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# A Case Study of Three African-American String Players Participating in a Community Orchestra

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A CASE STUDY OF THREE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STRING PLAYERS  
PARTICIPATING IN A COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in

Conducting

School of Music

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## DEDICATION

To Josh, my loving husband and best friend.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document has been a remarkable journey. I never could have imagined both the challenges and rewards of engaging in such a project. I gratefully acknowledge the people who have willingly given their time, talent, and dedication to see me through this process and ensure the quality of my research.

Having little previous experience with qualitative research, I owe my greatest thanks to Dr. Gail Barnes who took me under her wing and helped me every step of the way. I appreciate her suggestions and insights, as well as her tireless commitment to quality. She has been a mentor, sounding board, and guide. Without her support, this would not have been possible.

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## ABSTRACT

While there has been interest in the subject of diversity in orchestras and audiences, very little qualitative research exists exploring this issue. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that motivate African-American musicians to begin and maintain involvement in orchestral music. This research is a case-study of three African-American amateur musicians comprised of participant observation, in-depth interviewing, document collection, and analysis. Field observations and interviews occurred over a 22-week period. The resulting analysis revealed common themes that contributed to the participant's initial interest in string music and their continued participation as adults. The availability of music programs in schools, the importance of mentors, and the need for a supportive family were all factors contributing to involvement in classical, orchestral music. The predominant theme tying subtopics together is the importance of a supportive community. For all participants, social network ties played a key role in their exposure to string music and the support they received participating in orchestras. Connections between teachers, students, local support organizations, and families laid the foundation for them to begin and maintain involvement with string music.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Though there are a handful of orchestras in the United States noted for their diversity, most symphonies employ very few African-American musicians. African-Americans comprise less than two percent of the orchestral demographic, even in urban centers with large African-American communities (the Chicago and Detroit Symphonies, for example). While the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has exposed this discrepancy in their most recent survey of public participation in the arts (Iyengar, Bradshaw, & Nichols, 2009), few researchers have studied this phenomenon (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990).

By not reaching minority communities, orchestras are deprived of creative resources that could lead to innovative compositions and fresh musical interpretations, and minority populations are deprived of “life-changing experiences through art” (Iyengar, 2009, p. 4). Ethnic and cultural diversity benefits music by increasing creativity and embracing a greater talent pool. Arts experiences are important for producing more creative and inspired citizens, and for establishing a more diverse American heritage. Orchestras have been considered a reflection of artistic sophistication and health within a community yet, as communities have changed, orchestras have had difficulty keeping pace. Many African-Americans view classical music as a “white” art form (Carter, 2003). Bridging this racial gap will require new perspectives and inventive ways of engaging minorities.

The Riverland Community Orchestra (RCO) (pseudonym) located in the southeastern United States, stands in contrast to the demographic trend of professional orchestras (there is no data available to compare the demographic makeup of the RCO to other community orchestras in the United States). The RCO has much higher African-American participation. This group is not representative of what is typical, but rather what is successful in welcoming African-American participants. Table 1.1 contains a summary of the RCO's demographics during the 2012-2013 season.

Table 1.1 Demographic Representation of the RCO

| Concert Date                             | Number of Non-African-American Players | Number of African-American Players |
|--|--|------------------------------------|
| 10/29/2013                               | 19                                     | 4                                  |
| 12/17/2013                               | 26                                     | 5                                  |
| 2/25/2013                                | 29                                     | 5                                  |
| Sum                                      | 74                                     | 14                                 |
| Average African-American Participation = |  | 18.92%                             |

By conducting a case study of three of the RCO's African-American participants, insights about their lived experiences may be relevant to identifying factors that influence African-Americans to participate in classical, orchestral music. The community orchestra setting is ideal for a case study because adults who participate in amateur community music groups do so for personal enjoyment. All RCO participants are unpaid volunteer musicians.

