was already aware that it was a Mexican thing to do, but I wanted to do it. (Interview with author, June 9, 2018)

I was seated across the table from Yazmin in the cavernous cafeteria of Benito Juarez High School on a Saturday afternoon in June. We had just come downstairs from a three-hour rehearsal of the Chicago Mariachi Project. Yazmin, an alumna of the organization, was finishing her first year at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). She was there that day—as on most of her Saturday mornings—to volunteer as an assistant instructor and mentor to the more than fifty middle- and high-school students in CMP’s three Mariachi Academy ensembles. By that point, I had known Yazmin for half a year and had observed her teaching and coaching with a range of CMP students. That afternoon—as we sat surrounded by floor-to-ceiling murals depicting motifs from ancient and contemporary Mexican history, in a high school that came into existence in the 1970s through sustained Mexican American community activism in the surrounding Pilsen neighborhood—I was seeking to understand Yazmin’s relationships with music, mariachi, and *mexicanidad* as mediated by her involvement with the Chicago Mariachi Project.

In the quotation that opens this section, Yazmin was exploring the ambiguity of her feelings regarding a question I had posed: to what extent, as a young person, had she sought out distinctly Mexican forms of artistic or aesthetic expression, and to what extent had she simply pursued the extracurricular activities available in her neighborhood environment? Her answer is a testament to one of the core ideas of this chapter: for many of the young people with whom I have talked over my roughly ten months of fieldwork with CMP, their engagement with Mexican musical heritage was not a goal set out by their families or themselves. Their parents did not push them into it, nor did most of them feel a strong sense of cultural nationalism that drove them to pursue mariachi. Rather, individual and organizational actors across the city built up—gradually and often not in overt coordination—a network of opportunities for young people in Chicago to engage with mariachi music. For the children of immigrants in Chicago, this type of informal network of music-learning opportunities—unplanned and crossing public/nonprofit lines—gives them the chance to negotiate how they want to engage with art and community affiliation. I further suggest that the nature and structures of public school and nonprofit arts education in the twenty-first-century US city create ample opportunity for this sort of development. Cumulatively, these opportunities also constitute a musical pipeline—such that students may move through a series of opportunities, from elementary school through college, that equip them to perform mariachi at a high level of skill. This chapter lays out the case study of CMP as an example of how key individual actors can take advantage of a broader environment to create a pivotal education experience for young people in Chicago.

The Students of CMP

Who are the students of CMP? They range from elementary school students to seniors in high school. Many come from Chicago's predominantly Mexican areas, including Pilsen and various neighborhoods on the southwest side of the city. However, some students also come from the South, West, and North sides, from suburbs like Harvard, Illinois, and from as far as northern Indiana. The majority are first- or second-generation Mexican American, though some have other Latin American heritage and a few have no Mexican ancestry at all.

Below the surface-level demographics, there are several characteristics that are widely shared and are significant for my analysis. First, none of the students with whom I have spoken come from mariachi-performing families. To the extent that they were familiar with mariachi as a genre, style, or repertoire before joining the program, it was primarily from hearing classic songs like "Cielito Lindo" at home when their parents played recordings. Most were the first or only musicians in their immediate families (though some spoke of aunts, uncles, or grandparents back in Mexico who were musicians). Their parents tended to be quite supportive—as is necessary for a minor who is attending weekly Saturday morning rehearsals and frequent performing engagements—but nonmusical themselves.

Second, the majority of students are highly involved with other extracurricular activities. Several do Mexican folkloric dance, many are involved with sports (particularly soccer), and many also play other forms of music. Here, one can also see a divide between the instruments. Those who play violin and trumpet find it easy to integrate themselves into school orchestral ensembles and pursue private lessons through programs like the Merit School of Music—one of the city's most storied youth instrumental instruction programs, where teachers tend to teach using classical or

classical-adjacent pedagogical systems, such as the Suzuki method. By contrast, those who play guitar find it harder to integrate into their schools' ensembles, and those who play *viuela* or *guitarrón* find it impossible—with the exception, of course, of school mariachi ensembles for the few who have that option.

One result of all this is that students follow heterogeneous paths. Some, like Yazmin, have benefited from an in-school mariachi pipeline that built their instrumental skills and mariachi repertoire over many years, allowing for an easy transition into CMP's Mariachi Academy ensembles. Others, like Rudy, were introduced to me as examples of "quick learners"—he did not have much musical training and only took up the *guitarrón* in his adolescence, but he quickly reached the requisite skill level to succeed in CMP's most advanced ensemble. One student splits her time between CMP and classical music, playing violin in her school's orchestra. Another plays violin at CMP but in her spare time studies classical piano and acts in her school's musical theater productions. One upshot of all this is that CMP is doing different things for each student developmentally. For students, it may be an opportunity to take on responsibilities and mature, to see new people and places through travel for performances, to master an unfamiliar genre and repertoire that they find intriguing, or to become more familiar with a vaguely understood tradition that their parents love.

Chicago, Mariachi, History

In 2008, for the first time in Chicago, there was a continuous elementary-to-high-school series of mariachi education programs. This may be a surprise to some Chicagoans; the city has had communities of Mexican immigrants since the early twentieth century, and by the early twenty-first

century over 1.6 million Mexican-descended people lived in the greater Chicago metropolitan area (Pew Research Center 2014). Despite this, youth music programs for any Mexican musical traditions have been few and far between. By comparison, in the US Southwest—most of which was part of Mexico until 1848—there has been a long history of youth mariachi programs, particularly formalized in some public schools starting in the 1960s. They are so popular that students are able to take part in numerous state and regional festivals (typically referred to as “conferences” within the mariachi education movement) with divisions for elementary, secondary, and collegiate mariachi ensembles (Salazar 2011). Chicago has seen short-lived youth mariachi ensembles over the years, but the current boom can be dated to 2008 when for the first time a Chicago student—in the Pilsen neighborhood, at least—could participate in mariachi education throughout their primary and secondary education.

CMP’s leaders see the roots of this effort in the afterschool mariachi program started at Benito Juarez High School in 1994 by Victor Pichardo, a musician and educator (also a founding member of Sones de México Ensemble—see Chapter 3). The program at Juarez was continuous except for a few years in the early 2010s when the school’s principal, Juan Carlos Ocón, chose to focus the school’s efforts on boosting academic outcomes. The Juarez mariachi program returned in 2014 as an in-school classroom opportunity—an upgrade in the sense that more resources can be directed to a program when it is part of the school day curriculum, taught by a full-time teacher. This development took place in large part through the efforts of community leader Álvaro Obregón, who encouraged Ocón to support the mariachi program and helped him to find a classroom instructor. Obregón had also been instrumental in starting mariachi programs in the Pilsen neighborhood’s other two public schools. In 2007 he helped Orozco Community Academy to start a program, and the following year he worked with principal Martha Alba at Cooper Dual Language

Academy to start a program—with assistance from Victor Pichardo, the CPS Department of Arts Education, and the Resurrection Project (a Pilsen community organization). By that point in 2008, Obregón and his many collaborators had successfully created a mariachi education pipeline—that is, a student could attend all twelve years of public school in the same neighborhood, enjoying a continuous mariachi education program throughout.

In 2014, Obregón sought to expand the scope of these efforts and founded the Chicago Mariachi Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to “to elevate the Art of Mariachi and promote excellence in musicianship through education, coordination and support.” Several crucial ideologies are embedded in this mission statement, which will be analyzed at further length later in this chapter. Obregón sees CMP’s work as tripartite—embodied in “education, coordination, and support.” Though all three are important to his broader vision of establishing Chicago as a major center for mariachi, this chapter is focused primarily on the first: education. CMP and its leaders support mariachi programs like those at Cooper, Orozco, and Juarez, but here I will focus primarily on CMP’s Mariachi Academy—a trio of citywide auditioned ensembles. Over fifty students from throughout the city, the surrounding suburbs, and as far as northern Indiana now drive to Pilsen at 9:00 am every Saturday for three hours of mariachi education. The Mariachi Academy’s highest-level ensemble (“Group 3”) performs at venues throughout the city, including guest appearances with international stars like Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán when they make appearances in Chicago.

In 2017, members of the CMP Mariachi Academy flew to Albuquerque to take part in the 27th annual Mariachi Spectacular, a weeklong series of workshops, performances, history lectures, and competitions that brought together hundreds of youth mariachi performers from across the Southwest every year since 1991. The three-year-old CMP ensemble took first place in the High

School division, beating a range of long-established mariachis from Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

How and why did this story take place? This question can be answered from a number of angles. One might examine the different regional histories of mariachi education or the ideological processes through which mariachi even came to stand in as a symbol of Mexicanness. Other scholars have indeed taken up these questions (Salazar 2011, Madrid 2013), which are still worthy of further study. In this project, however, I seek to recruit CMP as a case study in the broader analytical project of explicating the intersection of community-based music education and immigrant youth subjectivity in twenty-first-century Chicago. This distinction helps to make clear what the dissertation is and is not about. A different—and doubtlessly important—project might take CMP and focus on the history of Mexican American musical formations. In that case the unit of analysis would be an ethnic or national community (depending on the analytical scheme used). Here, the unit of analysis is instead the community-based nonprofit music organization. This is important to keep in mind, as the project's primary goal is not to explore the broader workings of cultural *mexicanidad* in Chicago but instead to examine the broader workings of public-nonprofit arts education as a phenomenon in the twenty-first-century US city that is easily recruited by a range of immigrant-descended communities. This goal still intersects with the work of ethnic studies, as I am concerned with the formation—or lack thereof—of ethnic consciousness in present-day young people.

CMP at the Old Town School of Folk Music

Wednesday, January 18, 2017, 8:00 pm

As the houselights dimmed in the Old Town School of Folk Music's auditorium, Mateo Mulcahy, the director of Community Projects and Events at the school, came to the stage. "I know Mexican music and dance is loved across Latin America, but are there any Mexicans here tonight? ¿Mexicanos?" Roughly half of the audience erupted in cheers. Mulcahy noted that "this fantastic example of traditional Mexican music and dance" was thanks to "our youth—la juventude—keeping these traditions alive." This was not the first time that night that the language of maintenance or revival of tradition was used in reference to the two groups of youth performers.

The concert's first half consisted of a wide array of folkloric dances from various regions of Mexico. This regional diversity was emphasized by the group's director, José Luis Ovalle González, who periodically came on stage to explain the origins of different dance movements and costume elements. In explaining the origin of one northern Mexican dance type, he launched into a story of the nineteenth-century mixture of musical influences between German immigrants, native Mexicans, and Tejanos in the Rio Grande region—"right where the muro [wall] is going to go up." This piece of dark humor, two days before the inauguration of President Donald Trump, prompted raucous laughter from the audience.

After a brief intermission, the Chicago Mariachi Project (CMP) players came to the stage. The eleven-piece ensemble performing that night was an advanced subset of the larger CMP organization. Arrayed across the stage were six violinists, two trumpet players, and three armonía (rhythm/harmony) players on guitar, vihuela, and guitarrón. The young musicians played a variety of classic mariachi songs, including "La Bamba," "Guadalajara," and "El Son de la Negra." These familiar tunes received eager applause from the audience, as many around me sang along with the students on stage or cheered at references to regional identities like "la gente de Michoacan [the people of Michoacan]." The woman sitting next to me held up her young daughter so that she could see and encouraged her to sing along. The technical quality of

the student performers was not always high; while the trumpet players had remarkable precision and consistency of tone for such young musicians, the violin section often lacked the coordination that is a hallmark of highly polished mariachi groups. The young singers demonstrated great enthusiasm, but they had not yet mastered a comfortable stage presence or delivery of mariachi lyrics. Judging solely by audience reaction, however, this made no difference for the crowd.



Figure 4.2. CMP Students on stage at the Old Town School of Folk Music. Photo by author.

One recurring element at this performance was a discourse of pride in tradition, homeland, and the youth onstage. Both José Luis Ovalle González and Álvaro Obregón, the founder and leader of the CMP, carefully grounded their students' performances in lineages both artistic and migratory, describing the formation of styles as well as the dispersal of mariachi to different corners of the globe. Ovalle González

emphasized the passion of his students, implicit in his assertion that, if they could volunteer their time in a dance company on top of school and work, then no child in the audience should complain to a parent of having too much homework to do. Obregón further implicated his students in a cultural project of “elevat[ing] the art of mariachi,” a project that he asserted “sets us apart,” from other, implicitly less artistic, forms of music making. As the concert wound to a close at 10:30 pm, Ovalle González and Obregón reminded members of the audience to follow the two groups on social media and stay involved as they work to expand their presence in Chicago.

• • •

The concert hall that night reflected the priorities and choices of students, parents, community members, teachers focused on cultural preservation, and culture brokers focused on community engagement—a role that the Old Town School directors take on due to the size and power of their institution. Though it was not as immediately obvious, municipal cultural policy was also implicated in the performance that night. Over the course of several decades, the Chicago Public School (CPS) system has shifted toward the use of public-nonprofit partnerships to augment school-based arts education. The present system of in CPS emphasizes partnerships with “teaching artists,” who are often part of community-based organizations like CMP. This established system of community-school collaboration makes it easier for organizations like CMP that are meeting a clear student and parent interest to quickly find success through partnerships with public schools.

Finally, the concert revealed certain tensions in the construction of Mexican dance and music as aesthetic and cultural forms. While Mulcahy and Ovalle González used a language of revival and maintenance that in many ways maps onto the same discourse used to describe other (non-Mexican) folk musics that are learned and performed at the Old Town School, Obregón’s

emphasis on “elevating the art of Mariachi” suggested a different course. By positioning mariachi not only in the discourse of tradition but in the discourse of art—one that is less often discussed in contexts like the Old Town School—Obregón effectively made an argument about the way in which people should conceive of mariachi music and its hierarchical place in society. Category labels for music like “art,” “traditional,” and “folk” are, after all, frequently invoked to suggest hierarchies and boundaries (Weiss 2014: 510).

The issues highlighted by this concert help to illustrate the range of questions that drive my project. What motivations do students have for engaging with music that is part of an immigrant heritage tradition? What role does such music play in their lives beyond direct participation in these music education organizations? How do different levels of cultural politics and cultural policy—in this case, CPS arts policy, CPS schools as institutional actors, large-scale culture broker organizations like Old Town School, and small community-based entities like CMP—interact to create an environment which evaluates community cultural interests and creates opportunities to meet those interests? Finally, how do members of immigrant-descended communities construct “music” as a category in relationship with narratives of tradition, heritage, and art?

Part II: The Role of Social and Institutional Structures in Building Chicago’s

Mariachi Education Pipeline

Musical Pipelines, Musical Infrastructure

Any young person who wants to achieve a high level of musical skill on a particular instrument and

in a particular genre requires a sequence of learning opportunities to build up her or his skill. In a city like Chicago, this sequence of learning opportunities—a pipeline—is typically made up a diverse infrastructure of individuals and institutions, for example, private teachers, public schools, and community-based organizations.

Imagine a six-year-old girl who attends a Chicago Symphony Orchestra concert for the first time. She falls in love with the music and is particularly drawn to the sound of the violin. The next day she tells her parents that she wants to play the violin in an orchestra. She begins private violin lessons, studying with a teacher whose pedagogical technique is aligned with the performance practice of Western European art music, which I will refer to by its colloquial name, “classical music.” She might pursue these lessons through any number of organized schools or programs in Chicago ranging in scale from the large and storied Merit School of Music to neighborhood programs like the South Side Suzuki Cooperative. After several years of private lessons, she is ready to play in an ensemble. Fortunately, her public school has a string orchestra starting in sixth grade. She develops her ensemble skills and continues private lessons. By the time she reaches high school, she earns a first-chair position in her school’s orchestra. Her teacher, who is well acquainted with the classical education network in Chicago, encourages her to audition for the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras (CYSO), and she earns a spot in their premier ensemble, the Symphony Orchestra. That fall she performs for the first time at Symphony Center’s Orchestra Hall, where just ten years prior she had first heard this music.

Now picture a six-year-old girl who attends her first mariachi concert, hearing the Grammy-Award-winning Mariachi Los Camperos at Chicago’s Old Town School of Folk Music. She falls in love with the music and is particularly drawn to the sound of the violin. The next day she tells her parents that she wants to play the violin in a mariachi. What do her parents do? It is easy to find a

violin teacher in Chicago, but most have no familiarity with mariachi. The girl may be slowed in her path if all of her youthful practice time is spent on Mozart and Bach. Though she may develop strong technical skills on the violin, performance practice varies greatly between genres and it requires substantial additional work to transition between generic styles. Her school has no mariachi program. Perhaps she could join the school orchestra when she is older, but again, she would have to put in substantial additional work on her own to translate her skills to an out-of-school mariachi context. There are many professional mariachis in Chicago, but most of their members are adult men. How is this young girl to pursue her goal?

These paired stories are meant to highlight two points. First, straightforwardly, is the challenge of finding musical training in a non-hegemonic art form. By hegemonic art form, I mean those that have achieved a level of social and political dominance that ensures substantial societal resources are devoted to their reproduction, including the institutions that foster that reproduction—including incorporation of the art form into public schools, university-level teacher education programs, and citywide afterschool programming. In most US cities, classical music is a hegemonic musical form. Historically supported by and catering to the wealthy classes of society, the institutions at the core of classical music's reproduction (e.g., concert halls, conservatories, and youth orchestras) are kept afloat through philanthropic donations. Since these genres—such as orchestral music, opera, or chamber music—are thus established as high-prestige, they become understood as such even by those who are not wealthy. Scholars of education have also advanced the argument that higher education music training and youth orchestras more broadly perpetuate this cultural hegemony (Hein 2016; Fairbanks 2019).

Other genres find success in terms of reproduction (that is, perpetuating the tradition) by aligning themselves with the hegemonic classical music. In some cases this is by working within

the musical framework of classical music. The assorted band and choral styles that are widespread in American high schools are largely derived from the classical tradition in instrumentation and approach to tonal harmony. Though brass band music, to take one example, is not itself a hegemonic genre, it exists in large part because the hegemony of classical music has produced the instruments, teachers, pedagogies, and educational institutions that enable brass bands' genre reproduction.

To take a different style, jazz has been established in many US music conservatories in part thanks to its widespread reputation as "America's classical music." Musicians like Wynton Marsalis burnish this reputation by crossing between genres, emphasizing the rigor and technicality of jazz as analogous—from a cultural value standpoint—to classical. In Chicago, one of the more prominent jazz-based ensembles is the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, which fuses jazz and classical and regularly performs at the city's large downtown Pritzker Pavilion. Chicago has one of the longest histories of incorporating jazz into formal public school music education structures, dating back to the 1930s and Walter Dyett's influential work as an educator at DuSable High School. Dyett himself had a background as an Army band director. This is all not to say that jazz is a hegemonic genre, but that some of its success in attaining institutional legibility has been achieved by aligning it with classical music. Many jazz musicians object to this alignment, and many alternative stylistic and pedagogical schools of practice abound; particularly in cities like Chicago with long performance histories and performance venues to keep multiple variants of the tradition alive.

Other genres find success not so much by aligning themselves with classical music but by building up their own pedagogical infrastructure. "Folk music" in its twentieth-century US conception has a certain mainstream status in Chicago thanks to the influence of large institutions like the Old Town School of Folk Music—a young person who is interested will find it relatively

easy to learn the banjo or join a fiddling group. Thus, though folk music has not attained the same top-down cultural power of classical music, it is firmly established. Within this framework I have established, then, one can conceive of non-hegemonic genres as falling into two categories: first, those that have established forms of institutional reproduction either through alignment with classical music or through the development of a network of performance or training institutions (e.g., brass bands, community choral music, jazz, folk music); and second, those that have not yet established such institutionalization. One should also note that these statuses are not absolute but vary with geography. Mariachi has a dense base of institutionalized centers for reproduction in the US Southwest, but in Chicago it does not. Throughout this chapter I will refer back to this concept with the term “non-institutionalized.” Thus, returning to the initial point here, any young person interested in learning a non-institutionalized genre like mariachi faces an initial challenge of finding training resources.

The second point I mean to highlight with the hypothetical dichotomy opening this section is the way in which a successful art form’s training pipeline—seen in the classical vignette—consists of numerous overlapping and interwoven resources. Private teachers are speaking the same musical language as school instructors, making it easy for students to cumulatively build their skills in a single genre through multiple inputs. Both private and school music instructors come from backgrounds—including, potentially, professional performance and university or conservatory training—that have acquainted them with networks of opportunities, from neighborhood orchestras to summer music camps to competitive citywide ensembles. This amounts to a shared social structure, in which each adult musician that the student interacts with is acting as a separate node in an interconnected social web of classical resources. Their influences on the student are mutually

reinforcing, all serving to acculturate the student into the world of classical music and develop a comprehensive picture of the opportunities available to her.

Unseen in these hypothetical stories are the economic structures in the background. Private classical violin teachers are omnipresent because their skills are in demand. Their art form has been constructed as socially desirable for young people—it signals their cultivation to parents’ social peers, it prepares them to compete for opportunities such as college admission that ostensibly value artistic skill as a sign of well-roundedness, and it has been marketed by music educators and researchers as capable of increasing students’ attention and perseverance (Scott 1992), intelligence (Degé et al. 2011), and emotional intelligence (Salafiyah 2014). School-based orchestras became omnipresent over the course of the twentieth century. By the late twentieth century, over a third of public elementary and high schools offered string instrument instruction (Gillespie and Hamman 1998: 76).² Competitive citywide ensembles are supported by an extensive philanthropic structure; nearly 500 such youth orchestras exist nationwide, and the largest have budgets in the millions of dollars—in 2010, the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras had a budget of \$2.4 million (Commanday 2014).

One can see it is no accident that the first young woman found a clear path to her goal. While much practice was required along the way, at each step on her path there were well-established interlocking systems that seamlessly supported her. How, in the absence of such social and economic structures of support, does a young person pursue a similar path in a non-dominant music tradition? While this chapter focuses on mariachi as an illustrative case study, it is intended

2. Indeed, your author is the product of such educational infrastructure, having received violin instruction through after-school programs in elementary and middle school, and in-school string orchestra in high school, and private lessons from a Suzuki teacher from third grade through high school.

to provide the tools for a more generalizable analysis of how people can create structures of support for youth cultivation in non-dominant music traditions.

Creating a sustained pathway from childhood to adult mariachi performance is one of CMP's goals. On a small scale, they have accomplished this in the Pilsen neighborhood with elementary-through-high school and out-of-school mariachi learning opportunities. In a broader sense, Chicago's youth mariachi infrastructure has been built in gradual and piecemeal fashion by a loosely connected network of teachers and community leaders over the past ten years. The present section of the chapter argues that this pathways or pipeline has successfully come into existence through the interaction of economic structures (school-nonprofit partnerships, grant funding) and social structures (informal networks of mariachi educators and mariachi-invested community members).

The point of this analysis is to build better understanding of how, in a pragmatic, logistical sense, groups of people build the infrastructure and educational pipelines that allow or enable young people to pick up and continue a musical tradition. This is particularly relevant for supporters of non-institutionalized music education genres like mariachi, which are likely to have a harder time integrating their music into the public school system on a large scale. Here, I think of "music education genre" as a category distinct from genre in general. Mariachi has a long history as a professional popular music form in Chicago, but it has a much shorter history as a genre within the city's youth music-learning sector.

In a disciplinary sense, this argument builds on the nascent ethnomusicological work on community-based institutions of teaching and learning (O'Toole 2018; Bartleet and Higgins 2018) and argues for more concerted organizational analysis that unites the aesthetic nuance of ethnomusicology with the systems-level view of organizational sociologists like Paul DiMaggio

(DiMaggio and Useem 1978; DiMaggio and Anheier 1990; DiMaggio 2006; DiMaggio and Fernández-Kelly 2010; DiMaggio and Fernández-Kelly 2015).

The Case of Mariachi in Chicago

Recent developments in Chicago's arts education policy have created fertile ground for private-nonprofit partnerships. In the case of CMP, the partnership is somewhat unusual in that the organization is primarily independent of the Chicago Public Schools, yet three of its four leaders are full-time teachers or administrators in CPS schools in the same neighborhood (Pilsen). Thus, while CPS is not directly providing the funding or school time for CMP's Mariachi Academy, the group's networking and accomplishments are possible in large part because past activism and CPS's neighborhood school model enabled the clustering and collaboration of Mexican-descended educators. Meanwhile, philanthropic funding for out-of-school arts learning or school-nonprofit arts partnerships has created a network of other mariachi activities that provides a feeder source of students to CMP.

The notion of "pipeline" effects for CMP can be understood by looking at their 2017 performance at the Albuquerque Mariachi Spectacular. The festival closes with a Showcase performance, in which the best youth mariachi ensembles from the region compete for prizes and recognition. In 2017, many festival attendees were surprised when a new group from far-away Chicago took first place in the High School division. One of the stars of that champion ensemble was Yazmin.



Figure 4.3. Screenshot of the YouTube video of CMP’s award-winning performance at the 2017 Mariachi Spectacular Showcase. The still image shows Yazmin (Mariachi Spectacular de ABQ 2017).