Though little research exists on African-American participation in the arts (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990), studies from related fields suggest that certain factors may positively influence overall arts participation. These factors include educational background, the role of mentorship, and family/societal influences. Education affects

arts participation in a number of ways. The availability of arts education at a young age as well as a person's level of education both contribute to arts attendance and participation (Iyengar et al., 2009). The weightier of the two areas is arts education in childhood. "Arts education in childhood is the most significant predictor of both arts attendance and personal arts creation throughout the rest of a person's life" (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011). Over the past 30 years, arts education has declined by 49% for African-American children (Iyengar, et al., 2009).

Education-level may also correlate to a person's interest in classical music. Classical music audiences tend to consist of highly educated individuals. Approximately 88% of symphony audiences have achieved at least some level of college education (Iyengar, et al., 2009). Of those who have attended college, one third have graduated from college and half have attended graduate school (Iyengar, et al., 2009). "This pattern may suggest something like a 'Sheepskin Effect' in the data — attendance rates may not necessarily increase incrementally with an additional year of education, but surpassing certain educational milestones, like graduation from high school, attending college and completing college, are significant correlates with higher attendance rates" (Iyengar, et al., 2009, p. 42).

Mentorship is an area of consideration in predicting arts involvement. Mentors play a key role in a young person's development (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Vittenson, 1965). Mentors may be family members, community role models, or teachers. While it is difficult to overstate the effect that a mentor of any ethnicity can have on a young person, co-ethnic mentors may have an even greater positive influence on minority students (Vittenson, 1965). Co-ethnic role-models may be better able to identify with the unique

struggles that minority students face. Music teachers have also been shown to have an especially profound impact on students (Hamann & Walker, 1993). In 1993, Hamann and Walker found that music teachers were the most commonly cited role-models among 811 African-American students. Music teachers can positively influence student's perception of music and their decision to participate in music classes at both the high school and college level.

A person's family and cultural environment influence arts preferences. While young people are inclined to adopt many customs from their peers, their family has a greater influence on their disposition toward fine-arts activities (Cavalli-Sforza, Feldman, Chen, & Dornbusch, 1982; Smith, 1985; Mark, 2003). The larger culture including school, peer groups, and religious institutions also influence young people. Each culture has a set of traditions, values, and ideologies that sets it apart from other cultures (Mark, 2003). These cultural indicators then, become social boundaries by which communities establish their identity (Katz-Gerro, 2002). Members of cultures adopt these preferences in order to maintain authentic membership within the community (Carter, 2003). Communities are more likely to produce citizens interested in classical music if the art form is valued at all levels—family, school, and religious and societal institutions. Investigating the influence of these three areas (education, family/cultural background, and mentorship), may shed light on a previously neglected subject—African-American participation in orchestral music.

### **Research Question**

The purpose of the current study is to identify factors that motivate African-American orchestral musicians to begin and maintain music involvement. I proposed to

reveal whether there are commonalities in the backgrounds of three African-American members of the RCO. The principle research question was, “Are there common themes in the lives of African-American musicians that contribute to their sustained involvement in classical, orchestral music?” For the purpose of this study, the term Classical Music refers to the generic term, meaning the opposite of light or popular music. In this sense, “it is applied to the music of composers of any era, from the Middle Ages to the present day, and might even be understood to include ‘serious’ music of the avant-garde” (The Oxford Companion to Music, 2011).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Education**

The availability of arts classes in our nation's public schools has been declining over the past 30 years (Iyengar et al., 2009). Since 1982, "the share of 18-24-year-olds who report having had any musical education in their lives (now 38 percent) has dropped by more than a third" (Iyengar et al., 2009, p. 6). The sharpest decline in arts education has been for African-American children—a 49% drop from 1982 to 2002—compared to a much less substantial decline for white children (Iyengar et al., 2009). For some disadvantaged children, the only arts enrichment experiences they receive are at school (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). This lack of arts opportunities for African-American children may limit the number of African-American adults who participate in arts activities.

Arts education is essential in developing an adult population involved in the arts. According to the NEA study on arts participation, arts education in childhood is the "most significant predictor of...personal arts creation throughout the rest of a person's life" (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011, p. 5). Those who receive music education as children are not only more likely to perform and take music lessons as adults, but also to attend classical performances as well.