Nine years earlier, Yazmin had picked up a *guitarrón* for the first time in a mariachi class at Cooper Academy in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. How and why did this story take place? Yazmin had no musicians in her family, and she did not grow up listening to mariachi at home—how did she get to that stage in Albuquerque, earning recognition as among the best youth mariachis in the country? This is at core a question of institutional organization. A citywide youth orchestra or a chorus like the world-touring Chicago Children’s Choir is fed by a network of radial pipelines—school-day programs, neighborhood-based community ensembles, afterschool programs, and private teachers. Because of the long-term work and high-quality teaching required to achieve this level of youth artistic excellence, such a network of sequential, cumulative pedagogical opportunities is crucial. I argue here that the Chicago Mariachi Project has achieved its goals of artistic excellence by piecing together just such a network of opportunities. The more interesting question that I seek to answer is how CMP’s leaders were able to build that network over the past ten years in Chicago.

This story shows how a low-budget citywide nonprofit program with several key school partners is able to provide a platform for youth musical excellence. That platform may, down the road, be parlayed into more durable integration of the genre into institutional structures like the school system or the philanthropic funding sector—a sector for which mariachi education is not as

legible as classical music or jazz education. Taking Yazmin as our protagonist, I explore how she came to be on that stage in Albuquerque by tracking the locations of Yazmin's mariachi development so as to show how they served as social hubs connecting many of the people important to this story.

Yazmin

Yazmin was born in Chicago and has lived her whole life in the Pilsen Neighborhood. Both of her parents were born in Mexico and moved to Chicago as children. Her earliest memories include a love for singing and making art at home. When she started Elementary School at Cooper Dual Language Academy (see Figure 4.4), the school had no program that would give her opportunities to sing, so she signed up for art. This changed in the fourth grade, when Victor Pichardo started an after-school mariachi program at Cooper. It seemed like her best outlet for singing, so she joined. Pichardo asked her which instrument she wanted to play. She tried guitar but could not remember the chords, so they made her play the *guitarrón*—the acoustic bass string instrument of a mariachi ensemble.

After graduating from Cooper, Yazmin went to Orozco for grades 6–8. By that time, Pichardo and his son had also started a mariachi program at Orozco, so Yazmin continued to play. She also got to know another teacher, Phil Olazaba, who worked part-time as a guest teacher at Orozco. By eighth grade she was starting to have second thoughts about mariachi, as she received a lot of teasing from her peers. She tried to quit, but her parents talked her out of it.

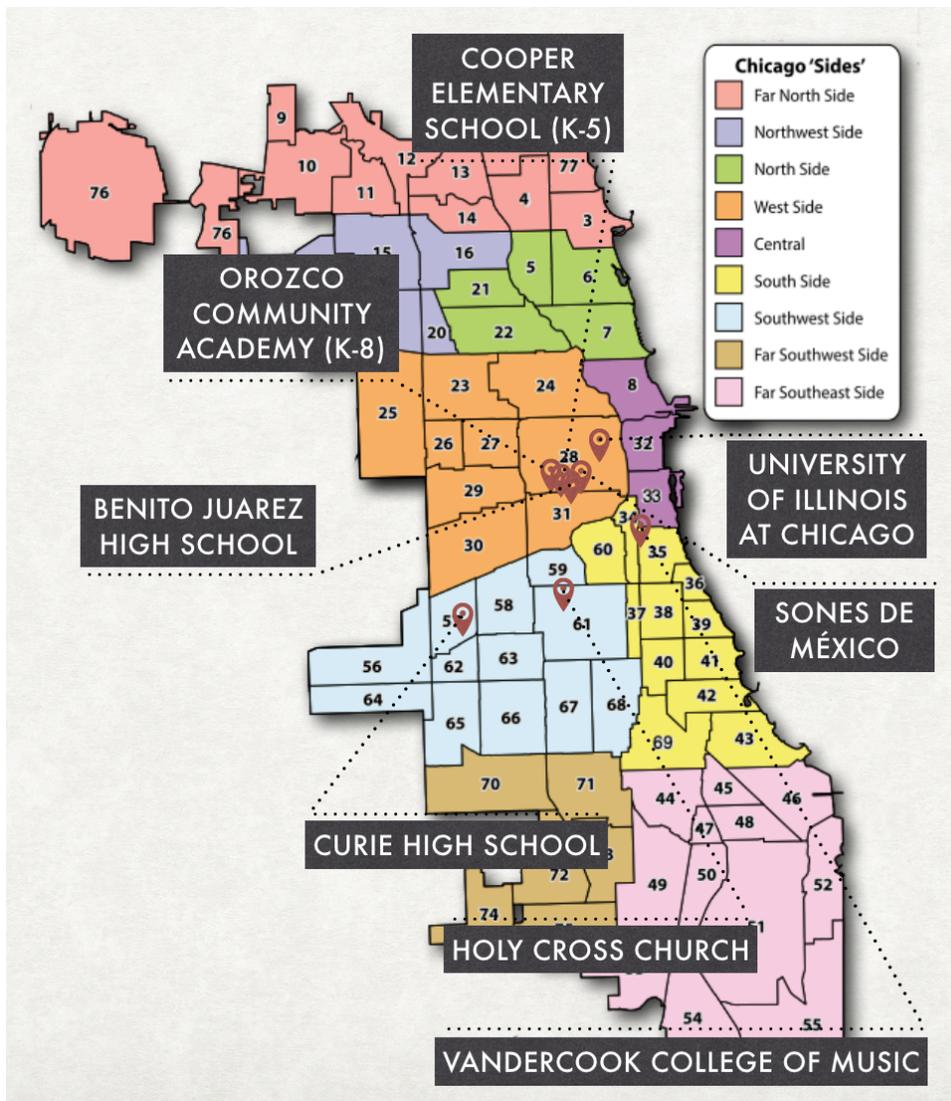


Figure 4.4. Map of educational institutions discussed in this section. Figure by author.

For high school, Yazmin was admitted to Whitney Young, one of Chicago’s selective enrollment schools. Whitney Young has a relatively low proportion of Mexican American students—especially compared to the neighborhood schools in Pilsen—and it does not have a mariachi ensemble. Luckily for Yazmin, she was contacted in ninth grade by Phil Olazaba and Álvaro Obregón, who had just started a citywide weekend mariachi program called the Chicago Mariachi Project. They asked her to audition, and she joined CMP, attending weekly Saturday

rehearsals at Benito Juarez High School. At first, she maintained an ambivalent attitude—she enjoyed playing mariachi but kept the activity at a bit of a remove, skipping rehearsals when she did not feel like going. Her instructors, however, began to shift her attitude, and she began to respect the genre more.

Y: I think it's been gradual, but I think the steepest part of growth was when I started with the Chicago Mariachi Project. I said that my first year was more like a "whatever." It was more recent where I was like "you know, I really shouldn't be—I love this music, it has the ability to make me feel so sad, it has the ability of making me feel very happy and very energetic." Once I understood that, the kind of power that music has, I was able to appreciate it as a whole and be able to provide feedback and just like all of that stuff. But yeah, for sure, when I was here at Chicago Mariachi Project is when I realized "oh, yes, I respect this music more than I did when I was younger." (Interview with author, June 9, 2018)

That summer, she participated in a mariachi program at Curie High School through After School Matters, a citywide umbrella organization that funds youth programming. That program's teacher, Mike Espinosa, was also one of CMP's lead instructors. By her senior year of high school, Yazmin was the accomplished musician who can be seen in the video at Figure 4.3. The following year, she enrolled at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where at the time of our interview she was a first-year studying computer science. She joined UIC's Mariachi Fuego—also directed by Mike Espinosa—and volunteers as an Assistant Instructor at CMP on the weekends.

In summary, from fourth grade through college, Yazmin participated in a series of interlocking mariachi education experiences that have cultivated her into an award-winning musician, allowed her to travel and perform in the US Southwest and throughout Chicago, given her leadership and teaching skills, and introduced her to a vibrant community of peers.

This network of opportunities did not exist by chance—in fact, it is quite hard to build such a series of programs from scratch in an out-of-school environment completely dominated by classical music and jazz education. Building the network of opportunities that allows someone like

Yazmin to have this experience requires teachers, space, leadership, and money—which can be challenging to obtain for practitioners of a non-institutionalized genre like mariachi in Chicago. Here I examine how this network came to exist.

The CMP Academy Team: Álvaro Obregón, Martha Alba, Phil Olazaba, and Mike Espinosa

CMP's Mariachi Academy is driven primarily by four central figures. Álvaro Obregón is the founder and president of CMP. A long-time community organizer, he has worked for many years around issues of affordable housing and cultural revitalization in Chicago's Mexican communities. He serves as the group's chief visionary, charting a course that will serve student and parent needs while elevating mariachi as an art form in Chicago. Martha Alba, CMP's other lead administrator, is the principal of Cooper Academy during the day. She manages finances and logistics for the group and serves as a child-development-informed check on some of Obregón's bolder ideas for the group. Rounding out the Mariachi Academy team are teachers Phil Olazaba and Mike Espinosa. Both are full-time Chicago Public Schools music teachers—Olazaba at Cooper Academy and Espinosa at Juarez High School—and both have played mariachi professionally for many years in Chicago. Examining how these four came together to lead CMP's Mariachi Academy provides insight into the social and institutional connections that enabled this to happen.

Álvaro Obregón was born and raised in Chicago. Most of his career has been in politics and community organizing. For many years he worked at the Resurrection Project, a large community organization that provides housing, education, health, and immigration services with the goal of revitalizing Pilsen. He then went on to manage Cook County Commissioner Jesus "Chuy" García's government office and constituent services. Though Obregón has never been a professional

musician, he is an ardent fan of music—which I know well from discussing some of the tens of thousands of tracks on his iPod while we were on a flight from Chicago to Albuquerque. For many years he organized an annual festival of traditional Mexican culture and performance, and he has sought other ways to support local traditional music. He serves on the board of Sones de México, a Mexican folkloric ensemble and education program cofounded by Victor Pichardo. Pichardo also founded Chicago’s first long-term afterschool youth mariachi program in 1994 at Benito Juarez High School. This was potently symbolic, as Juarez was built in the late 1970s thanks to a decade of sustained community activism and political pressure from Pilsen’s Mexican American residents (Alvarez 2008: 160–200). Obregón watched Pichardo’s efforts with interest, and in 2007 he helped Pichardo secure a grant to purchase instruments and start a mariachi program for Orozco’s middle school students. In the mid-2000s, Obregón became acquainted with Martha Alba, the principal of Cooper Elementary. Alba had a self-professed long-time “love of Mexican music and culture,” and was happy to collaborate with Obregón. In 2008, Cooper became the first CPS elementary school to establish a youth mariachi ensemble. At this point, Pilsen had a mariachi pipeline, from Cooper to Orozco to Juarez. However, the opportunity was limited to one neighborhood. Obregón had ideas at the time of starting a broader mariachi festival or education program, but he did not have a team ready to enact such a vision.

That same year (2008), Phil Olazaba was graduating from college with a degree in music education. Growing up in East Chicago, Indiana, he was a musical prodigy. Despite not picking up his first instrument until seventh grade, by tenth grade he was playing tuba in concert band, violin in the orchestra, and electric bass in guitar class—as well as in a metal band with his friends. His two school music teachers became his primary mentors and both invited him to join their professional gigging mariachi groups. He picked up the *guitarrón* and was a natural, able to sight-

read and retain parts quickly. This was also where he began to sing in public and refine his voice. He attended VanderCook College, the only college in the country solely devoted to training music teachers. At school he played Stravinsky and Sibelius in the orchestra and refined his pedagogical skills while continuing his professional mariachi career on the side. He also met Mike Espinosa a fellow student at VanderCook. It took some time before the two realized that they shared an out-of-school devotion to mariachi.

Espinosa had grown up in the Little Village and West Elsdon neighborhoods of Chicago. He played trumpet in band and viola in orchestra but dabbled in other instruments. He knew from a young age that he wanted to be a music teacher, and by middle school he was already helping his fellow students to learn their parts. As a student at Curie High School he joined the afterschool mariachi program to get some new experience. By eleventh grade he was running the group, as Curie had no dedicated teacher for the program. He graduated high school in 2005 and enrolled at VanderCook. During his first year, when visiting friends at home, he discovered that the Curie mariachi was falling by the wayside with no one to run it. He got the program integrated into the After School Matters funding structure and stayed on as its instructor. He was also hired to lead the youth mariachi program at the Holy Cross Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Back of the Yards. With his increasingly busy schedule and the challenge of classes, Espinosa began to take time off from college.

Returning the narrative to Phil Olazaba—after graduating college, he worked short-term jobs in several schools around northern Indiana, leading everything from women’s choir to handbell ensemble, and he had a stint teaching with Pichardo’s mariachi program at Orozco. He was hired in 2011 by Martha Alba to be the in-school music teacher at Cooper. In addition to general music classes, he led the afterschool mariachi—and started a second group to allow for both beginning

and intermediate students. After a few more years, now with a full-time music teacher who was also a seasoned mariachi musician, Obregón and Alba began to organize meetings to discuss establishing a citywide mariachi organization. Olazaba reached out to his former classmate—as Espinosa told me,

Mike Espinosa: I had talked to [Olazaba] before that, because we went to college together. And I was like, I was part of the all-city [orchestra] program growing up, for CPS, and wouldn't it be cool if we had an all-city mariachi, and just anybody from any school could come? And then, "yeah, that'd be cool," and then we talked about it and then he's like "oh, I know someone from—" 'cause he was working as part of the teacher's union, so he met somebody that was doing CPS Arts, he's like "yeah, I can talk to them about it, see what it would take." It didn't go much past that. But then afterwards, I was helping him out at Cooper and he was like "hey, remember when we were talking about having a program for kids all over, well these guys are talking about doing the same thing, and you should come to a meeting, I've only been to one so far but it sounds like it's a good idea." "Ok, yeah." So I went. (Interview with author, May 6, 2018)

Obregón and Alba hammered out the vision for CMP during 2013 and invited Olazaba and Espinosa to join as lead teachers of CMP's Mariachi Academy. By the 2013–2014 school year, CMP was registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and had their all-city Mariachi Academy off the ground, with Obregón as the President and community visionary, Alba as the administrator with an eye for details and knowledge of child development, and Olazaba and Espinosa as lead teachers. That first year, their oldest student was a ninth grader named Yazmin. Also that year, Espinosa finished his degree at VanderCook and was hired as a full-time music teacher at Juarez. For the first time, mariachi was incorporated into the school day music curriculum. Soon thereafter, he was hired to lead UIC's Mariachi Fuego.

Though the initial core of CMP students came from the three school programs in Pilsen, many come from much further away. Today, over fifty students from throughout the city, the surrounding suburbs, and as far as northern Indiana drive to Benito Juarez at 9:00 am every Saturday for three hours of mariachi education. CMP's most advanced ensemble performs at venues

throughout the city, including guest appearances with visiting international stars like Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán. This past January, they were flown to Washington, DC, to perform at the inauguration of newly elected Illinois Congressman Chuy García, Obregón’s former employer. García now represents Illinois’s fourth district, which encompasses much of the West side of Chicago.

In Figure 4.5, the six central figures of the preceding story are shown around the edges of the map from Figure 4.4. Colored lines link them to institutions of teaching and learning—red lines indicate places where that person was a student, and blue lines indicate places where they were a teacher or program administrator.



Figure 4.5. Elaborated version of the map shown in Figure 4.4. Figure by author.

This map may seem overwhelming to interpret. That is, in part, the goal here—to overwhelm the reader with the sheer volume of interlocking connections between these five adults who built this youth mariachi infrastructure. Yazmin stands in here as a representative for all the students of the Chicago Mariachi Project. As a Pilsen native and one of CMP’s first students, she has more connections on this map than a typical CMP student (as most did not grow up in and attend public schools in Pilsen). However, nearly every student in CMP’s advanced group could draw connection lines to multiple spots on this map. It is this *density* of connections, I argue, that allowed mariachi to achieve prominence and artistic excellence in a city like Chicago. A dense web of opportunities afforded young people the ability to take paths that would otherwise not have seemed apparent or possible.

Articulating a Theory of Musical Pipeline Construction

In the US Southwest, mariachi is a well-established genre—not just in terms of performance but in terms of integration into youth education systems (Salazar 2011). This case study shows how youth mariachi programs emerged in a very different space. More broadly, the model of CMP shows how a non-institutionalized musical genre can emerge and achieve artistic and educational excellence. As seen in the sporadic history of mariachi education in the city before the 2000s, a singular program at any one of these schools tends to either wither away or remain isolated. This isolation inhibits the artistic growth of students as it is difficult to cultivate an ensemble of well-trained and aesthetically-attuned musicians without a critical mass of peers or a pipeline to develop their abilities. This is even more the case with a student population who predominantly cannot afford private lessons and thus must do all of their learning in-group contexts. An all-city nonprofit music

academy structure as modeled by CMP circumvents many problems. Obregón articulated this when explaining to me the meaning of CMP's mission in pushing their students to artistic excellence:

AO: Now the other thing was that, you know, we were very intentional also about—at what level we really wanted to push it. We didn't want it to be just "oh, it's cute." We know that that's gonna come regardless, just by their age. People will walk by and say "oh my god, look, she's so small and she's playing mariachi music," right? So that's gonna come. What we really wanted it to be—that's why our mission was to raise it, raise how people view mariachi music, amongst ourselves and for the outside world. And I think that's what makes us, I think, very unique and so I'm real proud of that. (Interview with author, June 2, 2018)

Returning to our initial question: How were the leaders of CMP able to build the network of opportunities that allowed CMP's students like Yazmin to reach high levels of artistic achievement?

The crucial components for success, as shown in this story, include:

1. Music teachers with both the pedagogical training to maintain the stability of an in-school day job and the background expertise in the non-institutionalized music form that was likely not part of their formal music teacher education. Based on my fieldwork at other sites, this type of teacher is better able to commit themselves to long-term instruction with a community-based nonprofit music program than teachers who are primarily professional performers. This seems to be for a variety of reasons including income stability, availability of time, and youth pedagogy training.
2. Organizational leaders with experience in both youth programming and community engagement—ideally with the capacity to volunteer rather than to require payment
3. Space to rehearse, which can be arranged through partnership with local community leaders—particularly if these leaders see the program as providing an important opportunity for young people in the community
4. Unmet demand among young people

5. Ambition to recruit, teach, find performance opportunities, and pursue a mission that will inspire students' long-term commitment to the organization

The caveat, of course, is that this work did not happen in a vacuum. Teachers like Olazaba and Espinosa had important mariachi experiences in their own youth. The shift represented by CMP is (1) the increased density of opportunities, (2) the growth of school-nonprofit collaboration, and (3) the growth of social networks that help teachers to move students from one mariachi program to the next as they grow, like Yazmin, from elementary school through college.

Part III: CMP and Ideologies of Mariachi Education

Joe Maurer (JM): What do you like about playing mariachi music?

Y: Oh my gosh. So—oh man, there's a lot that goes into it. I think the primary—with any kind of music, specific in mariachi music, the amount of effort that goes into making sure that everything sounds right and everything is in time and in sync, but also to provide a more personal feel to it, where you're trying to get a reaction from the audience. Like, the play factor of mariachi music where it's not just us showing you something, but we want you to get something out of it too. It's so cool, because it's so evident in the way that mariachi music is played and the different genres of mariachi music is played. It's not something I initially appreciated up until maybe I got to the Chicago Mariachi Project, where I became more aware as I was growing up and I was listening to more mariachis. Like "oh my gosh, this group created this amazing arrangement, and it's so beautiful, and my goal is to be able to play it one day like that." I think that's probably the primary factor of mariachi music, that's what drew me in.

JM: Mmhmm, so capacity for excellence and really doing something complicated and tough and doing it well.

Y: But also the simplicity of it. There are very simple songs, like—I can't say I'm the biggest fan of *rancheras*, but I can appreciate them. In the sense that there's something so raw and so

vulnerable about having a *ranchera* of like, I guess lost love, or something of that topic. And just being accompanied by a guitar and a violin, and just a voice, I think that creates a beautiful ensemble too. It's just so varied, and regardless, all the professional mariachis are trying their best to create something beautiful. (Interview with author, June 9, 2018)

Ideologies of Mariachi Education

In answering my question, Yazmin did not just explain what she liked about mariachi—she implicitly outlined a theory of mariachi as a genre. For her, mariachi encompasses certain qualities and attributes. First, it is characterized by the dual qualities of technical musical coordination and affective engagement with audiences; Yazmin notes that there is great “effort that goes into making sure that everything sounds right and everything is in time and in sync, but also [effort] to provide a more personal feel to it” with the goal that “we want you [the audience] to get something out of it too.” She breaks this down, noting how CMP taught her to appreciate the planning and coordination it takes to achieve this effect—for example, through carefully structured arrangements that achieve a particular sound while allowing the performers to engage with the audience. The second element of her theory here is that mariachi is distinguished by its diverse repertoire, ranging from the complex to the minimal. This is an astute observation—though mariachi in popular depiction is often characterized by large groups and elaborate arrangements, Yazmin asserts that part of her appreciation for the genre stems from the contrast between this style and the minimalist beauty of passionately performed *ranchera* with minimal accompaniment.

The capacity for an adolescent to describe this nuanced and eloquent theory of mariachi as a genre should not be taken for granted. Building on the previous examination of musical pipelines, in this section I argue that a further component of CMP's success as a group stems from its leaders'

ideological approach to the genre. Throughout my time with the group, I observed that the administrators and teachers presented a shared vision and set of principles for what the students should be trying to achieve musically. This vision extended beyond the basics of instrumental and vocal competence to subtleties including the nature of mariachi as “art,” the importance of consistency, and the centrality of respect—for each other and for the genre. In conjunction with a rigorous education in musical skills and genre repertoire, these principles encourage CMP students to develop a deep relationship with the genre. This deep relationship has been crucial in building in students a strong commitment to both CMP and mariachi as an art form.

CMP’s Guiding Principles

While Olazaba and Espinosa provide the majority of the musical instruction, Obregón and Alba provide the vision and broader educational ideology. For them, CMP is not simply—and not even primarily—about connecting students with their cultural heritage. Obregón sees it as an artistic and community-building project. On the artistic front, his vision, informed by a near-encyclopedic knowledge of mariachi performers and history, is that CMP will work against a widespread superficiality in youth mariachi training. In our conversations, he has critiqued a host of educational practices, including an emphasis on costuming beginning students (which in many instances, he argues, leads to a lack of respect for the mariachi *traje*),³ a focus on technical instrumental complexity of substance and performance practice, and an over reliance on repertoire that he considers inappropriate for children due to explicit language around drinking and unhealthy gender

3. The *traje de charro*, or suit of the Mexican cowboy, is the traditional uniform of mariachis.

roles. On the community-building front, CMP seems to play a part in Obregón's broader vision for a revitalized Mexican American Chicago. In the past he has worked in the nonprofit community-organizing world as well as in local politics to support affordable housing and spaces for cultural engagement in Chicago's predominantly Mexican American neighborhoods. He knows that many parents are looking for extracurricular activities for their children, and he believes that the proliferation of mariachi programs, as one example, will entice families to remain in neighborhoods like Pilsen rather than leaving for the suburbs. In this vision, holding together families helps to maintain the character and community that has been built in Pilsen over more than half a century.

Alba also has extramusical thoughts in mind as she considers the role of CMP and school-based mariachi programs in Pilsen's future. As a school principal, she is mindful of the politics of Chicago Public Schools (CPS). After a series of politically controversial school closures in the past five years, many administrators see their own schools on the potential chopping block. In order to avoid shutdown, schools with declining enrollment—which in Pilsen can be tied to gentrification and the replacement of multi-generational families with newer, often affluent and childless couples—must find ways to attract young parents. In Pilsen, this dynamic predominantly consists of Mexican-descended families being replaced by young white couples. In this environment, mariachi programs are in a delicate balance. As vibrant arts education programs, they are attractive to young parents who are seeking a well-rounded school experience for their children. They may even be attractive to non-Mexican parents as a way for their child to take part in an artistic practice that will expand their understanding of the diverse neighborhood in which they live. However, this must be balanced against the reality that the current mariachi programs are predominantly filled with Mexican American children. Obregón and Alba often seem to be balancing this range of concerns—

serving the students they have, building an ideal neighborhood community, serving as a hub for citywide youth mariachi activity, and building toward a sustainable future.

Art

Y: I think mariachi music is such a novelty thing, where people want to relieve some nostalgia. Like, they want nostalgia feelings. For us, because we gig now, it's so different than being—we've had this conversation many times [indicating Rudy]

Rudy (R): Right, yeah

Y: —where it's so different than being in this group [CMP], where you feel respected. It's so bad to say this, but like, you feel respected, and you feel like when you're playing with someone they have the intent of listening to you.

R: You're not wrong though, that's really the feeling.

Y: When you do more gigs, where you're at a party—that feeling of, you know—here [at CMP], I've prepared this ten-minute-long piece, and it's so beautiful, and it's so intricately prepared, and we spent months prepping for this. [At performances with Mariachi Fuego, her current collegiate group,] They don't care, they don't care about that. Like, just play my two or three minute *ranchera* so I can feel like I can relive that past. I guess that's why I have my thing against *rancheras*, I'm not the biggest fan of them. Because instead of appreciating—I don't feel like other people have the same respect toward mariachi music as the musicians themselves, because they're the ones putting in the effort of preparing these kinds of pieces. So when you're in a party like that, they don't care how much effort you're putting, obviously. They're just kind of there to listen, then they're like “yeah, you guys sounded good.” And they're not even paying attention to us half of the time. (Interview with author, June 9, 2018)

CMP's mission provides a hint of how the group seeks to differentiate itself from other mariachi education programs. “Elevating the art of mariachi” may sound straightforward at first, but it makes a pointed claim vis-à-vis the cultural politics of music in the United States. The categories of “folk music” and “art music” were created as a sometimes-oppositional dyad over the past several centuries in Europe (Bohlman 1988, Gelbart 2007). In the past century, “popular music” has also emerged as a dominant category of analysis—particularly in the public sphere. In the US context,

“art music” tends to go by the name “classical music,” though the latter remains embedded with the same ideologies of high art. “Folk music” in the US has been constructed primarily in reference to rural white and black musics of the Southern states (Delta blues, string bands) as well as the urban “folk revival” formations that emerged in reaction to those rural musics (Filene 2000). “Popular music,” by contrast, tends to encompass more overtly commercial (or at least commercially successful) forms such as rock or pop. Though all three categories have been critiqued endlessly within the musicological disciplines over the past half-century, they remain fixed in public consciousness as categories of meaningful distinction. When a group like CMP makes the claim that their youth education programs are “elevating the art of mariachi,” they are implicitly positioning their understanding of mariachi in contrast with ideas of folk or popular music. It therefore becomes important to dig deeper into the specific meanings of art for CMP’s leaders in order to understand their motivations and the ways in which this ideology of art impacts the experiences that students have.

For Obregón, mariachi is an art form that can be viewed on par with classical music. It has acquired a bad reputation in some quarters, whether through the licentious lyrics of some recording artists or through association with the schmaltzy performances of gigging musicians who are too overworked and worn down to invest musicianship in their songs. Obregón, however, sees true artistry in the masterful performances of musicians such as Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán. In an introductory speech he gave to parents of CMP students at the beginning of the 2018–2019 academic year, he compared the compositions of great mariachis to the work of Hungarian composer Béla Bartók or Czech composer Antonín Dvořák. Both have strong nation-based cultural associations, but neither, he argues, is referred to as “folk music.” Implicitly, he was saying to the

parents, the intricate and moving performances of great mariachis are the Mexican artistic equals of Bartók, Dvořák, and others like them—and should be viewed as such.

One can see this artistic ideology clearly reflected in Yazmin's and Rudy's comments at the opening of this section. At the time of the interview, both had just finished their first year of college, where they had joined Mariachi Fuego, the student ensemble of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Mariachi Fuego is more of a gigging ensemble than CMP, and Yazmin's comments highlight her retroactive realization about how different her experience in CMP had been. There, instructors like Phil Olazaba would work with the students for months on intricate arrangements that they would perform in front of seated audiences in concert halls. In her current ensemble, she was beginning to experience the life of the gigging mariachi—paid scant attention and asked to repeat the same set of popular songs again and again. Though Yazmin and Rudy were experiencing a letdown in their first year out from performing with CMP, this conversation serves as an example of Obregón's and the CMP team's success at inculcating their artistic vision for mariachi in their students.

Music Literacy

Like notions of art, the issue of music literacy becomes fraught with cultural politics in a context like this. Mariachi was transmitted orally for many years, and some professional musicians still learn songs by ear. Some master musicians from Mexico—who the CMP students learn from at workshops when they attend national conferences—take pride in not being able to read sheet music. However, the growing incorporation of mariachi into music education has led to the transcription of many mariachi songs. This issue is, of course, a well-trodden topic for scholars of

oral folkloric traditions (Bohlman 1988). Mariachi presents a different case than, say, English ballads, however, as its education context increasingly involves large ensembles and standardized arrangements. For teachers like Olazaba and Espinosa, there is a certain tension here. They are both trained in a wide variety of music forms, having earned bachelor's degrees in music education and performed in Western classical orchestral ensembles. Their professional mariachi experiences, however, often involved learning by ear. Thus, when they bring sheet music to a CMP rehearsal for students to learn from, it is ambiguous whether they are drawing on pedagogical approaches that are true to their own experiences of mariachi or whether they are in a sense importing traditional classroom music literacy pedagogies into the mariachi space. Obregón, for his part, is proud that many CMP students are learning how to read music—he sees it as a valuable and transferrable musical skill that will help them to stand out and reach high levels of instrumental excellence.

For students, the tension between written and oral learning tends to have more pragmatic outcomes. Those students coming from classical or other private lesson backgrounds—particularly the violinists—tend to have no trouble reading and following their written scores. Guitar and *guitarrón* players, by contrast, often have parts simple enough that they can get away with not fully reading them. Simply by knowing the standard strumming patterns, listening to recordings, and memorizing the chord changes, the *armonía* (harmony) players can advance far without needing to fully master the printed score. In the end, it seems at times that the emphasis on music literacy in mariachi spaces like CMP is in equal parts about pedagogical efficacy and about a more subtle signaling with regard to class and artistic status. While mariachi could be transmitted orally—and in the past it often has been—treating it as a written genre provides students with an additional skillset, music literacy, that is legible to practitioners of other genres. On a more pragmatic note, it

also aligns with standard practices in public school band and orchestra pedagogy, making mariachi more legible to public school music teachers as a legitimate genre.

Consistency, Respect, and Commitment

Obregón, Alba, Olazaba, and Espinosa treat consistency as a key attribute for CMP students. In my time with the group, they did not often articulate this value using the term “consistency,” but it is the value underlying their approach. This shows up in two main respects: first, consistency with regard to musical performance, and second, consistency with regard to extramusical behavior vis-à-vis the group.

With respect to musical consistency, CMP’s approach can best be understood by studying the pedagogical approach in “Group 3”—the organization’s most advanced group, which does by far the most performances. In a simplified sense, Group 1 is devoted to mastering the basics of instrumental performance in an ensemble, Group 2 is devoted to expanding repertoire and learning intermediate mariachi performance practice skills, and Group 3 is devoted to achieving a high level of technical skill and ensemble coordination, as well as mastering generically authentic performance techniques such as *gritos*.⁴ This consistency is honed through constant practice and performance—

4. The *grito* is a stylized vocal exclamation somewhat between a cry, yell, or shout. There are several common *gritos*, and standard performance practice calls on lead singers as well as ensemble members to let out a *grito* between verses and choruses and/or at the beginning of songs as a technique to build energy among both audience and performers. For young mariachi students, the *grito* can be challenging as it is traditionally unplanned. During one class session I sat in on, the students and teacher engaged in a discussion about this issue; the teacher suggested that at first they might pre-plan a specific moment in a piece to let out a *grito* but that it would be best to work toward a more spontaneous and unplanned style, guided more by the energy of the particular piece and performance.

during busy times of the year, Group 3 has as many as three or four performances per week, ranging from volunteer performances at local community events in Pilsen, to a weekly public summer concert series in Little Village, to paid performances at corporate events, to private family events such as graduation parties, to the inauguration of Congressman Jesús “Chuy” Garcia in Washington, DC.

One challenge faced by Olazaba, the instructor for Group 3, is that few of the students can afford private lessons. When I asked in 2018, only one member of Group 3 was taking private lessons. For the rest, any skill development on their instrument came during the weekly three-hour group rehearsal on Saturday mornings. As a result, Olazaba uses his time lesson time creatively. Rather than spending most of the time running full-group repertoire rehearsals, as is common in many school-based bands or orchestras, Group 3 spends a substantial amount of time on sectionals—generally split into violins, trumpets, and *armonía*, made up of guitar, *vihuela*, and *guitarrón*. Each section has a student leader who works with the newer members of the group on instrumental technique. During my observations, Olazaba most often spent this sectional time with the trumpet players—in part because the violins and *armonía* each had very experienced and pedagogically-minded student leaders, and in part because the mariachi trumpet stands out so much aurally and requires extreme precision and consistency. Olazaba would drill the trumpet players over and over on minute details, ranging from the particular brassy timbre of an opening note to the particular lyrical quality needed in a harmony part running in concert with the violins. Consistency was an underlying theme in these sectional rehearsals—it was not enough to get an entrance right once, the entrance had to be right every time. The timbre could not be tentative; it had to be confident. As a result of this sectional drilling, Group 3’s full ensemble rehearsals of

repertoire tended to be efficient, running whole pieces whenever possible and only stopping to rewind when there were egregious errors to fix.

Another pedagogical approach used in Group 3 is bringing in peer mentors—during my time with group, in the form of Yazmin and Rudy. Yazmin’s most frequent role was as a vocal coach, working with students who were singing lead on particular songs to fine-tune their phrasing, delivery, and vocal timbre. Particular emphasis was placed on audience engagement—performing the meaning and emotional content of the song to the audience through eye contact, careful phrasing, hand gestures, and bodily movement. In analogizing to other forms of public school music education, this approach was more akin to the vocal pedagogies of musical theater than choral ensembles. Consistency was also a theme here—during my observations, at different times both Olazaba and Yazmin spoke with Group 3 members about the necessity of bringing fresh, consistent energy to every piece in every performance. Some of the standard repertoire—for example, “Guadalajara,” “Hermoso Cariño,” “El Son de la Negra”—can feel old after performing it dozens of times. Consistency, however, means bringing fresh energy and intentional phrasing to the piece rather than playing or singing it by rote. During one notable rehearsal, Olazaba and Yazmin spent the entire time with the group reviewing a video of the group’s performance from the previous week. They dissected individual moments—the violins were not together here, the singer was hesitant there, the ensemble vocals were weak there. Crucial to this exercise was the lack of judgment throughout. No student was called out or criticized for errors or inconsistencies in the video-taped performance. Rather, the ensemble as a whole understood the need to honestly assess their own strengths and weaknesses so as to understand how to reach a higher level of consistent musical quality.

Consistency for CMP extends beyond music to students' broader commitment to the group. Again, this comes out the most with Group 3 because of their intense performance schedule. The difference between students in Group 2 and Group 3 is not necessarily skill level—though on average the Group 3 students are more experienced and play at a higher level, Obregón considers the key distinction to be in terms of commitment. Group 3 is small, and each student on each part matters. Throughout my time with the group, I observed Obregón and Olazaba having serious conversations with students about their capacity to meet the needs of Group 3's performance schedule when the students needed to miss performances. They were both careful to adopt a nonjudgmental tone in these situations; as Obregón would say to them, it's understandable that you're a busy teenager—some students have commitments at their schools in the form of music or theater activities, many students play seasonal sports, and many of them have part-time jobs. For Obregón, it was never a question of talent or skill but of commitment—if you want to be in Group 3, then you need to commit to being there.

This attitude—not harsh or judgmental, but firm—seems to have been successfully inculcated into the identity of CMP's advanced performing group. Students I talked to exhibited a “can do” attitude—to paraphrase, “There's a last-minute opportunity to perform Christmas mariachi music for a radio station? Sure, we can learn the piece by then.” Paired with this attitude is a sense of respect—for each other's time, for the teachers, and for the genre itself. This is expressed in ways large and small, from an expectation of timeliness at events, to a structure of role modeling encouraged between older and younger students (ages range from roughly 12 to 18), to an emphasis on being representatives not just of CMP but of mariachi as a genre. This last dynamic is expressed, for example, in the group's treatment of the *traje*—wearing the *traje* is reserved for students in the advanced groups who have earned it through their dedication to the musical

tradition, and who are expected to always be on their best behavior in public while wearing the *traje* and serving as visual symbols of mariachi.

A Deep Relationship with Mariachi

Cumulatively, this commitment to artistic quality and legitimacy, music literacy, personal and musical consistency, and commitment results in a level of seriousness about mariachi. I noticed this seriousness most overtly when I traveled with CMP to the Mariachi Spectacular conference in Albuquerque. At this conference with hundreds of other mariachi students from across the country, CMP stood out for the consistent professionalism and seriousness of their students. Always outfitted in their navy-blue CMP t-shirts, they were often clustered toward the front of musicianship workshops while others joked around in the back. They were more excited to meet eminent mariachi musicians and examine instruments at vendor booths than to socialize or get into trouble with their temporary independence from their parents. This is not to say that they were uniquely well behaved but simply that they took the trip very seriously as an opportunity to deepen their relationship with the musical tradition. Of course, there is also room for fun—on that trip the young students went out to restaurants together and stayed up late gossiping in their rooms. As a chaperone for the boys' group, I saw how the older boys took the younger ones under their wings, giving them tips about everything from music workshops to relationships with girls. This easygoing camaraderie was a hallmark of the students throughout my time observing the group. It seems to stem in part from the seriousness and commitment to the group that I've been discussing, as well as the positive socializing effects of spending so much time with each other as well as the role

model effects of the group's adult leaders.

To reiterate an earlier point, the approach described in this section is not the only way to structure a successful youth mariachi education program. Rather, it is one particularly effective pedagogical approach and set of principles. In the case of the Chicago Mariachi Project, it has succeeded in cultivating deep and lasting relationships with the musical tradition for dozens of students in the group's short history.

Part IV: CMP in Albuquerque

JM: Is there anything you don't like about mariachi?

Y: I guess the thing that I don't like about mariachi is not so much with the genre, but more about the people. I feel like this applies to any kind of hobby, where people kind of take the love for mariachi and change the meaning where it's more competitive, and like "I'm better than you at playing this" and like "look at me." And I think there are moments where that's fine, like in solos or specifically catered to a song. But I think people have developed this attitude of being more egocentric than, you know [about] talent, or compassion, or something of that sort. So I think that's the thing that I've realized about mariachi music, unfortunately, that there are people that want to be better than you specifically, or you generally. And I think that's the thing that sucks, that it's not longer, or I guess it hasn't been, there are people that exist that don't make mariachi a communal enjoyment, but rather more of a just personal boost, like a personal confidence boost. Which sucks.

JM: Have you encountered much of that in CMP, or in other groups, or just more broadly? Or like when you go to Albuquerque?

Y: Yeah, I think that's the thing that I wanted to mention, is that Albuquerque was probably my first exposure to something like—Albuquerque was probably the trip where I realized a lot of things I didn't know before about mariachi. Specifically about the people. Because there are people there where they just want to play better than you, they want to show you that they're better than you. And it's scary. So when I first went to Albuquerque, they signed me up for the advanced class, and I wasn't sure if I was ready for that. But I went anyway, and it was *so intimidating*. Because I was the only young person in the advanced class, but I was also the only girl in the advanced class my first year that I had gone. It was later that I realized that there were more girls that came in later, like *later* later in the trip.

But at that time I was the first one there, and I felt so overwhelmed and underprepared. And I was like “I can’t be here.” And so I moved down, with other people. That was more of my speed, more of my level, and I was totally okay with that. But yeah, my first encounter, being with all these men, and they probably have years of experience, and I’m here writing down my notes—there’s a pressure to already know what you’re doing. So for sure, Albuquerque was a little terrifying at first.

Chicago vs. the Southwest

I introduced some distinctions between Mexican Chicago and the Mexican Southwest in the beginning of this chapter. It means something different to engage with *mexicanidad* in New Mexico than it does in Chicago. Most people of Mexican descent in Chicago can trace their families back to Mexico going only one or two generations back. Predominantly Mexican neighborhoods and families tend to represent a cross-section of Mexican regional cultures that came together here. This is reflected in music, as artistic activity tends to be transplanted from Mexico and young in its development of Chicago roots. Meanwhile, there is a rich body of scholarship exploring the nature of musical performance in the US-Mexican borderlands, where some say “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us” (Madrid 2011, Aldama et al. 2012). Though some people of Mexican descent in this region might be characterized as immigrants, many others have been in the same communities for generations—even centuries. Accordingly, mariachi traditions tend to reach longer back into local history. In the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas, Obregón asserted to me, the youth live and breathe mariachi. As we sat observing a room full of young mariachis warming up for a rehearsal, he pointed out a group of college-aged women. Those, he told me were students from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, possibly the most elite school in country for aspiring mariachis. One of CMP’s high school seniors, Maria, was considering attending “RGV,” but Obregón was worried about whether she would fit in socially. He had seen her interacting with the

group of women from the school, and he was worried that she was too laid back and unconcerned with status or appearance to succeed in the competitive environment that these natives of the Rio Grande Valley had known their whole lives.

Obregón and I were at Mariachi Spectacular de Albuquerque, the weeklong series of workshops, performances, lectures, and competitions that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. It was June 2018, the year after CMP's first-place finish in the festival's high school division competition. I was joining CMP as for the week as a chaperone in exchange for the opportunity to observe and learn about the CMP students' experiences. In my conversations with both students and adults, it became clear that their annual week in Albuquerque served as a pivotal point of development in the lives of many CMP members. This development was both musical and nonmusical. As Yazmin noted in the previous interview excerpt, her first trip to Albuquerque opened her eyes to the ways in which she fit into a broader national mariachi community—and the ways in which she was not so comfortable. For some CMP students, being able to play in hundreds-strong ensembles and learn from the best professional mariachis from the US and Mexico was an exhilarating experience that pushed them to hone their musicianship. However, it also led many to examine the nature of their own lives in Chicago in comparison to their peers from the Southwest.



Figure 4.6. CMP students (L to R) Maria, Andrea, and Olivia on *vihuela*, guitar, and guitar in the Mariachi Spectacular Advanced *Armonía* (harmony section) workshop. Photo by author.

Albuquerque as Pilgrimage and Crucible

In some cases the differences between the Chicago mariachi students and the Southwestern counterparts were obvious simply from observation. It became clear that CMP was quite egalitarian in the gender breakdown of its instrumentalists. There were very few young women playing the *guitarrón*—Yazmin’s instrument—and CMP’s trumpet player Deborah was one of the only women in the trumpet sectional rehearsals. Overall, however, it seemed like the biggest influence that many CMP students took away from Mariachi Spectacular was the interactions they had with their peers

from New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and California. Many CMP students told me how much they had learned from other students at the festival. In some cases they meant musically—they had learned new chord fingerings and strumming patterns, or they had been inspired by a highly skilled musician to step up their practicing. In other cases they meant socially—one student in particular, Miriam, had come out of her shell significantly thanks to encouragement at the festival’s late-night jam sessions. At these sessions, which often stretched as late as 2 am, as many as a hundred students would gather in a room at the conference hotel and play song after song from memory. Each song would be started and led by whoever could quickest fill the pause after the end of the previous song. When CMP had come the previous year, Alba told me, Miriam had been one of the shyest students there. At the jam sessions she stood in a corner and quietly listened. The year I attended, Miriam was one of the most assertive from CMP in terms of leading songs and stepping up into the center of the massive circle of students. This was especially impressive given that she was only in ninth grade yet was confidently stepping up to lead songs among a group of older and more experienced musicians. That shift in her can likely be attributed to a mix of encouragement from her peers and coaching from her CMP teachers—however, it would not have been possible without the symbolic crucible of the Mariachi Spectacular jam session, an event that pushed her out of her comfort zone yet set an exciting bar for her to attempt to reach.



Figure 4.7. Miriam (center of the circle, back to camera), leading a song at the late-night jam session. The three young women in the foreground (navy shirts, backs to camera) are CMP students; the others in this photo are not. Photo by author.

Part V: Pedagogies and Performances of Gender

Y: Everyone always brings this up, and you see it, too. I've gotten comments, like "oh my gosh, I've never seen a girl play *guitarrón* before, I'm so glad that you're playing this, you're representing women in mariachi music." And I think—look, yeah, I'll trash mariachi right now, in the sense that mariachi, the music, is very based on machismo. So for sure, all of these *rancheras*, and a lot of love songs are trashing women, for I don't know, not loving them back, or anything of that sort. So a lot of mariachi music is very hyper masculine. (Interview with author, June 9, 2018)

Like many youth music education spaces, CMP is predominantly composed of young women.⁵ During my fieldwork, CMP's most advanced group ("Group 3") was made up of roughly two-thirds young women to one-third young men. This bears comparison to two other contexts: professional mariachi performance groups and youth mariachi education programs in other parts of the country. The former is a heavily male-dominated space. In recent years high-profile all-women ensembles like Mariachi Divas de Cindy Shea have begun to shift the gender balance in the US professional mariachi space (Flores 2015). In Chicago, Mariachi Sirenas are the most successful all-women group. Mixed sex professional groups are more rare, and they tend to be historically male groups that have brought in a few women in recent years. The first famous instance of this was when Nati Cano, leader of L.A.-based Los Comperos, hired Rebecca González to play with his group in the 1970s (Rodríguez 2006: 18). González served as a clinician at the Albuquerque Mariachi Spectacular in 2018, where she shared her story and professional experiences with the young students present. Even 40 years later, this gender mixing is still out of the question to some male group leaders who consider it unsuitable for women to play with them.

Mixed sex ensembles are the norm in youth mariachi education spaces, though even this differs somewhat regionally. Some of the primary role models for the teenage students at Mariachi

5. Julia Eklund Koza (1993) has traced the history of the "missing males" discourse in US music education. One can see narratives similar to the present day's in nineteenth-century women's magazines, which discussed "sex stereotypes associated with specific musical instruments and activities" (ibid.:213). Koza examines early twentieth-century issues of the *Music Supervisors' Journal* to demonstrate that despite the dearth of boys in music education, teachers and administrators were predominantly preoccupied with young male subjectivity vis-à-vis music education—"career opportunities in music for males, the relationship of music to the nature and character development of boys, boys' musical likes and dislikes" (ibid.:212), and more. Koza's work contextualizes the case of CMP: a preponderance of young women has long been characteristic of many music education spaces, in sharp contrast to a broader professional musical world that foregrounds the musical subjectivity of men and boys.

Spectacular were the collegiate performers of Mariachi Aztlán who had been hired to serve as clinicians. Mariachi Aztlán, from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), is one of the premier collegiate mariachis in the country, having won many competitions, performed at the Kennedy Center and for President Obama, and been invited to premier mariachi operas for the Houston Grand Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. The group also consists primarily of men, while UTRGV's women mariachis perform in the all-female Mariachi Azalea, a newer and much less storied ensemble.⁶ This hierarchy played out at the Mariachi Spectacular, where the college-aged men of Mariachi Aztlán performed and taught at many workshops throughout the conference while the women of Mariachi Azalea primarily stayed in the audience, brought out for one performance showcase at the end of the week.

The young women of CMP are aware of the gendered nature of the genre that they love. Though I was not initially pursuing this line of inquiry, it became one of the recurrent themes in many of my conversations and interviews with interlocutors in CMP. Ultimately, the egalitarian gender norms of CMP's leaders—particularly as modeled by men—seem to create an environment that empowers young women to take leadership, albeit without any overtly gendered discourse within the group itself.⁷

6. Mariachi Aztlán has had more women members in the past, but the group as presented at Mariachi Spectacular de Albuquerque 2018 was entirely men, giving the impression that the recent creation of all-women Mariachi Azalea siphoned off the former female members of Aztlán. Though the UTRGV press release announcing the recent creation of Azalea portrays the group as a positive space for women—even titling the press release “Empowered through Music”—this seems to also have the effect of returning the prestigious Aztlán group to being primarily male-dominated if ostensibly mixed-sex. It remains to be seen, moving forward, if Mariachi Azalea will be presented with the same sort of high-profile performance opportunities as Mariachi Aztlán.

7. I mean to emphasize here that CMP does not foreground any kind of “girls’ empowerment” discourse in the way that some youth education spaces do. The empowerment of girls and young women is more implicit than explicit, for example in the assumption that of course a girl can play any instrument in the group.

Gender Analysis in Mariachi Studies

The past ten years have seen a burgeoning scholarly examination of gender analysis in mariachi. The most encyclopedic work is Leticia Soto Flores's 2015 dissertation "How Musical is Woman?: Performing Gender in Mariachi Music," in which she documents extensively the history of women in mariachi. Part of her project is to recuperate present readers' understanding of women as tradition bearers—pivotal actors who shaped mariachi as an art form—rather than novelties. The majority of research in this vein has focused on two themes: the histories and challenges faced by women in professional mariachi settings and the dynamics of gender expression in mariachi and other Mexican music genres (Alvarado 2012; Gaytán and Mora 2016; Jiménez 2017; Mulholland 2007, 2012, 2013; Perez 2002; Vargas 2010). It also focuses primarily on Southwestern US contexts. There is relatively little attention to the question of young women's engagement with gender roles and ideologies through mariachi during their adolescent development. As such, this section is intended to bring together this existing literature with CMP as an ethnographic case study in order to shed light on the ways in which a youth mariachi program implicitly and explicitly engages with the prevailing discourses of gender within the musical tradition and broader social arena of mariachi.