Researchers have also linked a person's level of education to their attendance at arts events (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011; DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990). As education level increases, the likelihood that a person will attend arts performances increases as



well (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990). The NEA study found that 88% of those who attended a classical music performance in the year prior to the study, “had at least some college experience” (Cross, 2008, p. 13). Those who attend college have greater exposure to a broader range of cultural experiences.

Another theory exploring the connection between a person’s education level and interest in high-art activities is known as cultural omnivorousness (Mark, 2003). This theory suggests that there is a positive relationship between education level and the number of cultural forms people enjoy (DiMaggio, 1987; Erickson, 1996). More educated individuals tend to like both popular culture and high art more so than those with lower education levels. This may be because “people with high levels of education may be more tolerant of cultural forms disproportionately liked by members of ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups” (Mark, 2003, p. 321). Conversely, individuals with lower levels of education tend to reject cultural forms liked by members of other social groups (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

### **Mentorship**

Studies suggest that mentors play a key role in a young person’s development. For the purpose of this study, a mentor or role model is defined as a person that an individual interacts with, and can respect, admire, and pattern his or her life after. Mentors may be family members, community role models, or teachers.

Music teachers serve as important role models for students. They can positively influence students to participate in music programs and classes and to continue their involvement with music beyond their high school education (Hamann & Walker, 1993). They may help students overcome ethnic stereotypes and invite them to participate in

cultural activities students may not have previously considered. Hamann and Walker found that music teachers were the most commonly cited role-models among 811 African-American students. Mentors of any ethnicity can positively influence children; however, mentors of the same ethnicity are of greater importance for African-American than for non-African-American youth (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Vittenson, 1965). The low numbers of African-American music teachers available to African-American students may inadvertently affect the number of African-Americans who participate in orchestras.

Mentors may also have a negative impact on young people's perceptions. Aaron Flagg, Dean of the Hartt School of Music and accomplished African-American trumpet player, shares an example of how community elders served as mentors, and negatively influenced his perceptions of the orchestral environment:

When I speak to older generations of African-American musicians about diversity in orchestras...They speak of experiences with overt discrimination in the past. But more importantly, they voice their suspicion that some covert discrimination must still exist today...Now, if you are a young musician of color, and this is the predominant message you hear from your elders--not necessarily your teachers, but the people you'd really ask, people who look like you--and it matches what you see onstage with your own eyes, why in the world would you go down that path? The only reason you would go down that path would be if a much stronger message was sent out from the orchestra field (Flagg, 2002).

If younger African-Americans receive a negative message about orchestras from their co-ethnic role models, they may be less likely to participate in this type of music. In order for young African-Americans to become involved in orchestral music—an art form that currently does not have a strong connection to African-American cultural tastes, it may be necessary for African-American youth to be positively influenced by a musical mentor.

## **Family/Society Influences**

Family and community play a considerable role in the types of cultural experiences to which children are exposed. People with like interests and similar backgrounds are more likely to form social ties than those with dissimilar backgrounds. This is the principle of *homophily* (Mark, 2003). Cultural tastes depend largely on exposure and children often adopt the arts preferences of their families and communities. People, in general, are less receptive to a new cultural idea unless it already has a meaningful connection to their established “cultural tastes, beliefs, values, interests, and identities” (Mark, 2003, p. 321). Children, therefore, develop cultural preferences primarily based on the influences of their families and communities.

Such network ties are the most important predictors of an individual’s cultural preferences (Erickson 1996; Kandel 1978). Family has the greatest influence in determining a child’s participation in fine arts and sports, while peer-groups are more likely to influence a child’s preference for clothing style and popular music (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982; Hebdige 1979; Smith 1985). Explaining the disparity between African-American attendance at high-culture events, DiMaggio and Ostrower (1990) suggest that differences in parental socialization and lack of access through social networks to high-culture events, may be leading causes for the divide.