Performing Age-Appropriate Gender Roles in Mariachi Repertoire

The definition of appropriate repertoire is an area of contention for some mariachi educators. This sometimes comes down on lines of aesthetics and tradition—for example, Obregón explained to me

that he would exclude the song “El Mariachi Loco” from any setlist because he finds it inappropriate and disrespectful to the genre. However, in youth education spaces, one of the foremost considerations is the age-appropriateness of songs—a judgement that often hinges on the portrayal of gender roles and norms. Obregón explained that he and his teachers avoid some popular songs like “El Rey” (the king) because of the ideals they represent. The widely performed song, most famously recorded by Vicente Fernandez, portrays a man determined to live life on his own terms. Obregón, however, objects to the appropriateness of children singing lines like “Con dinero y sin dinero, yo hago siempre lo que quiero” (With money and without money, I always do what I want)—though the lyrics are ambiguous, the implication of what the singer does implicitly have to do with drinking and womanizing, counter to the values of maturity, responsibility, and respect that CMP’s leaders seek to inculcate in the young men of their group. Obregón has similar objections to songs like “La Tequilera” (the female tequila drinker) for the picture of female gender norms that they paint. In “La Tequilera,” made famous by Lucha Reyes, the singer begins “Borrachita de tequila llevo siempre el alma mía” (My soul is always drunk with tequila) and from there discusses her suffering and betrayal at the hands of her lover—a downfall that others blame on her own drunkenness (Gaytán 2014: 84-86). Sociologist Marie Sarita Gaytán has analyzed Reyes’s 1941 performance of “La Tequilera” as subversive and potentially liberating for its time, given the way that Reyes broke down barriers regarding women’s ability to discuss themes of “anguish, betrayal, and inebriation” (ibid.: 85) in public. Teenagers in a youth mariachi ensemble, however, are a different population, and Obregón has a dual concern about a song like “La Tequilera”—first, about the way in which the audience would view the teenage girl singing it, and second, about its capacity to reinforce stereotypes about mariachi that run counter to CMP’s mission of uplifting the genre as an art form. This concern is not abstract—Obregón first expressed

it to me in the context of his displeasure at seeing young people from other mariachi programs performing these songs in public. For him, these subtle politics of repertoire programming represent a system of values that differentiates CMP from other programs. Though he does not conceive of these values in terms of gender roles, one impact seems to be that CMP students do not practice performing the masculine and feminine stereotypes in “El Rey,” “La Tequilera,” and similar songs.

Role Models

While the leaders of CMP avoid certain repertoire, they are also avoiding a broader model of performance. At the closing concert showcase of Mariachi Spectacular de Albuquerque 2018, Mariachi Aztlán and Mariachi Azalea performed a popurrí (medley) of songs that involved romantic competition and rejection between men and women: “Yo Creo Que Es Tiempo,” “La Media Vuelta,” “La Chancla,” “La Farsante,” “No Me Amenaces,” and “Te Voy a Olvidar.”⁸ The two groups combined to play backing accompaniment while lead singers switched off between Aztlán and Azalea—first a young woman from Azalea sang pointedly (with sharp gesticulation) to a young man from Aztlán:

Yo creo que es tiempo
Que te vallas a tu tierra
No olvides que otro amor allá
Te esta esperando

8. A member of the audience recorded a relatively high-quality video of this performance from the front row, which as of March 2019 could be viewed at the following YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHqA_JcNM5Q.

Yo creo que es tiempo
Que regreses ya con ella
Y que conmigo no la sigas engañando

I think that it's time
That you go to your land
Don't forget that another lover is there
Waiting for you
I think that it's time
That you return to her
And don't keep cheating (on her) with me

She continued in this vein through the first chorus, at which point the backing instruments abruptly shifted tempo and chords. The young man she had been singing to took a microphone and responded in turn:

Te vas porque yo quiero que te vayas
A la hora que yo quiera te detengo
Yo sé que mi cariño te hace falta
Porque quieras o no
Yo soy tu dueño

You leave because I want you to leave
At the time that I want, I'll stop you
I know that you need my affection
Because whether you like it or not
I'm your owner

Throughout, both the singer and her or his partner act out their reactions in broad strokes, prompting enthusiastic cheers from the audience when, for example, the young woman raises a finger and flicks her hand dismissively at “Yo soy tu dueño.” This popurrí continued for about ten minutes through six songs, each switching back and forth between members of the opposite sex. I

was curious about this vividly heteronormative “battle of the sexes”-style performance of gender roles, so different in style and content from the repertoire emphasized in CMP.

As the next group took the stage, I wandered over to Phil Olazaba and asked whether the emphasis on combative romantic gender roles was typical. In his perspective, this was fairly typical. He noted that a particular subset of mariachi repertoire seems to dwell on failed relationships in which men blame women for everything that has gone wrong—a subgenre toward which he displayed particular distaste. He said that he had not fully been paying attention to the Aztlán-Azalea popurrí as they lost his attention with the whole back and forth men vs. women structure of their set. Olazaba, in his mid 30s, had grown up in the greater Chicago area and performed in professional mariachis since high school. Despite being—in his own description—surrounded by men and a musical repertoire emphasizing machismo, Olazaba had chosen a different attitude. I’m not sure that this difference—his egalitarian worldview—played any role in his being hired as one of CMP’s lead teachers, but it certainly placed him in ideological alignment with the rest of the CMP team. Together, they envision youth mariachi as an uplifting space for young women and men to display artistic excellence and honor a community musical tradition, implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) rejecting an alternative mariachi narrative of normative gender performance. This egalitarian attitude becomes the norm in CMP—but when the students go to Albuquerque, they encounter a different set of attitudes. This disconnect or abrupt exposure results in the kinds of reactions I encountered from Yazmin and other young women in the group, who were variously upset, confused, or dismissive of the dynamics of gender and sex at play in the encounter with the norms of Southwestern mariachi.

Though these encounters sometimes promoted discomfort, they also promoted reflection. Several of the young women I interviewed spoke about becoming more confident and assertive

through a framework of performance and gender identity. For example, while being a young woman playing the trumpet is unusual in some mariachi settings, in CMP it is encouraged by the group's leaders. As I noted earlier, this encouragement does not tend to be through explicit gender empowerment messaging but rather an implicit encouragement for young women to pursue any musical goal that interests them.

Conclusion: Past and Present for Twenty-First-Century Youth

For my interlocutors like Yazmin and Rudy, CMP has the capacity to serve as a tool for mediating their understandings of past and present. For some, the abstract or vague notion of Mexican culture that their immigrant parents told them about when they were young was brought to life viscerally through encounters with elder mariachi musicians brought to Chicago by Obregón to impart musical training and historical knowledge to the students. For others, the new ability to sing traditional songs at family events has turned them into the center of attention—sometimes to their chagrin. A burgeoning interest in the recording artists of generations past has brought others into closer relationships with their parents.

CMP works in a sense to mediate past and present for these students. Many are drawn to elements of the past—in part to connect with a sense of historical *mexicanidad*, in part out of aesthetic contrarianism that leads many young people to reject the popular music that their peers listen to. But they are also unwilling to accept the past as it is. As Yazmin notes, she is unwilling to accept the gender norms of “traditional” mariachi. While this feminist approach is by no means

unique to Chicago (Flores 2015), it is tacitly the norm in CMP in a sense that did not seem echoed in Albuquerque, where male students predominated and claimed space with confidence.

Beyond issues of gender, the reconciliation of past and present also comes out in CMP's artistic discourse. The organization's emphasis on elevating mariachi as an art form is future-focused. The students are building something, the organization's leaders implicitly assert. On the medium scale—of the neighborhood or city—that something might be a revitalized Mexican artistic community in Chicago. On the micro-level, though, the strands I have described throughout this chapter weave together to create something more personal for each student. They are each building a sense of self, and CMP has played a role in helping them to figure out the steps. For some, they have become musicians. Others have become confident. Some have built a more meaningful connection with parents who were not even that crazy about mariachi to begin with. And finally, those who have been with the group for the longest have had the chance to travel, to meet important people and see grand sights they never would have before. Developing musical excellence opened doors and allowed them to understand the world more deeply.

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JM: Does mariachi in the US feel like it's about Mexicanness, in that it's looking back to Mexico, like the stories are based there, the cultural stuff is based there, or does it also seem like a Mexican American thing, like it has roots in the US, and it's relating to the US Mexican American experience?

R: I want to chime in, I guess to play the music, I think I feel like I'm playing music that's from eras ago, years ago, but definitely I guess just the act of playing, I feel like that relates to a Mexican American struggle of trying to preserve a little bit of yourself, a little bit of your past that you get from your parents, and this culture that you were brought up with. It's kind of like a way to preserve, I guess, your mentality, your culture. Kind of place yourself within that cultural identity of like "oh, I'm Mexican, I want to play this music, I want to be a little closer to something my parents always told me about." But I guess in terms of actually playing the music, I don't think there's much of a connection. Like "oh, I'm playing something" or "I'm expressing myself or my twenty-first-century struggles." I think it's more of like "oh, I'm just playing the music that was from the past." But I guess

just the act of playing, it's like oh it just brings me closer to my roots.

Y: Yeah, I definitely agree with that, but I do think for me it's a little more connection to Mexico. I don't think it's more about being present in the United States. For me, it's definitely more like the reason that I've continued with it is because it's so cool to think of the idea that, you know—"Jesusita en Chihuahua," something related to the Mexican Revolution, is something that I'm playing to this day. Like that historical context and historical significance is so cool to me because I feel like everything else I do is American. Everything else that I live through is super American. So for me, mariachi is something that's true Mexican of me and my past and my ethnicity, and my roots and my background and all of that stuff. (Interview with author, June 9, 2018)

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The interview excerpts throughout this chapter have focused on Yazmin and Rudy because they are particularly thoughtful interlocutors, and one can see in their stories many of the points that this chapter has sought to explain. However, one might substitute any number of the other students in CMP. Each has a dynamic life in Chicago, and CMP fits into a constellation of other musical, theatrical, artistic, athletic, and academic commitments. This chapter centered on the challenge of constructing a musical pipeline and the capacity for artistic excellence that this can afford when done well, as in the case of CMP. The second half of the chapter has sought to open up this vision of affordance, showing how—through the process of musical cultivation—young people are able to explore many other dimensions of themselves and the world around them. By exploring the complexities of CMP students' experiences, this chapter also seeks to push back against simplistic notions of heritage maintenance within immigrant-descended communities. Broad sociological arguments about the nature of assimilation and acculturation tend to lose the texture of everyday life. In this story, one can see how an individual organization—enabled by Chicago's arts education climate and driven by the particular passions of a small group of leaders—can embody the complexities and contradictions of history and heritage, art and popular culture, local and national community, and more. Most importantly, in doing so it creates an environment in

which second-generation Chicagoans can negotiate these complexities while engaging deeply and seriously with a musical tradition that, until the past ten years, was relatively inaccessible for young people in the city.

Chapter 5

Building Interracial Youth Power through *P'ungmul* Drumming

Part I: HANA Center Background and Context

Souzane (S): They were planning for May Day, HANA Center and several other organizations, so they invited us youth to go as part of one of the planning committees. And so within the committees, they were like “what is an activity that we would involve the youth?” And so some of them: “Oh, why don’t we have the youth speak at May Day?” And I’m like—knowing that hundreds of people attend this event, like you’re on the news, there’s all these eyes on you and stuff like that, I was backed up in the corner, I was like, [to self] “don’t say anything, don’t do anything, don’t make eye contact.” And them definitely like pointing you out, like “oh, how about you Souzane?” and me saying “um, I’m not sure, I think I’ll pass,” but them saying “are you sure you don’t want to—?”

JM: And who was it who said that, was it Inhe, or Yujin—?

S: Yujin said it! Yujin said that, and I was like “sure, I’ll do it.” And so—traveling with them through the process of me having those last-minute—like, we were at Inhe’s house, editing my—I believe it was not even 60 seconds, it was like a 30-second speech. Me being like “I don’t know if I can do this,” you know? I don’t know if I can step out on that stage. Even though I have two other people with me, I feel so alone. And having them like, “you’ll be fine, you’ll do fine, don’t worry about it, just you do you, and you go out there and do what you need to do to support all these other people.” And so, them definitely being—I guess, reassuring me, was one of the influences pushing me to do things that I wouldn’t be able to do without them.

JM: It sounds like you’ve gotten a lot out of this besides just learning how to drum.

S: For sure! It’s built Souzane—present-day Souzane! (Interview with author, December 5, 2018)

Wednesday, December 10, 2018, 7:45 pm

Souzane and I wandered through the hallways of HANA Center, looking for a place to sit and talk. I had been trying to find the time for a lengthier interview with her, but she was busy with her senior year of high school and had not been coming to drumming at HANA Center as often. Time was

short, and it had already been a long afternoon—a final rehearsal for HANA'sori's Fall Quarter end-of-program performance, followed by the performance itself. Souzane was a participant, while I documented the afternoon and evening with photos and videos for William, the Center's Youth Organizer. Though it was noisy, we grabbed chairs at the table outside the Youth Organizing office. I was eager to have a deeper conversation with Souzane about how she had come to be one of HANA's most active and ever-present youth leaders and *changgo* drummers. She was perhaps an unlikely candidate to be a youth leader in a Korean cultural and social services organization—born in Tanzania, she spent her early childhood in a refugee camp before her family immigrated to Chicago. Since joining HANA Center's youth drumming program early in high school, she had grown from being reserved and unsure of her future goals to being a confident and assertive young woman eager to pursue work in social justice. This outgoing confidence—combined with her academic work—had also helped to earn her a full college scholarship from the Posse Foundation. Souzane's own self-analytical narrative was reinforced when I spoke some months later with William, one of HANA's Youth Organizers:

JM: Can you think of any specific young people and ways that they've grown or changed or developed through any of this youth organizing or programming?

William Oh (WO): Yeah, I mean, I think from staff perspective, I think we try to create—a lot of young people come for the safe space, but I think we try to frame that and change it into a brave space, a space where our young people can feel safe and have comfort but are challenged to also step out of their comfort zones and to grow. And I think I've definitely seen our young people—I know Souzane just graduated, but when she first came four years ago, she was so shy, she didn't talk to anyone. But now as she left, she was one of our most outspoken—not outspoken, but strong leaders, who was one of the key people to welcome the new people and help them feel welcome. (Interview with author, August 28, 2019)

HANA Center's youth drumming program defies the standard narrative around Korean traditional music in the United States. Though it carries on a legacy of drumming as a form of social protest and political engagement, its diverse student body and its strong fusion of Korean

drumming with youth development and political organizing is atypical in the literature and media coverage of these US-based *p'ungmul* groups.¹ Souzane is part of a cohort of dynamic young people who found their way to HANA Center, forged bonds that led them to stay, and have been profoundly changed. This chapter explores how they got there, why they became so deeply enmeshed in HANA Center's community engagement activities, and what scholars, arts educators, and community leaders can learn from HANA's model of youth organizing through drumming.

HANA Center

HANA Center was created in 2017 from the merging of two Chicago Korean American community groups: Korean American Community Services (KACS)—which had been primarily focused on social services—and the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center (KRCC)—which had been primarily focused on cultural activities and advocacy. The leaders of KACS and KRCC decided that they would be best able to pursue their social service and political advocacy work in Chicago and the broader region by consolidating their resources. The new name, HANA, is the Korean word “one,” symbolizing the two organizations' new unity. HANA Center's work is wide-ranging, with a staff of around twenty people and an annual budget of over \$2.5 million (HANA 2019, Wong 2017). They offer citizenship, immigration, housing, and legal services; community education ranging from an early childhood center, to adult ESL and computer literacy courses; senior services,

1. Throughout this chapter, I refer to the musical style practiced at HANA Center as *p'ungmul*, following the spelling convention of scholars who specialize in the study of Korean musical traditions. When referring to organizations that use a different spelling in their name (such as the Global Pungmul Institute), I use their spelling. The drumming practices at HANA Center combine some elements of traditional *p'ungmul* with more recent *samulnori* practices. See Part III of this chapter for further discussion.

health clinics, and case management for public benefit programs; and a wide range of other community wellness, civic engagement, and education programs. Though many people who come to HANA Center are Korean, they conceive of their constituency more broadly. Inhe Choi, the executive director of HANA explained their vision upon the merging of KACS and KRCC: “I think it's a real big statement to say we're going to take an active role, we're going to take a leadership role. Not just as Koreans, not just as Asian Americans, but as people of color and people who are being united with all the marginalized communities” (Wong 2017). One can see evidence of this upon entering HANA, as many of the fliers promoting their various services are translated into Spanish as well as English and Korean. HANA also plays an active role in the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). ICIRR offers a range of programs and social services, but it also serves as an umbrella organization, bringing together over seventy partners like HANA for coordinated advocacy around issues that affect immigrants—for example, pressuring the state government to pass SB 31, the Illinois TRUST Act, which placed limits on coordination between local police and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a federal agency) in order to foster trust between local police and immigrant communities.

My own awareness of and interest in HANA Center grew out of their involvement in pan-immigrant organizing. I first saw the HANA youth *p'ungmul* drummers at an immigrant rights rally and protest in downtown Chicago in April 2016. I saw them again at an ICIRR rally in January 2017 and at the annual ICIRR leadership summit in March 2017—a day of workshops based on education and leadership development focused on community organizing and political advocacy. I was curious about this multiethnic ensemble of youth drummers—who were they as individuals, and how had each become connected with HANA Center? How did they come to play a central—or at least assertive, audibly present—role at so many pan-immigrant coalition events?

Youth Organizing at HANA

HANA's youth programming is roughly divided into four areas, though there is substantial overlapping membership between them. The central entity is Fighting Youth Shouting out for Humanity (FYSH), HANA's social justice youth leadership council. FYSH's activities range from leading their own campaigns, to serving as the youth voice in HANA's advocacy efforts, such as trips to Washington, DC to pressure Congress to pass the DREAM Act and other civil rights legislation. The second area of youth programming is the Gender Justice Program, consisting of gender-based groups for education, discussion, and support. The third area is programming-based, with a focus on college readiness, financial capacity building, and workforce empowerment. These programs, carried out by the Youth Organizers (full-time employee, post-college) and Youth Organizing Fellows (part-time employees, typically also attending college), often take place in partnership with the other group-oriented youth spaces at HANA. The fourth area is HANAsori ("one sound" in Korean), a youth *p'unngmul* ensemble that is funded in part by After School Matters (ASM).² This musical activity, of course, was what first drew me to HANA center.

2. After School Matters (ASM) is a citywide provider of afterschool and summer programs for young people. It grew out of gallery37, a teen cultural and artistic apprenticeship program founded in 1991 by Chicago First Lady Maggie Daley and Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Lois Weisberg. In 2000, the gallery37 model (focused on arts apprenticeships) was expanded to include technology, sports, and communications and rebranded as After School Matters. In FY2017, ASM spent \$29.3 million on 1,400+ programs that reached 18,000+ teens. While ASM provides some programming at their downtown physical location, their primary model is as a funding and coordinating partner. Organizations or individual teaching artists submit proposals to ASM for programs and, if approved, receive funding and support to implement those programs. The programs are seasonal, running for ten weeks in the Fall and Spring or six weeks in the Summer. Any teenager can apply to be in an ASM program—the programs are not limited to students at the schools or other locations that serve as spaces in which to hold programming. Due to the size of the city, however, many programs tend to recruit teens who live in some proximity to the program site.

During any particular year, youth activity at HANA tends to be driven by the core membership of FYSH, who tend to be highly involved with the center’s activities. Run by HANA’s Youth Organizers and Youth Organizing Fellows, FYSH fulfills several roles. First, it provides a voice to the youth constituency of HANA Center, providing them space to make decisions and guide part of the Center’s work. Second—and as a result of those decisions—members of FYSH run their own campaigns. Early in my fieldwork their central campaign was “Decolonize CPS Curriculum,” an effort to bring cultural diversity to the literature and history taught within the Chicago Public Schools—a project with many clear analogues in the history of the ethnic studies movement. Leading up to the 2019 Chicago municipal elections, FYSH’s members shifted their focus to eliminating the Chicago Police Department’s (CPD) gang database (discussed further in Part V of this chapter). FYSH members meet at HANA every Friday after school to plan their activities and socialize (see Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3). Many members of FYSH also participate in the other HANA youth programs.



Figure 5.1. The young women of FYSH in HANA Center’s Youth Organizing office. Source: HANA Center Instagram account.

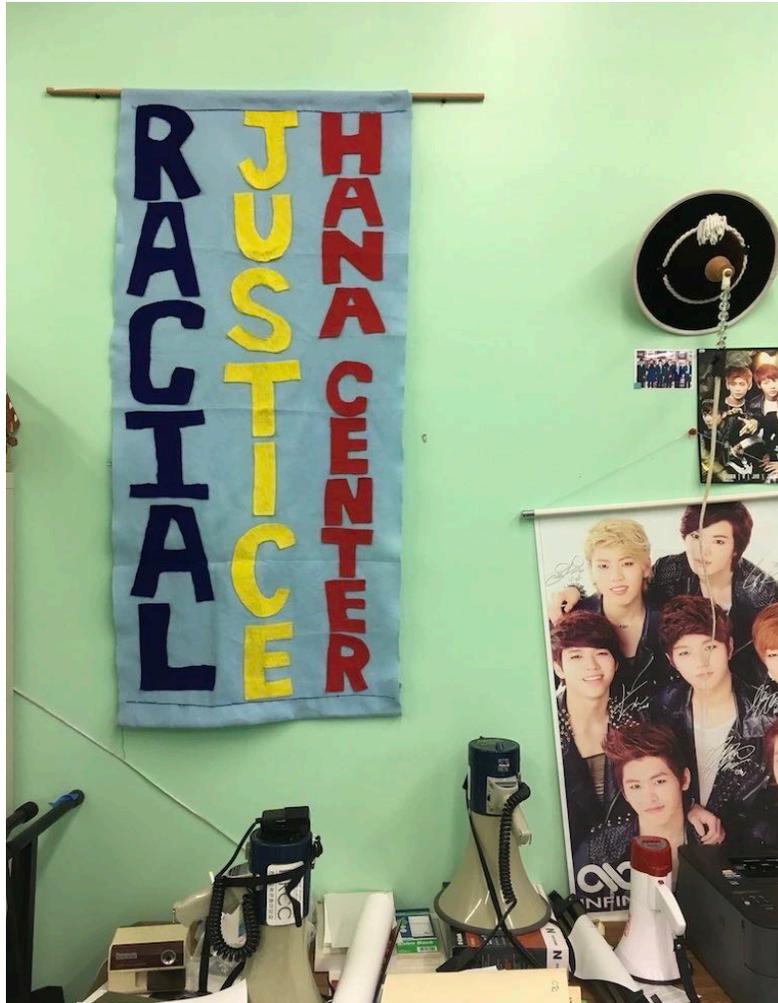


Figure 5.2. One corner of HANA Center’s Youth Organizing room. Objects indicative of common HANA youth activities include the banner and megaphones for marches and rallies, the *sangmo* hat (traditionally used in *p’ungmul* performances, though not typically by HANA drummers) and the signed poster from K-pop boy band Infinite. Photo by author.

Based on my observations, conversations with youth, and interviews with HANA staff, it is common for young people to sign up for the ASM-sponsored HANAsori drumming program and become friends with other youth who have been around HANA for longer. The positive social experience and bonds of new friendship attract many of these new participants to get involved with other HANA programs, including FYSH meetings or more goal-oriented training sessions such as those described here. Not all HANAsori participants get more involved. For some, the drumming

2001, Kim 2011, Bussell 1997). Though HANAsori tends to be used broadly to refer to the range of *p'ungmul* activities at the Center, in practice there tend to be two youth drumming groups: a public performing group and a training ensemble. The former is made up of the Center's most dedicated youth members—typically members of FYSH who are active at a range of HANA events. I return to this group later in the chapter but for the moment focus on the latter group, a training ensemble that is more formalized and has a more temporary membership.³ HANA offers three annual HANAsori sessions in partnership with After School Matters. These workshops, which run for ten weeks in the Fall and Spring and six weeks in the Summer, recruit high school students from across the city who typically have no prior knowledge of *p'ungmul*. The workshops have two elements. First is drumming instruction—as well as marching/dancing in the Summer—led by professional Korean musicians from the Chicago metro area (many of whom are associated with the Global Pungmul Institute in Wheeling, Illinois). The second element is youth leadership development, led by HANA Center's Youth Organizers—during my fieldwork, first Yujin Maeng and later William Oh. This leadership development is wide-ranging and includes activities like researching a social issue and writing a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, learning about college access and financial aid, and being trained to know their rights with regard to interactions with the police or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The HANAsori ASM program typically has a majority of students who have never been to HANA Center before signing up. I attended the Summer and Fall 2018 sessions, during which

3. Starting with the Summer 2019 ASM session, HANA changed the name of this program to #DrummingUpPower in order to make the nature of the program clearer to potential teen participants. Throughout this chapter I refer to this program as HANAsori, as that was the name by which it was called during all of my fieldwork and by my interlocutors. Those searching the web for current information about the program should search “#DrummingUpPower.”

roughly one-quarter of the students had either done the program before or were involved in other youth activities at HANA. All of them came from Chicago, as this is a requirement for ASM programs, and the majority attended CPS schools. Their reasons for signing up were varied. Many were brought by a friend. Some were drawn by the keyword “drumming”—they were musicians who wanted to learn a new musical style, or they were non-musicians interested in developing new skills. Others were drawn by the keyword “Korean”—several were K-Pop fans who wanted to learn more about Korean culture. Only a handful during the sessions I attended were themselves Korean. The majority were immigrants or children of immigrants whose parents had come to Chicago from various countries in Latin America, Asia, or Africa. A small handful of students were white or African American with no recent familial immigration history. Although a certain amount of diversity may be expected from a youth afterschool program in a city like Chicago, it is notable that this program, sponsored by a Korean cultural and community services center, serves almost entirely non-Korean young people. This is in contrast to the general trend of US *p’ungmul* and *samulnori* organizations in academic scholarship (Kwon 2001, Louie 2004, Kim 2011), which tend to focus on the cultivation of Korean American ethnic identity and political subjectivity.