Communities draw social boundaries by affirming their cultural, religious and ethnic tastes (Katz-Gerro, 2002). It stands to reason, then, that for African-Americans to become involved with classical music, one ingredient may be a positive influence from either their family or their scholastic/religious community. Investigating the influence of these three areas (education, mentorship and family/society influences) in the lives of the

African-American musicians of the RCO may reveal how best to involve the broader African-American community in classical music. The purpose of this study is to uncover any common factors in the backgrounds of three African-American musicians and thus develop theories for fostering more inclusive musical environments.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

The purpose of the current study was to identify factors that motivate African-American orchestral musicians to begin and maintain involvement in music. While the experiences of the African-American amateur musicians in this particular orchestra may not be transferable, commonalities in their backgrounds and experiences may provide a starting point for more substantial research. Conducting a case study is an appropriate starting point for this line of research.

#### **Research Design**

Case studies are valuable tools for understanding human behavior. They offer a variety of tools for pursuing inquiry, and draw attention to what can be learned from intensive study of a person, persons, or situation (Glesne, 2011). A case study is the preferred research strategy when the person or system is *bounded* (has established boundaries for what will and will not be included in the study), and the focus is on a particular contemporary phenomena (Yin, 2003). For the current study the cases refer to three African-American violinists who participate in the Riverland Community Orchestra (RCO).

Case studies involve participant observation, in depth interviewing, document collection, and analysis (Glesne, 2011). This study design allowed me to approach the

subject holistically, drawing from multiple data sources. After obtaining entrance into the field of observation and having three RCO players agree to participate in the study, I employed all data collection methods of a case study to varying degrees (observation, interview, and collection of artifacts). I held interviews with the participants, members of their families, and members of the RCO; maintained a field journal with observations of weekly rehearsals and RCO events, attended concerts and board meetings to gain a better understand of the participants and the RCO culture; held a focus group with participants; and collected artifacts from the participants' lives and RCO events. I then analyzed the data using HyperRESEARCH software, which allowed me to note emergent themes.

### **Entry into the Field**

While some researchers face challenges negotiating entrance into their field of study, my preexisting relationship with the RCO facilitated this process. I was the conductor of the RCO from the fall of 2010 to the spring of 2012. During that time, I developed relationships with the orchestra's players and board members as well as friends and family members who attended performances. When I started working with the group, my impression was that members shared a high level of familiarity with one another and that the orchestra provided an outlet for both musical growth and social engagement. Having worked with groups of varying age and ability levels, I was impressed by the larger than average number of African-Americans who regularly participated with the RCO. Intrigued by the unusually diverse conditions of the group, I approached the RCO board of directors in the fall of 2011 about conducting research within the organization. At that time I received permission to observe RCO rehearsals and solicit participation from members of the orchestra.

In planning this study, I decided to focus on a select number of African-Americans who consistently perform with the group. I asked the three African-Americans who regularly perform with the RCO to participate in the study and they all agreed. After gaining the approval of my dissertation committee and my university's Institutional Review Board, I began observations and interviews in the fall of 2012. I started weekly observations in October, shortly before the first concert of the season and continued through the end of February.

### **Subjects/Participants**

I selected participants from the Riverland Community Orchestra due to its greater than average number of African-American players and the fact that it is a volunteer orchestra. This is important because it suggests that the players are primarily intrinsically motivated to participate (Amabile, 1993). The criteria were the participants self-identify as African-American, were unpaid, amateur musicians, and consistently participated with the RCO for at least one year.

I personally called and emailed three of the RCO's African-American players, Annie, Bethany, and James (pseudonyms), to gauge their interest in my topic and recruit them for the study. For a year before beginning observations, I engaged in conversations with Annie and Bethany regarding their musical background and experience. Both women had a thorough understanding of my research before I asked them to participate and they readily agreed to do so. James was unfamiliar with my topic and because he was a minor, I took extra precautions before accepting him into the study. I spoke with both James and his father about the intent of my research and the requirements of participation, assuring them that James's information would be kept confidential. All

participants signed consent forms and were encouraged to ask questions about the study prior to the first interview (see Appendix A and B for sample participant consent forms). Though the selection sample was limited, these participants offered varied perspectives, having different personalities, ages, genders, and family backgrounds.

Annie is an Emergency Medical Technician in her early forties. She attended college (though she did not graduate) and received additional medical training specific to her career. Annie and Bethany attended the same high school and had the same orchestra director. Annie describes herself as an “orchestra nerd, supreme Girl Scout [and] infamous academic underachiever.” She has played violin with the RCO for three years and while she occasionally misses concerts due to work conflicts, she has a strong loyalty to the group and its members.

Bethany is an accomplished high school orchestra director in her late thirties holding an undergraduate degree in music education and master’s degrees in education. She currently teaches at her alma mater, and is Lead Teacher for the orchestras in her school district. Bethany plays violin and piano, but considers the violin her primary instrument. She holds a leadership role within the RCO as Concertmaster and a member of the Board of Directors. While Bethany’s profession is music education, her playing and service on the RCO board are volunteer activities.

James is a seventeen-year-old African-American male. He is a home-schooled student and a violinist. The 2012-2013 season marks his third year with the RCO. He regularly arrives early to assist with setting up chairs and stands. At the end of the 2011-2012 season he received a scholarship to pursue musical studies from the RCO Board of Directors for demonstrating hard work and a positive attitude.



## **Data Collection**

The case study research approach incorporates a variety of methods for obtaining data. The nature of qualitative research is subjective, relying on the shared experiences of others to make sense of particular phenomena. Therefore, it is important for researchers to *triangulate* their data. *Triangulation* is a term taken from surveying which means using multiple sources in order to increase the richness and validity of data (Glesne, 2011). This is important because, “it is always possible to make mistakes in your interpretation and a different view on the situation can illuminate limitations or suggest which of competing versions is more likely” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 94). Also, what participants say may be inconsistent with their behavior, revealing new dimensions for inquiry. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of African-American’s orchestral experiences, data collection for this study included the following elements: (1) interviews with the three primary participants, (2) interviews with parents and family members of the participants, (3) interviews with other members of the Riverland Community Orchestra (RCO), (4) observations of RCO rehearsals, concerts, and board meetings, (5) collection of RCO artifacts, and (5) a focus group with the three primary participants.

### **Participant interviews.**

This study is constructed through an *interpretivist* lens, where interview is the primary form of data collection, supplemented with participant observation and document collection. According to Glesne, *interpretivists* “seek to interpret people’s constructions of reality and identify uniqueness and patterns in their perspectives and behaviors” (Glesne, 2011, p. 19). The best method for understanding the perceptions of others is

through open-ended questioning. Interviews allow participants to make sense of their experiences and communicate meaning by sharing their life stories (Chase, 2003).

When recruiting the primary participants for this study, I requested they agree to three thirty-minute interviews each, followed by one combined focus group session after completion of the interviews. The interviews focused on the subjects of *education*, *mentorship*, and their *society and family backgrounds*. I met with participants at locations convenient to them. Annie preferred to meet at my apartment while Bethany and I met primarily in her orchestra classroom. James had other family members present at each of his interviews. We first met at his church with his father and younger brother present and his father contributing equally with James. Our second interview was also at the church with James, both of his parents, and his younger brother in attendance. During our second meeting, James's parents contributed more than James. My final meeting with James occurred at my office with his cousin and younger sister present. His cousin freely participated in the interview while his younger sister only occasionally made comments. All participants discussed each topic at length and the interviews lasted much longer than expected. The shortest interview lasted approximately 50 minutes and the longest more than 2 hours. The participants seemed enthusiastic about the subject and when I asked Annie her thoughts on being interviewed she responded, "It was like being on Oprah. It was great."

In order to gain further perspectives on the topic of African-American involvement in orchestral music and to better understand the participant's experiences, I asked family members and RCO members to participate in interviews. Annie and Bethany's mothers both agreed to meet with me for approximately one hour to discuss

their daughter's involvement in music and to share their family histories. Paula, a Euro-American member of the RCO shared her perspective as a friend and stand-partner to Annie, and private-lesson instructor to James. Richard, the conductor of the RCO met with me and shared his life experiences working with African-American student musicians. These participants also signed release forms (see Appendix C for a sample form).