Figure 5.4. HANAsori Summer 2018 ASM class. Source: HANA Center website.

While HANA seeks to provide the young people in HANAsori ASM with a holistic self-contained experience, they are also looking to build longer-term relationships with as many young people as possible. For some, this means registering for every ASM session that they can during their time in high school. For others, it means beginning to get involved in HANA's other youth organizing groups. HANAsori serves as a prime recruitment tool for FYSH—many of my young interlocutors described first coming to HANA through the ASM-sponsored drumming programs, then getting more deeply involved in other activities, from phone banking to political advocacy work in Springfield, Illinois or Washington, DC. For example, Sameerah, who during my fieldwork

was a college student at Northeastern Illinois University, went from being politically unengaged to joining HANAsori, then joining FYSH and getting involved in advocacy campaigns, to becoming a Youth Organizing Fellow, leading programming for high school students. During the 2019 Chicago mayoral runoff, HANA's Twitter account posted a video of her questioning candidate Toni Preckwinkle about funding for affordable housing in the context of expanding sanctuary for immigrants in Chicago.

Given this background, I explore several questions in this chapter. First, why do young people join HANAsori and then become more deeply involved in HANA Center's work? What about the drumming program proves conducive to getting more deeply involved in political organizing, and what do they find compelling about this setting? Most adults who work at HANA are Korean or Korean American, but most members of FYSH and HANAsori are not. How do these young people conceive of their relationship to this ostensibly Korean American community center? Finally, what is this program doing for HANA Center? What are their priorities with youth organizing, and why is a drumming program a foundational component of this aspect of their mission?

Research Methods at This Fieldsite

My full research methodology is described in Chapter 1. Briefly, at HANA Center my approach consisted of participant observation and interviewing from June to December 2018, with periodic interviewing and other engagement outside this timeframe. I first met with program staff at HANA Center in January 2018 to discuss my plans and goal for research with their youth *p'ungmul* program. I made research agreements with HANA's Youth Organizers and Executive Director, as

well as with After School Matters, the third-party umbrella organization that funds HANA's HANAsori program. I conducted participant observation at the Summer and Fall ASM programs. During these programs, in addition to my time observing and talking with the students and teachers, I learned how to play the *puk* and *changgo*, and I performed with them at the end of the Summer program. Outside these classes, I attended non-ASM events such as FYSH organizing meetings and fundraisers like the annual Coffeehouse. I also volunteered my time with HANA, participating in phone banking and leading college access and financial aid workshops for both HANAsori and FYSH. In addition to my informal conversations with young people and teachers during ASM classes and other events (documented in my field notes), I conducted at least one formal interview each with ten high school students (members of FYSH and/or participants in the ASM classes), two Youth Organizing Fellows (part-time staff; current college students), two Youth Organizers (full-time staff; recent college graduates), and the Executive Director of HANA. I interviewed some of these subjects multiple times.

Part II: Joining HANA Center

JM: How would you say being involved with HANA has changed your path into the future, whether it's your goals, or what you're planning on doing?

S: I definitely—before HANA Center, I didn't really have a passion, I would say. Nothing that came to me was ever my choice. My mom was like "oh, so how long are you gonna be in school for?" and I'm like, "ahh, I don't know, college, get my degree, get out of there." She's like "why don't you become this, why don't you go into STEM, why don't you go into this and this and this and that," and I'm like—I just intake those ideas and believe that they're mine, but they actually are not. So having that mentality where I absorb all these things that people are saying to me, and believe that "oh, ok, I guess I'll become a nurse" or "I guess I can go study chemistry in college and be over with, since that's what 'I' want"—quotation marks! I don't want—it's not actually me, someone else. And so HANA definitely erased that for my mind. It's like, you need to learn how to develop your own way of

thinking. You need to learn how to process how you feel about all these things that people are saying to me. ‘Cause I don’t need to take everything that is given to me. I can reject what others say, and I don’t have to feel apologetic. And so that was a thing that led me to a pathway where I was like, maybe I do have a passion for social justice and human rights, and this is what I want to do—coming from my own words, my brain, my brain chambers and everything like that.

Sarah, sitting off to the side, quietly applauds

(Interview with author, December 5, 2018).



Figure 5.5. FYSH/HANAsori members at a march. Source: HANA Center Twitter account.

I first encountered HANA Center’s youth drummers at several rallies for immigrants’ rights around Chicago. Musicians at a political rally always draw my attention, and these loud, assertive drummers stood out from the crowd. Many wore pale blue t-shirts that identified their affiliation with HANA Center. Though their instruments and attire identified them with a Korean cultural center, many did not appear to be Korean. I did not make much of this at the time—Chicago is a

big, diverse city, and young people have the chance to get involved in all kinds of extracurricular activities. After spending much of 2018 attending rehearsals, performances, and social events with these young people, however, I have come to think that this unselfconscious interracial youth musical group is emblematic of what an organization like HANA can do with an effective music education program. Posed as a question: why does a group of young people who are immigrants or children of immigrants from Vietnam, the Philippines, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Mexico commit a great deal of their time and social energy to *p'ungmul* drumming and political organizing at a Korean cultural center?

I argue here that the intersection of music education and community organizing enables the youth workers at HANA to build a cohesive group identity and shared set of skills for a multiracial group of immigrant and second-generation youth from different neighborhoods and high schools across the city. The young people are then able to mobilize this solidarity and shared skillset to achieve political goals that are relevant to them. The musical and nonmusical skills that young people develop through these workshops enable them to transition seamlessly into HANA Center's other youth organizing activities, such as leading a campaign to decolonize the CPS curriculum, fundraising for DREAMer scholarships, pressuring candidates for municipal public office to adopt pro-sanctuary policy positions, and drumming at public marches and rallies for immigrants' rights.

Student Profiles

Most young people first come to HANA Center without much sense of purpose or direction—accidentally, even. Nearly every young person I spoke with first became involved with HANA through the ASM-sponsored HANAsori drumming program. All ASM participants receive a stipend

for their participation, in large part to make afterschool and summer programming available for young people who would otherwise need to spend that time working—so, for some participants, HANAsori was a convenient way to earn a paycheck for the summer. Others were dragged along by friends or encouraged to attend by siblings. Several knew no one who had participated and selected HANA’s program out of the ASM catalog for a range of reasons—one young woman, a nearly professional drummer, sought to expand her percussion repertoire; another was a huge K-Pop fan and picked it because she figured a program about Korean culture would no doubt appeal. Some of these students only attend the HANAsori programs in the Fall, Spring, and Summer—perhaps once or perhaps over multiple programs. Many others, though, get much more deeply involved in HANA’s youth organizing activities.

Though I have described the center’s youth participants in aggregate, it may help the reader to see a brief representative profile of several students. I conversed regularly with several dozen students during my fieldwork, and I conducted in-depth interviews with ten. Several of them were among HANA’s most-involved young people during this time, others were beginning to get more involved, and a few only participated in one or two programs at HANA before dropping their involvement. The interviews mostly took place during the 2018 summer ASM program, with several more conducted the following autumn. Following are brief profiles of those ten students:

Jessica was a rising senior at Roosevelt High School, the high school closest to HANA Center. She lived in West Garfield Park, on the West Side of the city, but had family in the Albany Park area around HANA. She and her friend Jenny were attending HANAsori for the first time when I spoke with them. The two were president and vice president of their school’s K-pop club. The prior year, at the school’s annual activities fair, Jessica noticed a table with someone advertising HANA. Thanks to her K-pop fandom, she recognized the word’s Korean meaning and approached to

learn more. She and Jenny initially decided to sign up for HANAsori because of the financial appeal of the ASM stipend, but they found it more interesting than expected given the traditional-sounding topic of the class. She had so far enjoyed learning how to play the *changgo*, but for her the class stood out in terms of the cultural and political lessons—about Korean history and present-day immigrant community organizing. She compared this favorably to her past experiences with ASM programs in dance and art, which had eschewed cultural components. She saw commonalities between the Korean history of Japanese colonialism and the stories her parents—Mexican immigrants—had told her about Spanish colonialism in Mexico. She particularly connected the stories about colonial occupiers attempting to suppress artistic and cultural activity. Jessica credited her parents with giving her an open-minded view of the world, encouraging her to pursue things that interested her like HANAsori in order to have new experiences. While she had never been involved with political causes, she found HANA’s work appealing in part because of its personal relevance—when discussing the FYSH-organized Coffeehouse talent show and fundraiser, she noted how she appreciated that the funds were going to a college scholarship fund for undocumented students. One of her family members had been a DACA recipient and Jessica had witnessed the barriers to success for undocumented immigrants. This—along with her parents’ reminders—made her grateful for her citizenship status (she was born in the US), and drove her to get involved with HANA’s activities outside HANAsori in order to help those less lucky than herself. In the year after our interview, Jessica would go on to stay involved with HANA, regularly attending FYSH meetings and assisting the group’s work.

Mary was a rising senior at Westinghouse, one of the city’s prestigious public selective enrollment schools (where admissions is determined by an exam taken in eighth grade). She grew up in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago but later moved to North Lawndale. Her parents had also

grown up in Chicago. She learned about HANA from her friend Sarah. Unlike most students, Mary first came to HANA to participate in FYSH meetings and activities, but Sarah convinced her to sign up for the drumming program as well. She was drawn to FYSH's campaign to decolonize the CPS curriculum: "I'm all for activism, that's why [Sarah] thought I would fit well in here. And when I came in here and looked at the posters [for the CPS curriculum campaign], I'm like, this is the environment I want to be around, people that are *for* something that I'm for as well" (Interview with author, July 26, 2018). Before coming to HANA, Mary didn't know anything about Korean culture. Growing up in an African American family on the West Side of Chicago, most of the students in her schools had also been African American, so she had little exposure to any Asian Americans, let alone Koreans in particular. As one of the few students in the class without a recent family history of immigration, she was learning a great deal about both history and present-day political struggles; however, she was taking to it quickly in part because it aligned with her preexisting values. When asked what motivated her to ally herself with an immigrant rights organization, she paused before answering, "Liberation. Not just for me, but for others as well—I want people to understand that this [immigrant detention and other civil rights violations] is something that is real and that these people don't deserve it. They deserve to be free, as per what the United States is built on" (ibid.).

Grace was a rising senior at Whitney Young High School, another selective enrollment school. She lived in Ravenswood, a north side neighborhood close to HANA Center. She grew up in Chicago, the child of two immigrants—her mother from Korea and her father from England (where his own parents had immigrated from Hong Kong). She was distinctive among HANA participants in that she had extensive drumming experience—albeit as a classical percussionist in several school bands and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program. Her broad musical

background ranged from percussion study at Interlochen to a busking and farmers-market-touring folk band where she played cajón while her friends—members of the Chicago Children’s Choir—sang. A recent experience with African drumming styles had prompted her to seek out other global percussion experiences. Searching through the ASM offerings, she was drawn to HANAsori because of the confluence of drumming and her interest in exploring her mother’s Korean culture. When considering the balance between interest in the cultures of her Korean mother or her British Chinese father, her choice was guided by her parents—as her mother had put more effort into teaching her Korean and fostering her interest in Korean traditions while her father had shown comparatively less interest in fostering the Chinese side of her identity. While this interest in Korean heritage had guided her to HANA Center, Grace was ultimately focused on the music more than the cultural or political components of the class. She conceived of the program in part as teaching her a diverse set of percussion skills that she could incorporate into her broader repertoire. Despite making several friends in the program, she was ultimately not interested in deeper involvement with the non-musical aspects of HANA Center. After the summer session ended and her intensive rehearsal schedule started up in the autumn, she was unable to stay involved with *p’ungmul* activities at HANA.

Bryan was a rising junior at Northside College Prep, also a selective enrollment high school. Born in Chicago to parents from Ecuador, he lived in Albany Park, walking distance from HANA. Though he was participating in HANAsori ASM for the first time, his musical background in classical piano and violin equipped him with a strong sense of rhythm and timing, and he became the lead *kkwaenggwari* player for most performances that summer. He had no prior connections to HANA and found the class just by searching through the ASM catalogue and picking programs that sounded interesting. He didn’t articulate any specific reason for choosing HANAsori—the

combination of music and exposure to something new and unfamiliar was enough for him. Bryan was soft-spoken and somewhat reserved, but he emphasized the positive social experience of HANAsori as both a musical and an extramusical component. He had never before experienced such a social form of music-making, with constant communication and collaboration in playing and moving together. Though he was initially nervous about his role as lead *kkwaenggwari* player—which meant beating out the rhythms and tempos to initiate pieces and mark section changes within pieces, as well as physically leading the whole group’s line of dancing—he rose to meet this challenge and seemed ultimately to enjoy the social responsibility. Beyond the music, Bryan found the experience eye-opening as he met for the first time young people from many other parts of Chicago that he had never experienced. He spoke of this as an experience that helped to broaden his understanding of the city and its people.

Ken was a rising junior at Lane Tech, another selective enrollment school. He lived in the Budlong Woods neighborhood, two miles north of HANA Center. Ken immigrated to Chicago from the Philippines at age eight along with the rest of his family. Growing up in the Philippines he became a fan of K-pop—thanks in part, he suspected, to South Korea’s expansive media influence throughout southeast Asia. He took up the guitar in his spare time but was unable to pursue music in school because of his rigorous academic schedule. In searching for a summer activity, he applied to several musical ASM programs, including HANAsori, a dance program, and a band program—however, HANA Center’s proximity to his home was the deciding factor. He had little prior experience with Korean culture besides K-pop, though he found *p’ungmul* to be similar—in his view—to Japanese *taiko* which he had experienced as a volunteer at a Japanese cultural festival. In his view there were also commonalities between *p’ungmul* and traditional Filipino music and dance, particularly in the symbolic significance of certain instruments and rhythms which practitioners

compare to elements of nature. Beyond instrumental music, Ken was heavily involved in dance—including hip hop dancing, K-pop dancing, and traditional Filipino dancing. This turned into an avenue for social bonding, as he collaborated on dance routines for the HANA Coffeehouse talent show with long-time HANAsori participant Tuvy. Ken went on to stay deeply involved with FYSH. The confluence of friendship, drumming and dancing collaboration and a focus on social causes important to him as an immigrant made it a much more appealing and dynamic environment than he had imagined when he came across the program in ASM’s catalog.

Angel was an incoming ninth-grade student at Northtown Academy in the North Park neighborhood. He lived in Kilbourn Park, around four miles southwest of HANA. It was a last-minute choice for Angel to join HANAsori. He wanted to join a volleyball club, but his mother felt it was too far away; he was accidentally added to HANA’s ASM list and his mother encouraged him to attend because it was close by and he could bike there. Mostly he listened to Latin rap, reggaetón, salsa, and bachata. He grew up in Chicago with his mother and grandparents, all immigrants from Mexico. Angel was fairly representative of a type of student who comes to HANAsori, enjoys the drumming and the social environment, but doesn’t feel as compelled to stay involved. This could in part be attributed to his youth—he expressed less understanding of or interest in the cultural and political sides of HANA Center’s activities. Though his mother had talked about immigration and politics before, he was not particularly interested in that aspect of HANA. After the summer, he returned to more athletic activities and did not sign up again for HANAsori.

Carlos was similar to Angel in this regard—he was trying out HANA and enjoyed the program but didn’t end up returning. A rising sophomore at Lincoln Park High School, he had lived his whole life in Chicago and in 2018 lived a mile south of HANA Center. His parents immigrated

from Mexico. In his telling, he ended up in HANAsori because of a sibling prank: while searching through ASM programs online with his sister, he left her alone with the computer. She decided to sign up for him, and based on her recent fandom for BTS—a popular K-pop group—she chose Korean traditional drumming. With no other options close to his home, Carlos decided to go along with the plan. He had a great time for the summer session but, like Angel, decided that his interests lay elsewhere.

Tuvy was a senior at Lane Tech, the same school as Ken (they didn't know each other well before Ken joined HANAsori but they went on to become dance collaborators). She came to Chicago from Vietnam at age six and grew up in West Rogers Park on the far North Side. Tuvy first joined the *p'unngmul* group in ninth grade, when it was at KRCC (one of the two groups that merged in 2017 to form HANA). Like many students, her first exposure to Korean culture was K-pop, which her older brother introduced to her. In high school she joined the Korean dance club to learn more, and she noted with interest that most members were not Korean but instead Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino fans of K-pop. She was first brought to KRCC by her school friend Vincent, who invited her to join KRCC's Hapkido (Korean martial art) program. There she met Sameerah, who—along with Vincent—convinced her to join FYSH. Every year FYSH participates in Chicago's Dyke March, a lesbian protest march. That year, Inhe and Yujin asked Tuvy if she would join the KRCC drummers for the event. She enjoyed learning the *puk* cadences and after the march Yujin convinced her to join the ASM program to learn more drumming techniques; she had been attending ever since. By the time I met her, Tuvy was one of the lead *puk* drummers, often modeling and explaining rhythms and dance movements to newer members of the group. Particularly committed to drumming at rallies and the social aspects of HANA, Tuvy was at first less interested in the social justice components. Close social bonds were a primary driver of her commitment to

HANA, as she felt that her friendships formed there were more significant than those at school. Her closest friends and confidants were those she had met at HANA, even though they attended different high schools. She found that her time at HANA built up her leadership skills better than any other activities, particularly as over time she found younger students looking to her for musical and personal guidance. With time she also came to be more politically engaged, as HANA taught her more about immigrant rights issues like DACA and DAPA. Given the diverse range of rallies where HANA drummers participate, Tuvy was also exposed to other social justice issues, such as those advanced by the Movement for Black Lives—with whom HANA has collaborated.

One of Tuvy's close friends at HANA was Dalin, a senior at Mather High School. Dalin's family immigrated to Chicago from Cambodia. A friend convinced her to come to a FYSH meeting at KRCC during ninth grade and she stuck around. Initially, the most compelling aspect for her was the political knowledge—it was transformative for her to understand issues that adults were fighting for, issues going on in the world that her friends at school didn't know about. This extended beyond issues of immigrants' rights, as HANA Center's intersectional framework to social justice organizing meant that Dalin also learned about topics like trans rights that she had never heard of before. For Dalin, being surrounded by so much information was empowering. Other members of FYSH convinced her start drumming as well. At first she found the drumming boring, but over time she came to appreciate the way that it expanded her capacity for persistence and group solidarity as she struggled through long practices and performances with the other HANA youth. Like Tuvy, Dalin found her closest friendships at HANA. For Dalin, this was driven in part by the liberating environment. As a child she had participated in traditional Cambodian dance activities at the Cambodian Association, but she found the expectations of the community to be too restrictive—particularly regarding gender norms. There was a narrow sense of what it meant to be a

girl that Dalin resisted. Her experience at HANA was radically different. She found that HANA defied the norm that Asian American women were expected to be quiet—instead, HANA lifted up the voices of young women, encouraging them to be loud. Dalin saw HANA as having empowered her to speak. Ultimately she attributed this not to any one group or person—rather it was the dynamic nature of the Center itself. Other contexts like the Cambodian Association were dominated by limited age groups—often older adults and children—and particular activities—such as a primary emphasis on cultural practices like dance. Dalin saw HANA as full of dynamic diversity, with young adults in their twenties who she could look to as more approachable role models (such as Yujin, who taught her about feminism), with a constant hum of activity moving from musical to social to political, from public concerts for Chicago children to grueling all-day rallies and marches for immigrants’ rights. Throughout it all, she could count on seeing a rotating cohort of people who came to be her community, from friends like Tuvy, to mentors like Yujin, to parental figures like Inhe.

Last of all, Souzane is already familiar to the reader from the beginning of this chapter. To expand on her biography: born in Tanzania to parents who were refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she spent her early childhood in a refugee camp before immigrating to Chicago. During my fieldwork, Souzane was a senior at Von Steuben High School and lived in Uptown. She first learned about the KRCC drumming program from her brother, who participated for one summer. He had picked it solely because it was an ASM program conveniently close to their house. Souzane signed up herself for the first time during the summer before ninth grade. Like Tuvy, she became one of the informal drumming leaders, specializing first in the *changgo* and later learning each of the other instruments. She quickly joined FYSH out of curiosity when she saw other students going upstairs to the youth office after ASM sessions ended. Particularly compelling

for her was the dynamic range of topics that she learned about for the first time, from intersectionality to mental health, sexual orientation, and immigration. This also led to transformative political leadership experiences—for example, one summer Souzane, several other HANA youth, and several staff members boarded a van and drove to Washington, DC. to advocate for the DACA program (which was under threat of elimination) for several days in front of the White House. There she practiced her political persuasion on passers-by and built musical solidarity with other DACA advocates who had brought along their own drums. These experiences also helped Souzane develop her understanding of herself as an immigrant in solidarity with immigrants from other backgrounds.

While these profiles of ten HANA participants are not comprehensive, they are representative. The Center’s youth population changes from year to year, but these profiles provide a snapshot of the diversity of backgrounds, interests, and experiences that they bring. Most are immigrants or children of immigrants, with occasional exceptions like Mary. Most have little musical experience, with occasional exceptions like Grace and Bryan. Many discovered HANA through the ASM-sponsored drumming program, while a few first came to FYSH meeting for leadership development before being recruited into the drumming activities. Some start early in high school while others become committed members in their senior year. Geographically, they come from all over the city, though concentrated in several areas. Figure 5.6 emphasizes the geographic diversity of the students—their home neighborhoods are labeled with blue pins while their high schools are labeled with red pins.⁴ HANA is represented by a Green Star.

4. Please note that the blue map pins do not indicate the actual addresses of students’ homes, merely the general location of the neighborhoods in which they live.

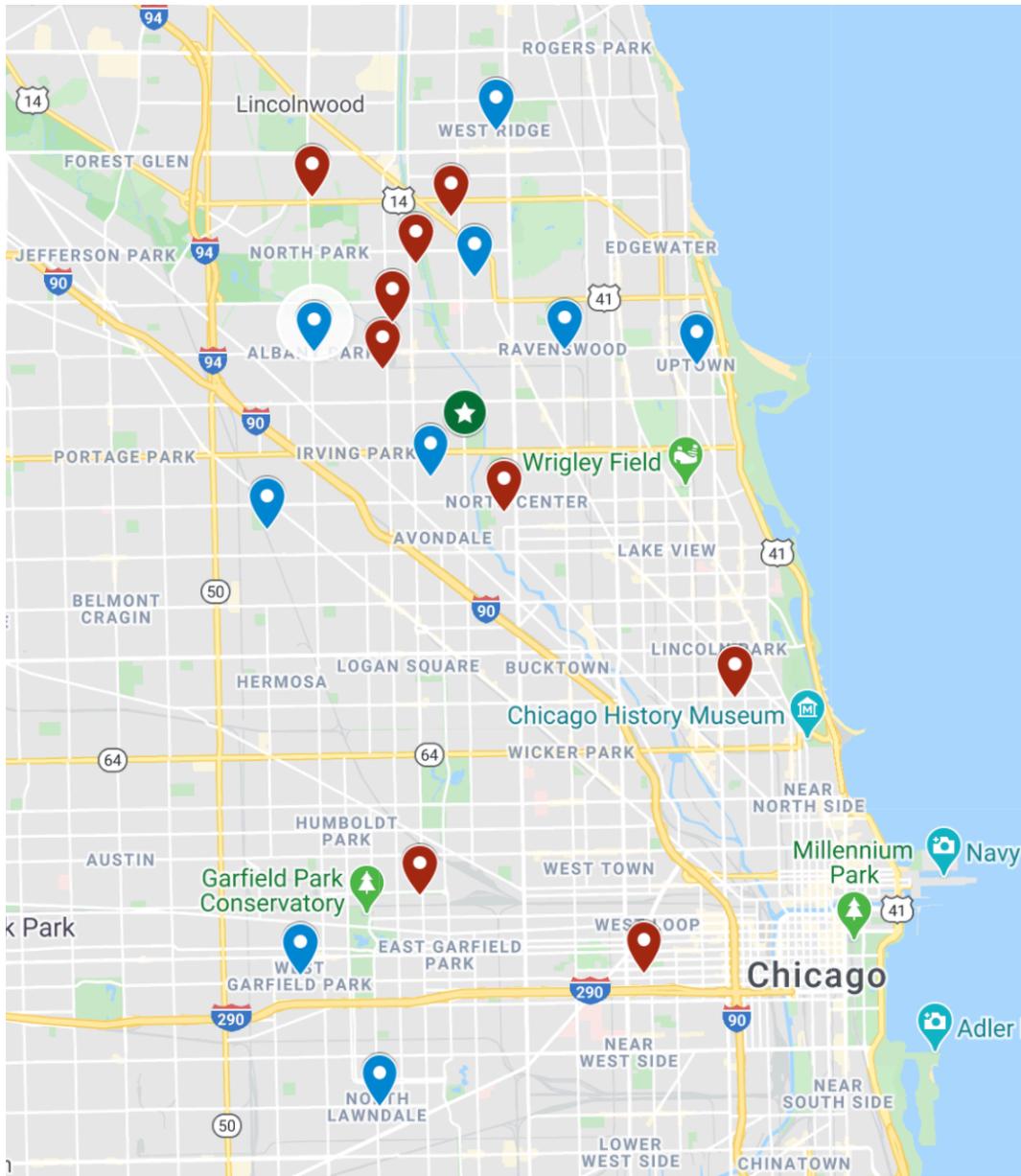


Figure 5.6. Map of HANA drumming program participants. Created by author using Google Maps.

Figure 5.7 contextualizes the geographic locations of the HANA Center participants with demographic data on the concentration of immigrants in different census tracts throughout Chicago. This figure maintains the same markers as the preceding figure—blue pins (representing participants’ home neighborhoods) with a green star for HANA. The background data, drawn from

the American Community Survey 2018 (five-year estimates) depicts the percentage of foreign-born residents in each census tract. The darker orange indicates a higher percentage of immigrants, while the paler areas indicate a lower percentage. Several trends well known to residents of Chicago are evident here. First, there are three primary areas with low percentages of immigrants—the South Side, which is predominantly African American (save for the dense dark area on the lake front that is Hyde Park, the location of the University of Chicago), the West Side, which is similarly populated by African Americans, and the near North Side, which is predominantly White. The dense immigrant population to the southwest is primarily Mexican, whereas assorted immigrant populations from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America populate the Northwest and far North areas of the city. Within this context, the locations of HANA’s participants make sense—most of them live in neighborhoods with high immigrant populations, and similarly most of them live relatively close to HANA Center.

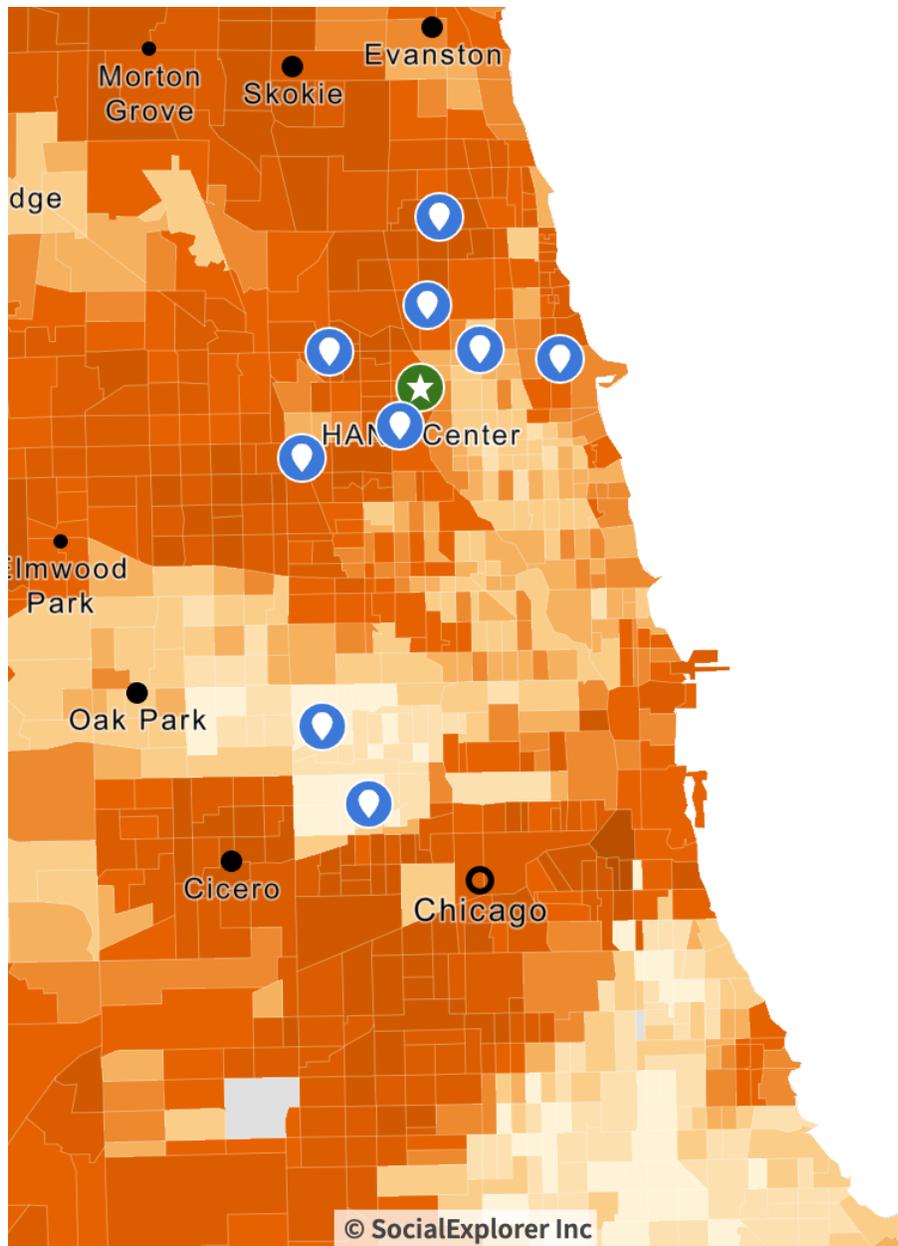


Figure 5.7. Map of HANA drumming program participants juxtaposed with immigrant population data. Created by author using Social Explorer.

A Typical Class

The HANAsori programs have two typical formats. During the Summer session, class runs for six weeks, four hours a day on Mon–Thurs. The musical emphasis is on marching and choreographed

dance pieces—relatively simple or formulaic. During the Fall and Winter sessions, class runs for ten weeks, three hours a day on Tues-Thurs. The musical emphasis is on seated presentational performance with more elaborate rhythms. During both types of session, however, each class is structured similarly. They begin with a group check-in around a table in HANA's large upstairs multipurpose room—led by either a Youth Organizer (Yujin or William) or a Youth Organizing Fellow (Sameerah or Jasmine), students will share how they're doing and participate in an icebreaker activity. This is followed by drumming instruction, typically for about two hours. HANA hires professional instructors from the Global Pungmul Institute—the Youth Organizers and Fellows are generally experienced drummers but not qualified to teach. At the beginning of each program session, all the students are introduced to the four percussion instruments and invited to choose their instrument for the remainder of the session.

There are two gongs—*kkwaenggwari* and *ching*—and two drums—*puk* and *changgo*.⁵ The *kkwaenggwari* is the lead instrument—both musically and physically, as the head *kkwaenggwari* player takes the lead in dancing formations. It is a small hand-held metal gong struck with a mallet in a moderately intricate pattern. The head *kkwaenggwari* player starts performances with a rhythmic signal and uses other specific rhythmic signals to indicate shifts in tempo or a switch to another musical section of the piece. HANA'sori typically has two to four *kkwaenggwari* players. The *ching* is a larger metal gong that is struck in a simpler pattern, emphasizing the downbeat. HANA'sori typically has one or two *ching* players. The *puk* is a narrow barrel drum struck with a thick mallet. Similar to the *ching*, its main musical purpose is to keep metrical time. Typically about one third to half of the remaining HANA'sori members play *puk*, while the rest play *changgo*. The *changgo*

5. Transliterations of these instruments' Korean names vary. I defer here to the spellings used by scholars like Kwon (2001), Kim (2011), and Hesselink (2012).

generally plays the most rhythmically elaborate part. It is a double-headed hourglass-shaped drum played with two different sticks. Typically the left drumhead is lower in pitch and right drumhead is higher. The right drumhead is struck with a flat wooden stick. The other stick is more of a mallet, with a rounded wooden head. It can be used to strike either side of the drum. The *changgo* can be played quite fast and is often used to elaborate the rhythmic foundation provided by the other three instruments. Figure 5.8 illustrates the four instruments as played in a seated formation. The young man in the blue baseball cap is the lead *kkwaenggwari* player. The young man in the center of the formation, wearing glasses, is the *ching* player. On the far side of the formation are four *puks* and around the left side and in the foreground are five *changgos*.



Figure 5.8. Students from the Summer 2018 HANAsori program (joined by a few additional members of FYSH) prepare to perform for their friends at a FYSH Coffeehouse fundraiser at HANA Center. Photo by author.

HANAsori’s program activities take place in HANA Center’s second-floor multipurpose room. A cavernous space with support pillars rising floor to ceiling, its walls are adorned with banners and posters documenting recent activity at HANA—particularly the activities of FYSH. During Summer 2018, some prominent posters proclaimed “Protect DACA” and “Decolonize Our Curriculum.” Right outside the room is a kitchen where students periodically duck off to cook a bowl of ramen to snack on during a break. Down the hall is the Youth Organizing office, pictured toward the beginning of this chapter.



Figure 5.9. Students in the Summer 2018 HANAsori program, assembled in HANA Center’s upstairs multipurpose room. Photo by author.

After the first two hours of drumming instruction, students put away their drums and transition to some sort of youth development activity. These are typically facilitated by a Youth Organizer or Fellow, or sometimes an experienced member of FYSH, and they include a wide range of activities. Some are knowledge-based, like Know Your Rights workshops, designed to educate immigrants and friends or relatives of immigrants about their legal rights, particularly with regard to police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or college access and financial aid workshops. Others are based on self-reflection and empowerment—as students learn about and

discuss racial and gender justice or personal identity. Some are historical lessons, teaching students about eras in Korean history like Japanese imperial occupation and the role of drumming as a means of cultural and political expression throughout Korean history. Others are focused on skills, like spoken word storytelling or writing letters to local newspapers about issues the students care about in their local communities. There is also a financial literacy component built into ASM—the students have a program budget that they can democratically allocate throughout the program period, and the Youth Organizers lead them in the process of planning and budgeting.

Drumming as a Means of Solidarity-Building

It became apparent over the course of my time with HANAsori and FYSH that the members' close friendship and solidarity expressed in so many day-to-day social forms often had its root in their shared drumming. Though many students join HANAsori due to a friend or sibling, they tend not to know anyone besides the person who brought them or encouraged them to sign up. On top of this, none of them enter with any experience on the four instruments—in some cases, without any musical experience. As a result, they're starting from a blank slate both socially and musically. As they struggle together to master the physical motions of the instruments and rhythmic complexities of the music, they support one another—modeling how to hold a stick or explaining a missed rhythmic phrase. A typical HANAsori cohort consists of some beginners and some youth who are repeating the program to hone their skills. These experienced drummers serve to bring the first-timers into the social and musical youth community of HANA. Though they may not share much on the surface—coming from different neighborhoods, high schools, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds—the drumming serves as a medium through which to share skills, commiserate over

challenges, and celebrate successes.



Figure 5.10. During downtime before their end-of-summer performance, Souzane (L), one of the most experienced drummers in the group, explains and demonstrates a complex rhythm to Mary (R), who was participating in HANAsori for the first time. Photo by author.

These drumming skills also serve as a gateway to on-the-ground political engagement.

HANA Center drummers—most of them youth drawn from HANAsori and FYSH—serve as a core of activity at a range of marches and rallies in Chicago—primarily events supporting immigrants’ rights, though sometimes other events like Dyke March. Attending a rally and articulating a political stance can be challenging for adolescents, but many of my interlocutors who had

participated in such events spoke of how the drumming made the experience easier. They knew what to do and could fall into their rhythmic role with the group—it was also apparent how they brought energy to other participants, including many not affiliated with HANA Center. The drumming thus became an avenue into political activism, a way to play an important part while feeling safe in the musical and social structures that they had cultivated in classes and workshops at HANA itself.

Part III: *P’ungmul* in Korea and the United States

There is some ambiguity about whether HANA Center’s percussion activities would best be described as *p’ungmul* or *samulnori*. Ostensibly, the two are distinct genres: *p’ungmul* is an older and more folkloric tradition that includes drumming, dancing, and sometimes singers, actors, and reed instruments; *samulnori* is a newer tradition (started by the group SamulNori in Seoul in 1978) that only uses the four percussion instruments at the core of *p’ungmul*. While *p’ungmul* is typically performed standing (marching and dancing) and outside, *samulnori* is typically performed seated and inside (often on a stage), as it is a more virtuosic and intricate style. Despite this ostensibly clear division, the actual activities of groups like HANAsori tend to be a bit more blurred. During the summer and at marches and rallies, their performances more closely resemble *p’ungmul*—standing, dancing, and marching outdoors, though only with the four core percussion instruments and without the typical *sangmo* ribbon hats—while during their Fall and Spring programs their performances more closely resemble *samulnori*—seated, indoors, and with much more intricate arrangements. One key difference in the latter approach is that, while *samulnori* typically has just

one musician on each instrument, the Fall and Spring HANAsori programs feature multiple students on each. Throughout this chapter, I refer to HANA Center’s musical activities as *p’ungmul* because that is the term they use.

***P’ungmul* in Korea**

In Korea, the drumming and dancing called *p’ungmul* have been practiced for several centuries by farmers and villagers, and in broader contexts—professional, urban amateur, and preservationist—after the agrarian society industrialized in the twentieth century. Its ultimate origins in both time and space (within Korea) have been widely debated (Hesselink 2006: 13–17; Lee 2012: 184). There has been some terminological controversy; some, including the government of the Republic of Korea, refer to the tradition as *nongak*, meaning “farming music.” Others critique this term, asserting that the term *nongak* was used by Japanese authorities during their occupation of Korea from 1910–45 to frame the tradition as solely agricultural and to restrict its practice (Lee 2012: 184–85). Thus, *p’ungmul* has come into wide use as a more neutral terminological choice.

Under the name *nongak*, it was the eleventh national tradition registered as intangible culture by the South Korean government under the nation’s 1962 Cultural Property Protection Law (Cultural Heritage Administration 2006). Five regional traditions were registered as sub-categories. It was further registered with UNESCO 2014 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

As this dissertation is particularly occupied with the transmission and youth practice of musical traditions, the reader may glean some insight here from the Republic of Korea’s own narratives regarding *p’ungmul*. The UNESCO intangible cultural heritage nomination form asks

several salient questions, including “1.(ii) Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element? Are there any specific roles or categories of persons with special responsibilities for the practice and transmission of the element? If yes, who are they and what are their responsibilities?” and “1.(iii) How are the knowledge and skills related to the element transmitted today?” The Korean government’s responses to these questions can be accessed online (Republic of Korea 2014).

1.(ii) Nongak is transmitted by various types of community groups scattered throughout Korea. These groups at the forefront of its transmission display and preserve their respective regional characteristics in diverse activities to popularize their genre.

Village bands embrace this role in farming and fishing communities. In the cities, voluntary groups at business companies, schools, municipal districts and neighborhood communities are engaged in teaching, performing, popularizing, and transmitting nongak. These enthusiastic voluntary efforts in the private sector have built a solid base for its safeguarding and transmission.

Schools play an important role in teaching and transmitting nongak. Most elementary school students have an opportunity to learn a few basic instruments used in its music, and many schools from elementary to college levels have voluntary student clubs devoted to nongak. These early experiences help to reignite their interest later in adulthood.

Active efforts are also in place at different government levels. In particular, the central and local governments give recognition to outstanding performers and performing groups by awarding state, municipal or provincial titles as bearers of intangible cultural heritage (“living cultural treasures”) as mandated by the Cultural Heritage Protection Act. They are thus endowed with special responsibility to pass down nongak to future generations. Professional performing groups supported by the National Gugak Center (Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts) and other state and public institutions as well as private organizations also contribute to the transmission of nongak.

1.(iii) Nongak is transmitted very naturally and spontaneously; it has become the popular performing art that it is today, having been passed down as part of the everyday lives of the Korean people. Most Koreans naturally become familiar with it as they repeatedly watch and participate in its performances in villages and cities. Public education at the elementary level provides lessons on playing some instruments for its music, so every Korean can learn the basic content and play an instrument. Thus at schools of all levels, from elementary to college, students can learn the music and participate in group performances through after-school or club activities as well as regular education programs. Adults also can enjoy playing the music by joining clubs at their workplaces and communities.

Cultural centers of local governments in different regions and individual performers and societies for safeguarding of nongak designated by the central and local governments

provide regular education programs to disseminate nongak as a medium for cultural empathy and communication among community members, and pass it down to future generations. These education programs are offered once or twice a week. Enthusiastic participants include both professionals and ordinary people.

Public institutions such as the National Gugak Center as well as professional performing groups play important roles in the education and transmission of nongak. The National Gugak Center has a top-class band which offers highly-refined performances; the center's local branches in various parts of the country contribute to promoting and transmitting the local versions in their respective regions.

While this UNESCO certification application, a national and nationalist project, foregrounds centralized bodies like the National Gugak Center, ethnomusicologists have tended to be more interested in local modes of transmission. Donna Kwon, for example, eschews "a top-down study of transmission where the central point of inquiry might be the National Gugak Center or the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Intangible Cultural Property system" (2015: 37) in favor of studying regional, on-the-ground transmission practices and "documenting the incremental changes that demonstrate how a group flexibly adapts to new realities, even while adhering to a government mandate of preservation" (ibid.).

The most comprehensive English-language work on Korean drumming has been written by Nathaniel Hesselink, Donna Kwon, Keith Howard, and Katherine In-Young Lee. Hesselink's *Pungmul: South Korean Drumming and Dance* (2006) provides a comprehensive assessment of the genre as a traditional musical form in Korea. Recent English-language scholarship has tended to focus on *samulnori* rather than *p'ungmul*. *Samulnori* uses the same four primary instruments—the hourglass *changgo*, the *puk* barrel drum, the small gong *kkwaenggwari*, and the large gong *ching*—but in an adapted, urban cosmopolitan concert form. The genre's origin story is often retold—founded by four young musicians at a 1978 concert in Seoul, the style took rural, "traditional" *p'ungmul* and made it faster, intricate, arranged, and virtuosic. *SamulNori* (capitalized) was at first the name of the

performance group, but as they achieved national and international fame, *samulnori* (lower-case) came to also refer to the group's performance practices and repertoire as taken up by other musicians.

The rise of *samulnori* has been viewed negatively by some proponents of *p'ungmul*. Hesselink writes of setting out to research *samulnori* in the 1990s and being steered by both Korean and North American academics toward *p'ungmul* as “something so popular, urban, and recent [as *samulnori*] could not possibly be ‘traditional’” (2012: 6)—with the examination of the “traditional” being the implicit goal of ethnomusicological scholarship. One of Hesselink's interlocutors, Pak Hyöngnae—“nationally designated *p'ungmul* cultural asset performer” (ibid.)—told Hesselink that “*Samulnori* is *p'ungmul* that has been popularized in urban areas for people with little knowledge of the past. It's like disco music—it does not have any slow rhythms which let you move in a distinctively Korean way” (ibid.). While *samulnori*'s proponents and founders viewed it as “saving Korean traditional music from obscurity in a nation threatened by Western cultural hegemony” (ibid.: 2), while its opponents viewed it as spoiling traditional *p'ungmul* performance practices with ruinous Western influences (ibid.: 7). There is much recent English-language scholarship on *samulnori*. Hesselink's *SamulNori: Contemporary Korean Drumming and the Rebirth of Itinerant Performance Culture* (2012) offers a revisionist history and genre argument, reframing the traditional/modern dichotomy of *p'ungmul* and *samulnori* by framing the latter as a rebirth of *namsadang* itinerant troupe performance. He focuses on social, cultural, and economic analysis of the first twenty years of the original SamulNori group's existence, attempting to explain its origins and success. Hesselink's work here provides crucial insight into tensions between “tradition” and change—he argues that SamulNori embodies the proverb “preserve the old while creating the new,” that the group “made tradition relevant again in Korean society” (ibid.: 13) and that “SamulNori called into question the *meaning* of tradition in the twenty-first century” and “created a powerful alternative to the government's cultural asset

system, policies that are emulated in other East Asian countries and by UNESCO” (ibid.). This alternative, he asserts, affords agency to performers and creators, allowing them to adapt musically and to question the political, social, and economic dynamics of “codified tradition” (ibid.: 13–14). Keith Howard’s *SamulNori: Korean Percussion for a Contemporary World* (2015) builds on this with a comprehensive history and overview of the genre. Katherine In-Young Lee’s *Dynamic Korea and Rhythmic Form* (2018) takes an innovative analytical approach, using rhythm to explain the global spread of the genre. Lee’s work begins to move in directions relevant to this dissertation—particularly, the reasons behind amateur non-Koreans’ engagement with the genre.

***P’ungmul* scholarship in the United States**

Though the majority of *p’ungmul* scholarship focuses on practices in Korea, there is a growing literature on US *p’ungmul* contexts. *P’ungmul* groups (often with *samulnori* influences) formed in many US cities during the late 1980s and 1990s, driven by the rapidly expanding population of Korean Americans. The Korean immigrant population in the US—as was the case with most post-1965 immigration from Asia—expanded rapidly, growing from 11,000 people in 1960 to 290,000 in 1980 (O’Connor and Batalova 2019). The wave of scholarship examining this phenomenon followed a few decades later.

Donna Lee Kwon’s work is particularly foundational, tracing the roots of US-based *p’ungmul* activity, summarizing the state of various collegiate and activist groups, and examining the genre’s role in shaping Korean American identity (2001). Several studies in the following two decades examined Korean American identity formation. Youngmin Yu’s ethnomusicology dissertation juxtaposes the musical performance of Koreanness in North and South Korea, Japan, and the United

States (2007). Yu's sections on the US focus particularly on South Korean immigrants in Los Angeles and Korean American youth identity. Though it is a brief portion of the work, there is interesting material on interethnic collaboration around political protest (ibid.: 228–230). S. Sonya Gwak, grounded in education scholarship, examines Philadelphia-based *p'ungmul* groups as part of a larger study of Korean American ethnic identity (2008). Soojin Kim's ethnomusicology dissertation focuses on the concept of diaspora between Korea and the US, based on fieldwork with *p'ungmul* groups and Korean cultural centers in Los Angeles and New York City. Margaret Walker Dilling also conducted interviews with Korean American *p'ungmul* groups like the Korean Youth Cultural Council in Oakland, CA, though the interviews and her analysis remain unpublished (Lee 2012: 161).

It is interesting to note the similarities and divergencies between *p'ungmul* and taiko in the United States—both as musical traditions and areas of scholarship. Taiko has received substantial scholarly attention in its US form, in large part due to the long-standing and sizable Japanese American population on the US West Coast. Deborah Wong has examined taiko's development beyond Japanese Americans as a broader Asian American participatory music form (2019). *P'ungmul*, while widespread, is still predominantly practiced by Korean immigrants and Korean Americans, making the HANAsori group somewhat of an outlier.

***P'ungmul* in the Greater Chicago Region**

As with many topics in this dissertation, Korean traditional drumming in the greater Chicago area has received little attention compared with other diasporic hubs—in this case, Los Angeles and

New York. Notably, two of the first academic studies of *p'ungmul* in the United States examined activities in Illinois. Mi-yon Kim's essay "Musical Organizations in an Ethnic Student Group: The Korean Church Choir and the Samulnori Pae" compared two groups in Champaign, Illinois, noting that the church choir served primarily as a social outlet while the drumming group, formed at the University of Illinois, had a larger component of ethnic and political identity formation (1993). Jennifer Bussell's 1997 B.A. thesis at the University of Chicago is the first writing I have found on *p'ungmil* activities in Chicago. She provides an overview of the genre, profiling a University of Chicago-based ensemble as well as the group at the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center (KRCC), the predecessor to the HANAsori and HANAsori groups that I examine in this study. At the time the group was called *Il-Kwa-Nori* (Work and Play). Bussell notes that in the 1990s, university *p'ungmul* groups tended to be politically agnostic and focused ethnic heritage, with the primary variation between universities being whether the group consisted primarily of Korean international students/immigrants or second-generation Korean Americans, and whether they allowed non-Koreans to join. By contrast, non-university groups like *Il-Kwa-Nori* at KRCC had a more political slant—which Bussell argues is analogous to the political engagement of drummers in Korea. While *Il-Kwa-Nori* was focused on political matters in Korea during the early 1990s, Bussell suggests that they shifted to focus on Korean American issues by the mid-to-late 1990s. This included campaigning against the 1996 federal welfare reform act (formally referred to as the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996") within the Korean American community of Chicago, as well as summer camps and programs for high school students—predominantly 1.5 and second-generation Korean Americans.