Based on preliminary research, the interviews were centered on the subjects of education, mentorship, and society and family influences. The questions were semi-structured and opened-ended allowing participants to share the stories they felt most important. Occasionally topics shifted unexpectedly and participants told me personal details about challenging experiences. For me, this process reinforced the importance of building trust with interviewees. The participants that I did not know well started by answering carefully, yet as the interview process progressed, they all became less guarded and more open in their discourse (see Appendix D for interview questions).

The final phase of the interview process was a focus group that I moderated with the three primary participants. *Focus groups* or *group interviews* are useful for stimulating discussions in which group members react to one another's comments and collectively brainstorm (Berg, 2007). "A far larger number of ideas, issues, topics, and even solutions to a problem can be generated through group discussion than through individual conversations" (Berg, 2007, p. 146). Annie, Bethany, James, and I met after a RCO rehearsal in one of the church offices for the group interview. The participants seemed nervous at first, but quickly began joking with one another and the interview, while semi-structured, had a conversational tone. We spent over one hour reviewing

topics and exploring new ideas. Having had time to process, I asked the participants to each evaluate the main reason for their involvement in string music and to share suggestions for improving diversity in orchestras (See Appendix E for the list of focus group questions). I video recorded and transcribed the session. Meeting with the participants together gave me the opportunity to thank them for their time and commitment to the project. I gave them each \$10 Target gift cards as a token of appreciation

Table 3.1 contains a summary of all recorded interviews. Formal interviews were recorded (using a Sony digital recorder with USB attachment), transcribed, coded, and returned to participants for descriptive and analytic validity checks. I took hand-written notes during all interviews and later typed them in my field journal adding reflective comments. Non-recorded interviews and conversations with participants and RCO members were noted in my field journal. The RCO treated me hospitably and welcomed my presence. Numerous players in the orchestra offered their assistance and answered questions related to my study. While *interpretivism* may rely solely on interview, I chose to add depth and validity to my research by observing the participants at RCO rehearsals and collecting artifacts.

### **Observation.**

Participant observation is the process by which an investigator establishes a relationship with a subject in its natural setting for a social scientific understanding of the behavior (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). The goal is to develop rich data for qualitative analysis. My previous association with the RCO established my role of “Insider” Participant Researcher. I had developed relationships with the players and

Table 3.1 Interview Log

| Group                | Pseudonym                                       | Length of Interview | Date       | Topic   |
|----------------------|---|---------------------|------------|---|
| Primary Participant  | Annie Jones                                     | 1:27:03             | 11/7/2012  | Education   |
| Primary Participant  | Annie Jones                                     | 1:27:28             | 11/13/2012 | Mentorship  |
| Primary Participant  | Annie Jones                                     | 1:37:13             | 11/20/2012 | Society/Family Education/Mentorship/Society & Family                                  |
| Primary Participant  | Bethany Thomas                                  | 59:26:00            | 9/24/2011  | Society & Family  |
| Primary Participant  | Bethany Thomas                                  | 1:04:17             | 10/27/2012 | Education   |
| Primary Participant  | Bethany Thomas                                  | 49:26:00            | 11/15/2012 | Mentorship  |
| Primary Participant  | Bethany Thomas                                  | 57:37:00            | 11/28/2012 | Society/Family  |
| Primary Participant  | James Richardson                                | 52:21:00            | 10/27/2012 | Education   |
| Primary Participant  | James Richardson                                | 47:13:00            | 11/9/2012  | Mentorship  |
| Primary Participant  | James Richardson & Destiny (cousin)             | 1:27:15             | 11/21/2012 | Society/Family  |
| Participant Relative | Diana Jones (Annie's mother)                    | 1:24:45             | 12/1/2012  | Daughter's Interest in Music/Family Background  |
| Participant Relative | Tandie Thomas (Bethany's mother)                | 1:31:37             | 11/21/2012 | Daughter's Interest in Music/Family Background  |
| RCO Personnel        | Richard Corley (RCO Conductor)                  | 1:31:17             | 11/29/2012 | Personal History & Connection to the RCO  |
| RCO Personnel        | Paula Rogers                                    | 2:05:48             | 11/25/2012 | Personal History & Connection to the RCO  |
| Focus Group          | Annie Jones, Bethany Thomas, & James Richardson | 1:12:33             | 12/3/2012  | Review of previous subjects and Motivation for Continued Interest in Orchestral Music |