Beyond the longstanding KRCC *p'ungmul* group and the ensembles that have come and gone over the years at the University of Chicago, the most notable Korean drumming organization in the

Chicago area is the Korean Performing Arts Institute of Chicago (KPAC), which was called “Global Pungmul Institute (GPI)” until Fall 2019. Located in Wheeling, in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago, it shares a building with the Korean Cultural Center of Chicago (KCCC). KCCC’s mission is focused on apolitically framed cultural programming and workforce development. Its mission and goals emphasize the preservation of cultural ethnicity, the cultivation of young people’s professional skills (in a workforce development sense), and building connections between Koreans and non-Koreans in the greater Chicago area. KCCC offers many education programs; its music programs are divided into “music” and “traditional music”—the former includes courses in harmonica, ocarina, and saxophone, as well as four choirs (a general choir, a couples choir, a women’s choir, and a fathers’ choir), while the latter is made up of *p’ungmul* programs offered by KPAC/GPI. KPAC has three primary programs: SoriBeat, a youth education and performance ensemble, NoriBeat, their adult program, and Rhythm Connections, their professional performing group. KPAC has also sought out intercultural musical solidarity, organizing the “1st Chicago Drum Festival” at Northeastern Illinois University with local groups playing traditions from Puerto Rico (Buya), China (Cheng Da Drum), “Africa” (Muntu), Trinidad (NEIU Steel Combo), Middle East (OBA Trio), and Japan (Tsukasa Taiko).⁶ KPAC’s primary youth population is 1.5 and second-generation Korean

6. An advertisement illustrating many of these groups can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5a5hhcPYfPA&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR32CMo39-FA6T0q5T1SKOMXEkdzqdx6viwAg8D0JWNNbOl6e5unqPkICrA>. The relative ethnic/national specificity in these promotional materials regarding traditions from the Caribbean and East Asia vs. those from the Middle East or the continent of Africa may have several explanations. First, of course, is the thoroughly analyzed homogenization of African or Middle Eastern societies and cultural practices in the US popular imagination. In this case, however, the labelling may reflect the self-branding of these organizations. I have not been able to find information about OBA Trio, but Muntu is a longstanding Chicago institution (founded in 1972) that conceives of its mission as “preserving traditional African dance while creating new works that build on African, Caribbean and African American cultural traditions” (<https://www.muntu.com/about>).

Americans. Its teachers tend to be more recently arrived immigrants who received their professional *p'ungmul* training in South Korea. HANA Center also hires these teachers to lead the After School Matters HANAsori programs.

The building in Wheeling where both KCCC and KPAC are located is just over a mile away from HANA Center's Northwest satellite office. This institutional concentration in the Northwest Chicago suburbs follows the demographic shift of the city's Korean residents over the past several decades.

Demographic Change and the Suburbanization of Korean Chicago

As in the case of many groups, mass immigration to the United States from Korea began after the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The general effects of this Act on Chicago's population are discussed further in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Chicago's Korean population peaked in the 1990s, concentrated in the Albany Park neighborhood where HANA Center is located.⁷ This population has declined even as Chicago's overall immigrant and children-of-immigrant population has increased. This is driven on the one hand by the rapid economic development of South Korea, which led to a substantial decline in immigration compared to countries that shared Korea's economic status a half-century ago. The other driver of this phenomenon is the growing economic success of Chicago's Korean families, which has led to an exodus into the Northwest suburbs. As of 2020, only one third of Cook County's Korean residents lived in the city of Chicago—12,000 out of 36,000 (Santos et al. 2019: 11). As Albany Park's Korean

7. HANA Center's building was formerly Korean American Community Services (KACS), founded in Albany Park in 1972.

youth population has declined, so has Korean youth participation in HANA Center’s programs. While HANAsori’s predecessor drumming groups at KRCC were driven by the city’s Korean and Korean American youth, the present-day group is more reflective of Albany Park’s overall demographics—plurality Latinx with a mix of Asian, Black, and White participants—mostly 1.5 or second generation.

Part IV: Building Interracial Youth Power

Cultural Commonalities

Sameerah Haque (SH): Getting involved in Korean drumming is really interesting because—it was a combination of “this is a totally different culture from what I’m used to”—cause I had Bengali culture, and then I listened to K-Pop, but this was traditional Korean drumming. And then when I started doing traditional drumming, it was really interesting because I was just like “this is really fun, but what’s the background behind it?” And then we learn about the background and the history and how it came to be, and that stood out to me ‘cause I was like “that’s really powerful.” But then another tie that I learned was that whenever I would drum, and I would show my parents videos or they came to performances, my mom was like “oh, this is a lot like some of the beats and rhythms in the songs that I listen to” and when I started listening to her [Bengali] music, I noticed the drums and I was like “oh, this is a similar rhythm, I know this rhythm. It’s different, but this is like a one beat, that’s a double, I started noticing those things, the similarities. In a way it kind of connected me to Bengali culture as well as teaching me about a completely different culture and appreciating the work that HANA Center revolves around.

JM: That’s really interesting—what are some of the things you feel like you learned about Korean culture and history?

SH: One of the really powerful things was how it started off as kind of like ritualistic drumming, and a lot of festival drumming where they performed at shamanistic rituals, or they performed it for festivals for a good harvest and stuff. So that’s how it started, but then, because of a lot of things that were happening politically, like imperialism, they started using drumming as a way to organize and keep themselves together. And that’s why it was really cool, seeing pictures of Korean rallies. It was so cool, ‘cause when there’re

rallies in Chicago, they're very loud, and very big, and there's people everywhere, but seeing Korean ones, they're very organized and neat, and they're very unified. It was interesting because the loudest thing you heard were the drums and it was so cool seeing those pictures and those images. The drums were kind of what led them to fight for their own freedom and to fight imperialism. And seeing that, it was like "oh, that's actually really cool, that's amazing." And then it started making sense why we were drumming at rallies and going out and leading rallies a lot. 'Cause a lot of times it was like "oh, that's kind of terrifying" and "why are we doing this, we just learned this to perform, this isn't a performance," but like, learning that background history it's like, yeah, it is a performance, people do perform this and it's really nice and beautiful, but politically it was used to fight for freedom, so doing that, even now, here in the US, it's still carrying on that tradition. (Interview with author, August 10, 2018)



Figure 5.11. Sameerah (second from left) asks a question of Toni Preckwinkle, mayoral candidate in Chicago's 2019 municipal election. Credit: HANA Center Twitter account.

P'ungmul at HANA Center has served as a transformational gateway for many of my interlocutors. For Souzane, whom I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, drumming, marching, and organizing with HANA helped her discover a passion for social justice that she plans

to cultivate as she leaves Chicago to attend college. For Sameerah Haque, drumming led to joining FYSH and working on political advocacy campaigns, which led to working as a Youth Organizing Fellow where she often serves as a public face for HANA. Though she is still a college student, she has already advanced to a level of maturity and civic engagement uncommon for her age.

One way to frame this story is about HANAsori's success as a politically engaged traditional Korean *p'unghmul* group despite the relatively low number of Korean youth who engage with their programs. However, this framing—in which *p'unghmul* necessarily operates as a tool for Korean American youth political actualization—misses what is truly notable. HANAsori, and HANA's youth organizing more generally succeeds not in spite of but because of the diversity of students, coming from different neighborhoods, high schools, and cultural backgrounds. No one is an insider and no one is an outsider, which makes for a welcoming environment. With the development of drumming skills as an activity to unite them, these young people from Vietnam, Tanzania, Mexico, Thailand, Bangladesh, China, Ecuador, and the US draw inspiration and common cause from the history and specific traditions taught to them by their *p'unghmul* teachers and by the HANA Youth Organizers. Some, like Sameerah, find commonalities between Korean history and culture and their own familial experiences. Others see no cultural connection but hear their own experiences in stories of Korean struggles against colonialist imperialism. As the young HANAsori drummers share stories, teach each other drumbeats, and learn about the political causes that unite them as young, immigrant, twenty-first-century Chicagoans, they make real HANA's claim to be serving and empowering not just Koreans but a diverse constituency of immigrants and youth.

Why Does *P'ungmul* Matter to This Story?

Why is *p'ungmul* significant to this project of youth solidarity-building? Could this youth community-building be accomplished through some other social activity, such as athletics or a performance medium other than music? I was ambivalent about this question early in this research, and through my interviews I sought an answer, at times obliquely and at times directly. Over the course of this research, I have come to believe that *p'ungmul* has, in fact, been an ideal medium to accomplish this goal of youth solidarity-building. Here I summarize five core arguments attempting to explain this phenomenon.

1. “Korean Drumming” Is Appealing

Many of the non-Korean students who come to HANA Center are drawn by the concept of “Korean Drumming.” They know nothing about it, but many have a vague sense of interest in Korean culture, perhaps driven by knowledge of K-pop. When I asked William Oh why students tended to join the HANAsori program, he offered a range of reasons, ending with “but some youth were like ‘oh, I applied because I’m really interested in Korean culture, and K-pop [laughter], and all this,’ so I’m like ‘Oh! Cool!’ [laughter] I’m like ‘oh, interesting’” (Interview with author, August 28, 2019).

2. Drumming Is Effective at Building Solidarity Quickly

There is a growing body of research on the social and psychological effects of group drumming. One challenge of applying the literature to this case study is that most of it focuses on subjects who were undergoing some kind of treatment—soldiers with post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD), mental health service users, and others in this vein. There is growing research on the psychologically traumatic effects of growing up in poverty or in fear of police violence and/or deportation—conditions that apply to some of HANA Center’s youth participants. While they are not patients receiving treatment, and the drumming program is not framed as music therapy, I judged this to be an area of research worth knowing about for the reader.

Ho et al., in a Los Angeles-based study, found that group drumming “appears to improve the social and emotional correlates of chronic stress in low-income children” (2011: 11). Fancourt et al. (2016), in a study of mental health service users, found group drumming led to significant decreases in depression, increases in social resilience, and improvements in anxiety and mental wellbeing. Bensimon et al., in a study of soldiers with PTSD found that drumming seemed to contribute to “increased sense of openness, togetherness, belonging, sharing, closeness, connectedness and intimacy” (2008: 34).

While HANAsori is not a therapeutic context, this literature suggests that group drumming may be effective at promoting positive social and emotional outcomes for participants. This conclusion is supported as well by my fieldwork observations. Drumming seemed to break down barriers of social awkwardness between students who were strangers to each other. At the beginning of a session, many new participants would know no one in the group. As they began drumming together, however, they would begin to celebrate musical successes with their peers, they would turn to each other for help or clarification on a difficult beat, and they would laugh at the frustration of a challenging passage. By the end of each session, the majority of group members were much more socially comfortable with each other and interested in spending more time together. This observation on my part was confirmed in interviews with many of the student participants.

3. The HANAsori Program Is Integrated into Broader Citywide Structures

HANA Center has made astute use of the After School Matters structure to recruit and retain students. Because ASM participants receive a stipend, there is financial incentive to join some kind of program. This is a “foot in the door” for HANA—they get their name in the ASM catalogue, and students who are looking for something to do during the summer might pick their program on a whim. This was the case for several students who I interviewed who have gone on to be some of the most active participants in HANA Center’s broader youth organizing.

4. There Is a Clear Pathway for Further Involvement at HANA

Most young people come to HANA for the first time through the ASM drumming programs. The Youth Organizers who run these programs also run the rest of HANA’s youth programming. Throughout the HANAsori drumming classes, young people are building social bonds with the Youth Organizers, becoming comfortable in HANA Center’s physical space, and getting used to socializing with each other in the youth office—where young people and Youth Organizers can be found hanging out or working on projects many days of the week. Because young people can participate in HANAsori as long as they are in high school, there is always a mix of new and returning drummers. The experienced youth, many of whom have joined FYSH, bring the new people on board. All this creates a smooth pathway to deeper involvement for any young people who are interested.

5. HANA's Youth Programming Is Well Targeted at Immigrant Adolescents

HANA's overall mission, as I have discussed, explicitly encompasses non-Korean immigrants and people of color. The programming mobilizes Korean history and activism to build solidarity around immigrant rights organizing. This expresses itself in a number of ways. Participants like Jessica may see commonalities between Korea's experiences under imperial colonial rule—which students learn about through the HANAsori curriculum—and the colonial histories of their own countries of familial origin. Others, like Dalin, find an Asian American feminist subjectivity that fits their own vision for self-actualization better than anything available in other immigrant cultural programming they've encountered. Some, like Souzane, find common cause for issues of immigrant rights that transcend race and national origin—leading her to pile into a van with a crew of Asian American and Latinx activists and their drums to drive to Washington, DC and fight for DACA.

William pointed out a final, simpler reason that *p'ungmul* is valuable to HANA Center's work. His point is general to all genres of music, so I have not included it as a point in this section's argument, but his words serve as a valuable reminder:

WO: Music is also fun! Our young people might not have come to our space [if not for music], most of our people in FYSH came through our Drumming Up Power program. And with young people we have to have fun. I think community needs fun, in general, not just young people, adults! It's not fun when all of us just in there with strategy charts, all that always—I mean, that can be fun, but music adds that extra sizzle. And it is a very powerful community-building tool. I think everything I've seen, even this past year alone, validates that.

The Fruits of Youth Solidarity and Organizing

During the beginning of my fieldwork at HANA Center, the members of FYSH were pursuing several organizing campaigns. Their central effort was the “Decolonize CPS Curriculum” campaign discussed earlier in this chapter. According to Youth Organizer William Oh (Figure 5.12), during 2018 members of the group began to reevaluate their focus on this campaign, feeling that they were hitting roadblocks and unsure of their path forward. The young people voted and decided that they wanted to shift their organizing focus to the Chicago gang database, which was receiving increasing scrutiny and criticism during Spring and Summer 2018 (Dumke 2018b, Sweeney and Fry 2018). The database of over 128,000 people, ostensibly used by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) to track people affiliated with gangs, is riddled with errors as demonstrated by investigations from ProPublica and the Chicago Tribune (Dumke 2018a). Allegations include that people were added to the database based solely on race and neighborhood and that much information is incorrect (people listed with ages of 132), incomplete (11% of entries listed no gang affiliations), or long out-of-date (a 77-year-old listed based on affiliation with the Black Panthers in the 1980s). The database has also been criticized both for its focus on people of color—making up 95% of the database—and its inclusion of minors as young as 10 years old. Minors (17 or younger) make up 24.6% of the database and young people age 17–24 make up another 34.3% of the list (Sweeney and Fry 2018). The young members of FYSH viewed the gang database as a racial justice issue salient to their lives as adolescents in Chicago.



Figure 5.12. After the final performance of the Fall 2018 HANAsori program. On the far right is William Oh, Youth Organizer at HANA. In the middle (in white) is Chansoo Lee, a professional *p'ungmul* musician and teacher from the Global Pungmul Institute, hired by HANA Center to provide instrumental instruction for HANAsori. Photo by author.

Because HANA is a 501(c)(3) organization, they may not endorse or work explicitly to support specific political candidates. However, they can work around elections to get out the vote and to advocate for particular issues of importance to them. This was the approach that the members of FYSH took with their work around the aldermanic election. As William put it:

WO: In the run-up to that forum, our young people, along with the help of our organizing team, we did door knocking and phone banking of the local ward to turn out attendance for this event but also to get out the vote. We attempted over 560 homes, we phone banked over 6,000 contacts, and yeah, we had over seventy people turn out for the community forum. Both candidates committed to being champions, regardless of who won, on these issues of sanctuary. One candidate was obviously stronger, but we couldn't, you know, make [an endorsement] because we're a 501(c)(3). But we were able to advocate on issues of sanctuary. And the election ended up being so close, it ended up being a gap—the final count, now that I look at it a few months later, is sixty-eight votes, but at the time it was like thirteen votes. And considering how many people we contacted, how many people we turned out around this issue, the stronger candidate on sanctuary won. Now, Rosanna

Rodríguez is one of the leading champions at the city council level on these issues, and our young people helped make that happen. And it's something I think—like wow, we did something, we did something so powerful, especially on the local level. (Interview with author, August 28, 2019)

I asked William about the degree to which HANA's youth were agentic drivers of this process—was the forum their idea, or were they executing plans developed by the older Youth Organizers and other HANA staff members? His response provided particular insight into the nature of youth political activism within an organizational setting:

WO: A lot of people sometimes mistake youth organizing and youth leadership. Some people think “oh, it's the adults coming and bringing these ideas,” and some people think “no, it's all youth, and it's only youth.” I think the most powerful youth organizing . . . and that's the mission of youth organizing in HANA, where young people are seen as equal partners in creating the healthy, just, and equitable world that we all deserve. And I think the way the community forum came about was a perfect example of that partnership. . . . I think staff challenged our young people, “ok, beyond education, how do we translate that awareness into power, how do we change and create tangible outcomes?” And we should pressure our local elected officials. And then around that time we saw that the election was happening, we had a chance to shape a local election. . . . The analysis came out of, “well, to eliminate the gang database we need city council and the mayor to vote for it” and so the research came back, and [the young people were] like “ok, let's make sure our elected officials, local elected officials are champions,” and that's how the forum idea came about. So it was really, I think staff brought the tools, like the strategy chart, and prompted the questions of power, how are we going to achieve the change we seek, and our young people really came in with those ideas [about how to do a forum] and set the direction. (Ibid.)

I have interviewed or spoken informally with most of the young people who were part of this effort. The majority of them first came to HANA Center (or its predecessor KRCC) through the HANAsori drumming program. It might seem like a long step between signing up for a Korean drumming cultural program and organizing a campaign to influence aldermanic candidates and shape municipal policy around sanctuary and youth encounters with law enforcement. In this chapter, I have sought to show how and why that progression took place for so many young people in this organization. Though young people like Souzane and Sameerah often use their drums during political action—at rallies, in front of the White House—in this case, they were not necessary. I

hope that I have shown the reader, however, that the drums were not incidental to the achievement described here. The *changgo*, *puk*, *kkwaenggwari* and *ching* built solidarity, across lines of ethnicity, neighborhood, and school, binding together a multiracial group of Chicago youth to work and fight for each other.

Chapter 6

Present and Future for Immigrant Music Education in Chicago

This dissertation has examined timeless phenomena at a specific moment and in a specific context. Music and migration have been intertwined throughout human history—people move, communities change, and as generations age, the older attempt to bring the younger into their traditional musical practices. My dissertation’s contribution has been to isolate and analyze a specific version of this phenomenon—the reproduction of immigrant musical tradition through formal community organizations in a twenty-first-century US city. Structuring the project in such a way has been meant to accomplish several goals.

First, by focusing on this particular phenomenon across three different communities, I have sought to provide a deeper investigation of the phenomenon itself as opposed to the communities themselves—while prior ethnomusicological work on children’s engagement with traditional music has typically focused on the dynamics within one specific community, often as a component of a larger study of traditional music (Rice 1993: 39–63; Zheng 2010). The comparative approach provides better understanding of how this type of music education organization functions in present US society.

Second, by focusing on community-based nonprofit organizations I have sought to provide analysis of this third space of formalized musical reproduction—distinct from the school classroom privileged by music education scholarship (Soto 2012; Karlsen 2013; Kelly-McHale and Abril 2015) and the informal interpersonal contexts favored by ethnomusicology and anthropological studies of musical tradition. Another tendency in music education scholarship on immigrant youth

experiences of music is the granular focus on a small number of individual children (Kelly-McHale 2011; Adorno 2017). Such a micro-approach provides deep insight into particular young people's experiences and perspectives; this project, however, has eschewed that approach in favor of one that captures diversity of experience across moderate-sized cohorts of young people, parents, and teachers—as well as capturing organization-level effects driven by the pedagogical choices and philosophies of program leaders. Framing the project around these nonprofit program field sites (rather than homes or school classrooms) is not just an attempt to examine an “under-studied” context—this framing is itself an argument for the growing significance of the nonprofit context as a space for the creative reproduction of musical tradition.

Third, by structuring the project around immigrants, I have sought to highlight two particular dynamics, generational and organizational. Due to the post-1965 shifts in immigration policy discussed in the first two chapters, Chicago has a large population of first- and second-generation residents with family origins in Latin America or Asia. This means that there are many adult immigrants who have become teachers and nonprofit leaders, and many second-generation youth who are interested in exploring music—or whose parents want them to. The second, organizational dynamic at play is the struggle for resources in a scarce environment. Chicago has been historically led by Euro-American immigrants and their descendants—famously by a long series of Irish mayors. This has occasionally alternated with rising political power from the city's large African American population, as with the Harold Washington administration (1983–87) or the 2019 election of Lori Lightfoot. Despite their relatively large populations, Latinxs and Asian Americans have not achieved the same political power—though there are growing numbers of leaders on the aldermanic level, and Jesús “Chuy” García came close to the mayorship in the 2015 municipal election. These political power dynamics are echoed on the level of cultural

organizations, as the most powerful musical institutions in the city are those associated with European art music or Chicago's famous African American genres, blues and jazz. By focusing on Latinx and Asian American-led nonprofit organizations, I have brought together the analysis of cultural reproduction with an examination of nonprofit organizational dynamics. As they work to fund their activities and recruit student participants, immigrant- and children-of-immigrant-led organizations must adopt creative strategies. In examining such strategies and student outcomes in the prior chapters, I have sought to provide insight into this particular corner of immigration sociology: the effects of both generational dynamics and urban nonprofit dynamics on musical reproduction.

Music, Education, and Immigration in the Twenty-First Century

Each of the preceding chapters has told a different story. How, then, might the reader assemble them into one? This is a question that has interested many of my interlocutors. Some are skeptical at first that three such disparate programs belong in the same research project, while others are interested to read about the programs different from their own. To understand my project, it is crucial to understand the nature of the comparison between these three music education programs. "Comparative (ethno)musicology" has the potential to arouse skepticism, particularly when putatively scientific musical measurements and comparisons are made in an attempt to derive universal truths about human musicality or—to the opposite extreme—in an effort to discern musical, cultural, or civilizational characteristics inherent to groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, or nationality. Both projects have received new attention in recent years, the former as a renewed scientific project (Mehr et al. 2019) and the latter in an effort to unearth and examine the historical

intersections of musical ability and eugenics within music scholarship (Cowan 2017). The dissertation's project is comparative in a very different sense, as there are no arguments about the aural or acoustic relationships between mariachi, *sones*, and *p'ungmul*. Rather, my advocacy in this vein has been for a comparative approach to studying the organized teaching of traditional music. With music education programs as the unit of comparison, the analytical lens is opened to see the wide range of pedagogies and philosophies as they play out through music teaching and learning.

At Sones de México Ensembles' Mexico Music School, parents navigate their aspirations and anxieties regarding their children's community participation, musicality, extracurricular cultivation, and bilingualism. The teachers and program leaders, meanwhile, cultivate creative pedagogical approaches to perpetuating an art form that their group has performed for over twenty-five years. This case study provides insight into the ways that musicians' cultural agendas for a genre and parents' educational agendas for their children come together. When a program is designed to effectively bridge the two, it can find success for both sets of goals—as in this case.

At the Chicago Mariachi Project, students build musical excellence and performance ability thanks to a series of opportunities cobbled together between school classrooms, afterschool programs, and a citywide Mariachi Academy. This case study highlights the importance of connections between teachers, musicians, community leaders, and school administrators, as I argue that it was through this dense web of connections that an effective system of mariachi programs was developed—in a city where by all logic a mariachi education system should have developed earlier. On a broader level, my analysis provides insight into ways that non-dominant musical traditions can be cultivated under a framework of artistic excellence (as opposed to cultural exposure).

At HANA Center, *p'ungmul* training programs serve as an engine to build social cohesion between immigrant youth from a wide range of backgrounds. This is a third model—not nearly as focused on cultural heritage and revival as the Mexican Music School, nor as focused on musical excellence as the Chicago Mariachi Project. When it first began, HANA Center's drumming program was closer to the cultural heritage model. Some early participants, also interested in musical excellence, gravitated to other greater-Chicago-area programs to focus on developing high levels of musical skill. HANA Center's leaders ultimately moved toward the pan-immigrant model as a deliberate choice that fused Korean history and cultural heritage content knowledge, musical skills for a tangible purpose (particularly drumming at public events), and group cohesion so as to build leadership and community organizing skills.

The comparative element, then, comes in understanding how each of these programs stands as a model that can be emulated by any immigrant group with any musical form. Each program is successful in its own goals because its leaders and teachers have thought carefully about who they are serving, what those people want, and how they can accomplish the constituents' goals while also pursuing their broader mission—be it reviving Mexican *son*, elevating mariachi as an art form, or cultivating leadership in immigrant youth. Any of these models could be shuffled, however: mariachi training could become a forum for cultivating community leadership skills, *p'ungmul* could be taught as a cultural revival form with a greater emphasis on Korean cultural history, and so on—provided a constituency interested in such a program and organizational leadership with the skills to design and execute such a pedagogical program. More broadly, each program demonstrates the creativity, skillset, and determination required of people who want to build music-training programs in non-dominant genres—a descriptor that applies to virtually every immigrant musical tradition in the United States.

On the individual level, the examination of students and parents at the three sites shows how people can be shaped in many ways by these programs—often in the ways they hoped for when they signed up for the program, but often in ways unexpected. Here I think of Souzane (Chapter 5), who learned how to drum but also learned how to assert herself and pursue her own goals with conviction. I think of Mari Carmen (Chapter 3), who not only found a way to musically cultivate her son but found her whole family’s interactions with music transformed by their shared sense of participatory ownership of *son*. I think of Yazmin (Chapter 4), who developed maturity as she transformed from high school student/performer to college student/volunteer music coach. This individual-level insight, combined with the organizational-level point about diversity of program structure, speaks to broader issues within the music education sector. While much discourse focuses on a binary presence or absence of music education in schools, my research points to the broader importance of musical diversity in educational programming.

None of these programs could exist with their particular structures and modes of organization within present-day public schools. Versions have been attempted—such as the CMP in-school partner classes, or Sones de México Ensemble’s trial workshop program at a local school—but programs like CMP’s citywide academy or the multi-session Mexican Music School do not seem to be on the near horizon for Chicago Public Schools. This is neither good nor bad—a future with programs like these in schools could have benefits, but there are also benefits in the flexibility afforded by these three nonprofit organizations’ present community-based structures. It does, however, speak to the necessity of such programs in some form. Different people derive different enjoyment and benefits from different kinds of musical programs. On one level, this insight may seem banal, but it is worth pointing out. Not every student interested in folkloric musics benefits from the Old Town School of Folk Music, and not every student interested in

classical music benefits from the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras. Diversity of program offerings, musical genres, pedagogical structures, and social structures is important both for individual students' ability to find rewarding outlets and for teachers' and community leaders' ability to advance their own goals for the future of their musical genres and the youth generations that they seek to reach. In the present moment, as children and parents are accustomed to engaging with an organized citywide system of afterschool and nonprofit community-based programs, this format makes sense for immigrant musicians and leaders hoping to advance such goals. I hope that this dissertation has not only provided insight about how these programs work and how they affect young people, but also how these teachers and program leaders can learn from each other—or how people who have a vision for a new kind of music education program might make their vision a reality.

What Lies Ahead

I write this conclusion from Hyde Park, Chicago while the city is under stay-at-home orders due to the threat of COVID-19. Out my window is an empty library, rows of desks devoid of their usual students. Around the city, classes are canceled at the Mexican Music School, the Mariachi Academy, and HANA Center. On my Twitter feed I see public service announcements on the Sones de México Ensemble account from Juan Díes in both English and Spanish, warning his social media followers to take this virus seriously and stay home. For the moment, the city has come to a standstill; all is quiet.

The effects of this crisis will ripple on for years—not just in the psychological and emotional effects of untimely deaths that will touch so many people, but in the economic effects that will

touch everyone. Many of the students I interviewed for this project have parents who work in professions that will be hard-hit—particularly service workers. Though it has not been a central analytical framework in this dissertation, the question of socioeconomic class has remained beneath the surface. Part of the story I tell in this dissertation is that of precarious music education activities that flourish through determination and the creative use of limited resources. There are few wealthy donors or powerful business leaders—such as those supporting classical music education institutions—seeking to promote Mexican *son*, mariachi, or *p’ungmul*. One point of my project has been that, lacking clear models or existing support structures, immigrant leaders who value these musical traditions are able to advance them using creative funding structures and nonprofit organizational models. For Sones de México, this means partnering with community organizations to keep down costs and allow for a socioeconomically diverse cohort of families to afford lessons. For the Chicago Mariachi Project, this means relying on the donated time and public school connections of their leaders, creating a rigorous musical training pipeline for just \$250 per year for each student. At HANA, this means relying on funding support from After School Matters to recruit a diverse cohort of primarily low-income youth of color, allowing them to develop musical and leadership skills instead of being forced—out of economic necessity—to spend their time working and contributing financially to their families.

How much of this will change in the coming years? We are on the precipice of what may be the largest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Will these precarious musical programs wither or remain resilient? My experience spending countless hours with these students, teachers, administrators, and parents over the past two years leads me to believe that the latter outcome is more likely. None of these youth music-learning programs were easy to create—all three lacked a clear pre-existing example to model off of, but they have persevered and prospered, creating

remarkable results for students and families—musical and developmental. Each program is distinct, but the thread that unites them—the thread that led me to group three such disparate programs within the same research study—is that of creativity in the face of challenges. Any immigrant individual, group, or community that seeks to build a music program for young people will face countless challenges driven by the underlying socioeconomic and education policy structures of the United States. People love music, however—a cliché that remains true as oft-stated as it may be—and they will go to great lengths to pass on that love to future generations. My dissertation has advanced an argument about why these particular music-learning programs flourished at this particular moment in time. The nature of the next moment in time may be different, but I hope that this study will continue to provide useful information to both researchers and program leaders in the coming, post-COVID era. These three immigrant musical traditions—and countless others—will continue to persist in the US as long as there are creative and organized people—like Juan and Victor; like Álvaro, Martha, Phil, and Mike; like Inhe, Yujin, and William—who spend the time, find the resources, and build the organizations to provide young people with transformative musical educations.

Appendix 1: Consent and Assent Forms

The following three forms were used to discuss and record participant preferences regarding their participation in my research study. In each case, I discussed the nature of the study with the potential participants and explained their choices regarding anonymity and my use of materials including interview recordings and photographs for future purposes including this dissertation, conference presentations, publications, or examples in classroom teaching.

Participants age 18 or older completed the “adult consent form.” Participants under the age of 18 completed the “child assent form” and had a parent or guardian complete the “parental permission for child form”.

These consent/assent forms and my research protocol were approved by the University of Chicago Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board (SBS IRB). Protocol Number: IRB18-0303.

Document 1: “Maurer Dissertation - child assent form”

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO CHILD ASSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

I am from the University of Chicago and I am asking you to be in a research study. We do research studies to learn more about how the world works and why people act the way they do. In this study, I want to learn about why young people participate in music education programs.

What I am asking you to do:

I would like to observe your music class so that I can learn more about how it works. During my observation, you would not need to do anything other than participate as you usually do.

I may also ask to have an interview with you for about 30 to 60 minutes. During the conversation, you can skip any question if it makes you uncomfortable.

Do I have to be in this study?

You do not have to participate in this study. It is up to you. You can say no now or you can even change your mind later. No one will be upset with you if you decide not to be in this study.

Your relationship with your music program, teachers and classmates will not be affected if you choose to not participate in the study or if you choose to stop participating at any point.

Will being in this study hurt or help me in any way?

Being in this study will bring you no harm. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. It will hopefully help us learn more about music education programs.

What will you do with information about me?

I will be very careful to keep your answers from this interview private. Before and after the study I will keep all information I collect about you locked up and password protected. All researchers at UChicago are mandatory reporters. If we learn about current or ongoing child abuse or neglect, we will report this to the appropriate authorities.

If you want to stop doing the study, contact Joe Maurer at 508-847-2596 or JMMaurer@uchicago.edu. There is no penalty for stopping. If you decide that you don't want your interview in the study, just let Joe know.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Joe Maurer
508-847-2596
JMMaurer@uchicago.edu

If you have questions about your rights in the study, contact:

Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
University of Chicago
Phone number: (773) 834-7835
Email address: sbs-irb@uchicago.edu

Agreement:

By signing this form, I agree to be in the research study described above.

Optional Study Elements

Agreement to Audio Record

I would like to audio-record this interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you tell me. I will keep these recordings on encrypted and password-protected hard drives, and they will only be used by me. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow my interview to be audio recorded.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my interview to be audio recorded.

Agreement to Use Photographs and Audio/Video Recordings

As part of this project I will make photographic, audio, and/or video recordings of you while you participate in music lessons and performance activities. I am asking your permission to share those recordings with people who are not part of this research team, in the following ways: The recordings may be included in articles, books, and presentations about this research study that are seen by other researchers and by the general public, and they may be shown in classrooms to students.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow the records to be used in publications, presentations, and classrooms.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow the records to be used in publications, presentations, and Classrooms.

Agreement to Use True Name

You may choose whether you wish your true name to be used in this study. If you do not want me to use your true name, I will use a pseudonym (fake name) instead.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow my true name to be used in this study.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my true name to be used in this study.

Agreement to Quote from Interview

I may wish to quote you in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. If you have chosen for me to not use your real name, I will only use a pseudonym (fake name) when quoting you.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow my words to be quoted in presentations or articles resulting from this work.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my words to be quoted in presentations or articles resulting from this work.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Document 2: “Maurer Dissertation - parental permission for child form”

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM FOR CHILD’S RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Study Title: American Folk: Transmitting Musical Heritage in Immigrant Chicago
Principal Investigator: Philip V. Bohlman
Student Researcher: Joseph Maurer
IRB Study Number: IRB18-030

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study. This form has important information about the reason for doing this study, what I will ask your child to do, and the way I would like to use information about your child if you choose to allow your child to be in the study.

Why are you doing this study?

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study about music education programs in Chicago that focus on musical traditions from immigrant and immigrant-descended communities. The purpose of the study is to understand how and why people engage with the particular musical traditions described above and to understand what role this musical engagement plays in the participants’ identity.

What will my child be asked to do if my child is in this study?

I would like to observe your child’s music class so that I can learn more about how it works. During my observation, your child would not need to do anything other than participate as he/she usually does.

Your child may also be asked to participate in an interview. Participation should take about one hour.

I would like to audio record your child as he/she participates in the interview, to make sure that I remember accurately all the information. I will keep these recordings in on encrypted and password-protected hard drives, and they will only be used by me. I will only audio record your child if you and your child give me permission.

What are the possible risks or discomforts to my child?

Your child’s participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to your child beyond that of everyday life.

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality of the information I collect about your child could be breached – I will take steps to minimize this risk, as discussed in more detail below in this form.

What are the possible benefits for my child or others?

Your child is not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study. This study is designed to learn more about music education programs and immigrant heritage in Chicago. The study results may be used to help other people in the future, for example, to help the leaders of music education programs to understand how and why different people are interested in participating in programs like theirs.

How will you protect the information you collect about my child, and how will that information be shared?

Results of this study may be used in publications and presentations. Your child’s study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used unless you give explicit permission for this below.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will store the recording and transcription of my interview with your child on an encrypted, password-protected hard drive. No one except me will have access to this data.

If I think that your child intends to harm him/herself or others, I will notify the appropriate people/agencies with this information. All researchers at UChicago are mandatory reporters. If we learn about current or ongoing child abuse or neglect, we will report this to the appropriate authorities.

Financial Information

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you or your child. Your child will not be paid for participating in this study.

What are my child's rights as a research participant?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may withdraw from this study at any time -- you and your child will not be penalized in any way or lose any sort of benefits for deciding to stop participation.

If your child decides to withdraw from this study, I will ask if the information already collected from your child can be used.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this research study?

If you or your child have any questions, you may contact the researchers at:

Joe Maurer
508-847-2596
JMMaurer@uchicago.edu

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the following office at the University of Chicago:

Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
University of Chicago
1155 E. 60th Street, Room 418
Chicago, IL 60637
Phone: (773) 834-7835
Email: sbs-irb@uchicago.edu

Parental Permission for Child's Participation in Research

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I give permission for my child to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this Parental Permission form after I sign it.

Optional Study Elements

Consent to Audio Record Interview

I would like to audio-record the interview with your child to make sure that I remember accurately all the information he/she provides. I will keep these recordings on encrypted and password-protected hard drives, and they will only be used by me. If you prefer for your child not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow my child's interview to be audio recorded.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my child's interview to be audio recorded.

Consent to Use Photographs and Audio/Video Recordings

As part of this project I will make photographic, audio, and/or video recordings of your child while he/she participates in music lessons and performance activities. I am asking your permission to share those recordings with people who are not part of this research team, in the following ways: The recordings may be included in publications and presentations about this research study that are seen by other researchers and by the general public, and they may be shown in classrooms to students.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow the records to be used in publications, presentations, and classrooms

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow the records to be used in publications, presentations, and classrooms

Consent to Use True Name

You may choose whether you wish your child's true name to be used on internal study materials and in any presentations or articles resulting from this work. If you do not wish his/her true name to be used, I will use a pseudonym (fake name) instead.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow my child's true name to be used in this study.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my child's true name to be used in this study.

Consent to Quote from Interview

I may wish to quote your child either in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. If you have chosen for your child to use a pseudonym, I will only use the pseudonym when quoting him/her.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to allow my child's words to be quoted in presentations or articles resulting from this work.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my child's words to be quoted in presentations or articles resulting from this work.

Parent/Legal Guardian's Name (printed)

Date

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature

Name of Person Obtaining Parental Permission (Child's name)

Document 3: “Maurer Dissertation - adult consent form”

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Study Title: American Folk: Transmitting Musical Heritage in Immigrant Chicago

Principal Investigator: Philip V. Bohlman

Student Researcher: Joseph Maurer

IRB Study Number: IRB18-0303

I am a graduate student at the University of Chicago, in the Department of Music. I am planning to conduct a research study, which I invite you to take part in. This form has important information about the reason for doing this study, what I will ask you to do if you decide to be in this study, and the way I would like to use information about you if you choose to be in the study.

Why are you doing this study?

You are being asked to participate in a research study about music education programs in Chicago that focus on musical traditions from immigrant and immigrant-descended communities. The purpose of the study is to understand how and why people engage with the particular musical traditions described above and to understand what role this musical engagement plays in the participants’ identity.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

You will be asked to participate in an interview. **Study time:** Study participation will take approximately one hour for an interview. **Study location:** All study procedures will take place at either the site of your music program or at a location that is convenient for you, such as a coffee shop.

I would like to audio-record this interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. I will keep these recordings on encrypted and password-protected hard drives, and they will only be used by me. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead.

You will have the option below to choose whether or not I may quote your remarks in presentations or articles resulting from this work and whether you prefer to be identified by your true name or by a pseudonym (fake name).

Music teachers only:

I would like to observe your music class so that I can learn more about how it works. During my observation, you would not need to do anything other than participate as you usually do.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life.

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality of the information I collect from you could be breached – I will take steps to minimize this risk, as discussed in more detail below in this form.

What are the possible benefits for me or others?

You are not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study. This study is designed to learn more about music education programs and immigrant heritage in Chicago. The study results may be used to help other people in the future, for example, to help the leaders of music education programs to understand how and why different people are interested in participating in programs like theirs.

How will you protect the information you collect about me, and how will that information be shared?

Results of this study may be used in publications and presentations. Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used unless you give explicit permission for this below.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will store the recording and transcription of our interview on an encrypted, password-protected hard drive. No one except me will have access to this data.

If I think that you intend to harm yourself or others, I will notify the appropriate people with this information. All researchers at UChicago are mandatory reporters. If we learn about current or ongoing child abuse or neglect, we will report this to the appropriate authorities.

Financial Information

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you. You will not be paid for participating in this study.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to participate in this study, please feel free not to. If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. I can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You may withdraw from this study at any time, and you will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation.

If you decide to withdraw from this study, the researchers will ask you if the information already collected from you can be used.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this research study?

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researchers at:

Joe Maurer
508-847-2596
JMMaurer@uchicago.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the following office at the University of Chicago:

Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
University of Chicago
1155 E. 60th Street, Room 418
Chicago, IL 60637
Phone: (773) 834-7835
Email: sbs-irb@uchicago.edu

Consent

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form.

Optional Study Elements

Consent to Audio Record Interview

I would like to audio-record this interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. I will keep these recordings on encrypted and password-protected hard drives, and they will only be used by me. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

- _____ (initial) I agree to allow my interview to be audio recorded.
- _____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my interview to be audio recorded.

Consent to Use Photographs and Audio/Video Recordings

As part of this project I will make photographic, audio, and/or video recordings of you while you participate in the research (for example, during music lessons). I am asking your permission to share those recordings with people who are not part of this research team, in the following ways: The recordings may be included in publications and presentations about this research study that are seen by other researchers and by the general public, and they may be shown in classrooms to students.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

- _____ (initial) I agree to allow the records to be used in publications, presentations, and classrooms
- _____ (initial) I do not agree to allow the records to be used in publications, presentations, and classrooms

Consent to Use True Name

You may choose whether you wish your true name to be used on internal study materials and in any presentations or articles resulting from this work. If you do not wish your true name to be used, I will use a pseudonym (fake name) instead.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

- _____ (initial) I agree to allow my true name to be used in this study.
- _____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my true name to be used in this study.

Consent to Quote from Interview

I may wish to quote you either in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. If you have chosen to use a pseudonym, I will only use the pseudonym when quoting you.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

- _____ (initial) I agree to allow my words to be quoted in presentations or articles resulting from this work.
- _____ (initial) I do not agree to allow my words to be quoted in presentations or articles resulting from this work.

Participant's Name (printed)

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix 2: Research Participants

Below are the names of the people who participated in the interview portion of this study. As one can read in Appendix 1, Each research participant who I discuss in this work went through an informed consent process that included the option to have their true name used or for me to use a pseudonym. As discussed in Chapter 1, out of an abundance of caution, I have opted to use only first names for all of the minors, youth participants, and parents (either true names or pseudonyms, depending on their choice). For those with official jobs (e.g., teachers or youth organizers) and leadership roles in the organizations, I have opted to use full names.

Angel. Interview by author. Chicago, July 31, 2018.
Alicia. Interview by author. Chicago, May 25, 2019.
Andrea. Interview by author. Chicago, August 12, 2018.
Anuntarungsun, Jasmine. Interview by author. Chicago, August 10, 2018.
Ashley. Interview by author. Chicago, June 8, 2019.
Brian. Interview by author. Chicago, July 21, 2019.
Carlos. Interview by author. Chicago, August 1, 2018.
Choi, Inhe. Interview by author. Chicago, October 30, 2019.
Dalín. Interview by author. Chicago, November 30, 2018.
Deborah. Interview by author. Chicago, July 28, 2019.
Días, Juan. Interview by author. Chicago, April 29, 2015.
Días, Juan. Interview by author. Chicago, May 5, 2015.
Días, Juan. Interview by author. Chicago, November 20, 2017.
Días, Juan. Interview by author. Chicago, March 5, 2020.
Donna. Interview by author. Chicago, May 25, 2019.
Erica. Interview by author. Chicago, May 25, 2019.
Espinosa, Michael. Interview by author. Chicago, May 6, 2018.
Francis. Interview by author. Chicago, June 1, 2019.
Gregorio and Matthew. Interview by author. Chicago, May 18, 2019.
Haque, Sameerah. Interview by author. Chicago, August 10, 2018.
Jaden. Interview by author. Chicago, August 12, 2018.

Jetzemany. Interview by author. Chicago, June 1, 2019.

Jessica. Interview by author. Chicago, July 25, 2018.

Juan. Interview by author. Chicago, June 1, 2019.

Ken. Interview by author. Chicago, July 31, 2018.

Lauren and Rosalba. Interview by author. Chicago, June 11, 2018.

Maeng, Yujin and Jasmine Anuntarungsun. Interview by author. Chicago, June 15, 2018.

Maeng, Yujin. Interview by author. Chicago, August 28, 2019.

Maeng, Yujin. Interview by author. Chicago, January 17, 2018.

Mari Carmen and Mariano. Interview by author. Chicago, May 18, 2019.

Mary. Interview by author. Chicago, July 26, 2018.

Obregón, Álvaro. Interview by author. Chicago, July 28, 2019.

Obregón, Álvaro. Interview by author. Chicago, June 2, 2018.

Oh, William. Interview by author. Chicago, August 28, 2019.

Olazaba, Phillip. Interview by author. Chicago, May 12, 2018.

Olivia. Interview by author. Chicago, July 28, 2019.

Rudy and Yazmin. Interview by author. Chicago, June 16, 2018.

Bryan. Interview by author. Chicago, July 31, 2018.

Silvia. Interview by author. Chicago, June 1, 2019.

Souzane. Interview by author. Chicago, December 5, 2018.

Grace. Interview by author. Chicago, July 26, 2018.

Tuvy. Interview by author. Chicago, November 7, 2018.

Veronica. Interview by author. Chicago, May 25, 2019.

Yazmin and Rudy. Interview by author. Chicago, June 9, 2018.

Appendix 3: Research Questionnaires

Below are the three questionnaires I used in formal interviews with students, parents, and teachers/administrators. These were the core questions I sought to ask in every interview; each interview also went beyond these questions, typically in different directions based on information of note that came up in the course of our discussion.

Interview guide—music students

“American Folk: Transmitting Musical Heritage in Immigrant Chicago”

IRB18-0303

PI: Philip V. Bohlman

Primary Contact: Joseph Maurer

*Note that not all of these questions will be relevant or appropriate for each interviewee, and that each question may be followed with further improvised questions depending on the interviewee’s answers.

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you / what grade are you in?
3. What instrument(s) do you play / do you sing?
4. What neighborhood do you live in?
5. What kinds of music do you enjoy listening to?
6. How did you become interested in learning music?
7. How did you decide to participate in [this musical activity]?
8. How long have you been participating in [this program]?
9. Do you participate in other musical activities?
 - a. [IF YES] How is it / are they similar to [this one]? How is it / are they different?
 - b. [IF RELEVANT] Do you have music class at school? If so, what do you learn in music class?
10. How do you feel about your music classes?
11. What kind of relationship do you have with your music teacher?
12. What kinds of relationships do you have with the other students in the program?
13. What do your parents say about [this music activity]? Do they encourage you to participate in it?
14. What do you like the most about [this program]? Is there anything that you don’t like?
15. How do you feel when you’re performing [this kind of music]?
16. Is it important to you that the music you’re learning is originally from [place of origin]?
17. Are any of your relatives from [place of music’s origin]?
 - a. [IF YES] Do you feel like that gives you a special kind of connection with the music?
 - b. [IF NO] Do you feel a connection with the music? Do you think you would feel differently if you or your relatives were from [place]?
18. Have any of your ideas about music changed since you first joined [this program]? Do you enjoy certain kinds of music more or less than you used to?
19. What are your plans for the future in terms of music?
20. Have these plans changed because of being in [this program]?

Interview guide—parents of music students

“American Folk: Transmitting Musical Heritage in Immigrant Chicago”

IRB18-0303

PI: Philip V. Bohlman

Primary Contact: Joseph Maurer

*Note that not all of these questions will be relevant or appropriate for each interviewee, and that each question may be followed with further improvised questions depending on the interviewee’s answers.

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What neighborhood do you live in?
4. What is your job?
5. What is/are your child’s/children’s name(s)?
6. What music activity/activities does your child participate in?
7. How long have they been participating?
8. How and why did they start participating in that music learning activity? What role did you play in the decision? Were they or you considering a different music activity? What factors contributed to you choosing this program?
9. What goals do you have for your child in terms of this activity? Is there anything in particular that you hope they get out of it?
10. What has been your experience of this musical activity? In what ways are you involved with your child’s learning? (For example, do you help them to practice? Do you listen to music with them?)
11. What kind of relationship do you have with your child’s music teacher?
12. How do you feel when your child is performing [this kind of music]?
13. Is it important to you that the music you’re learning is originally from [place of origin]?
14. Are you or any of your relatives from [place of music’s origin]?
 - a. [IF YES] Do you feel like that gives you a special kind of connection with the music?
 - b. [IF NO] Do you feel a connection with the music? Do you think you would feel differently if you or your relatives were from [place]?
15. What kinds of music do you enjoy listening to?
16. Do you play any instruments or sing, or did you in the past?
17. Can you describe the musical environment in your home? Does your family ever listen to music together?
18. Do you ever go to concerts, festivals, dances, or other musical events as a family?
19. Have any of your ideas about music changed since your child first joined [this program]? Do you enjoy certain kinds of music more or less than you used to?
20. What kind of effect do you think [this program] has had on your child?
21. What future goals do you have for your child? Is there anything you hope that they achieve in terms of music? Or in other areas of life?

Interview guide—music teachers

“American Folk: Transmitting Musical Heritage in Immigrant Chicago”

IRB18-0303

PI: Philip V. Bohlman

Primary Contact: Joseph Maurer

*Note that not all of these questions will be relevant or appropriate for each interviewee, and that each question may be followed with further improvised questions depending on the interviewee’s answers.

1. What instrument(s) do you teach?
2. What genres or styles of music do you teach? How did you decide to teach those styles? How and why did you first decide to teach music?
3. How long have you been teaching with [organization]? Do you teach music in any other settings?
 - a. [IF YES] Is there anything distinctive about [organization] compared to the other settings where you’ve taught music?
4. How did you prepare for your career as a music teacher?
5. When and how did you first learn to play music?
6. Is it important to you that the music you’re teaching is originally from [place of origin]?
7. Are you or any of your relatives from [place of music’s origin]?
 - a. [IF YES] Do you feel like that gives you a special kind of connection with the music?
 - b. [IF NO] Do you feel a connection with the music? Do you think you would feel differently if you or your relatives were from [place]?
8. How do you think students learn music differently when there are also historical and cultural lessons included?
9. Do you participate in professional activities other than music teaching? This could include music performance, arts administration, composition, etc., or something not related to music.
 - a. [IF YES] How do you balance these different activities or responsibilities?
10. What do you enjoy about teaching music? What are some challenges?
11. What are your relationships like with your students? (e.g., Are you primarily a teacher? Also a mentor? Do they talk to you about things other than music?)
12. What are your relationships like with your students’ parents?
13. What were your relationships like with your own music teachers?
14. What is the working dynamic like at [organization]? For example, how is the curriculum decided? How are students recruited? How do you and the other teachers/administrators determine the division of responsibilities?
15. Do you follow any particular pedagogical models?
16. What are your goals for your students? To what extent do you think about musical goals and non-musical goals? What do you hope that students ultimately get out of this program?

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