board members as the former conductor, so my presence at rehearsals was a minimal distraction. Some players wondered why I was no longer conducting the group, but after explaining my research purpose, group members quickly adjusted to my presence. Most players seemed more interested in my recent marriage and life changes than the research. Occasionally this friendliness with the orchestra members distracted from my research goals because engaging socially at times prevented me from documenting interactions. This type of interaction typifies the social nature of the RCO's group dynamic. My field notes included observations of RCO rehearsals, dress rehearsals, concerts, board meetings, and attendance at participant's churches.

In Table 3.2, I present a summary of time spent in observations. The majority of observations occurred at RCO activities. I typically arrived 15 to 20 early to rehearsals and concerts and stayed late in order to document behaviors and interactions among the participants and RCO members. I tried to be unobtrusive, but on certain occasions such as concerts, I felt that taking notes during the performance would be distracting. During rehearsals, I changed seating to acquire different perspectives, but during concerts, I typically remained in the back of the performance hall, hoping to avoid attention. During board meetings, the President invited me to sit at the table with the board members, but I was careful to remain quiet during board discussions. Journal entries included observations of interactions, conversations, diagrams, notes on setting, photos of participants and their environment, and personal thoughts and reflections. I took notes during each event and later typed them, expanding on what I had seen and constructing preliminary codes and theories, as suggested by Glesne, resulting in notes that were both descriptive and analytic. While observing RCO events was part of my original research

proposal, data collection was expanded to include observations of participant churches as well.

Table 3.2 Observation Hours

| Hours Recorded     | Type of Observation    | Description  |
|--------------------|------------------------|--|
| 18:02:00           | RCO Regular Rehearsals | Weekly rehearsals held at a regular rehearsal location                     |
| 5:10:00            | RCO Dress Rehearsals   | The rehearsals held the Sunday before each concert at the concert location |
| 1:33:00            | RCO Board Meetings     | Held after rehearsals, the Monday immediately following performances       |
| 5:50:00            | RCO Concerts           | Attendance at three culminating concerts                                   |
| 8:55:00            | Church Observations    | Attendance at each of the participant's churches                           |
| <b>Total Hours</b> | <b>39:30:00</b>        |  |

One of the primary participants, James, is shy. After our first interview, I brainstormed ideas to get a better understanding of his experience since he is less talkative than either Annie or Bethany. The church plays a dominant role in James's life and so I asked permission from his parents to attend. Visiting James's church was an incredibly valuable experience because I learned more about James's culture as well as his musical experiences outside of the RCO. Consequently, I asked Annie and Bethany to attend their churches and was equally pleased with the experiences. Attending their churches added further depth to my understanding of their musical upbringing and allowed me to engage with their family and friends. The influence of church music became a recurrent theme, discussed in the remaining interviews and the focus group.

I followed the same process for recording field notes and collected artifacts such as church bulletins and hand-outs.

### **Artifacts.**

For researchers studying historical phenomena, artifacts are an essential element in the data-collection process. For those studying contemporary phenomena, artifacts can give both historical context and can “raise questions about [the researcher’s] hunches and thereby shape new directions for observations and interviews” (Glesne, 2001, p. 85). I collected both historical and current artifacts during the course of fieldwork. Table 3.3 lists the type of artifacts collected in each category. Collecting artifacts as part of this study gave me a better understanding of the participant’s past and current relationships as well as a historical context for the RCO.

### **Data Analysis**

At its simplest, data analysis involves organizing collected information in order to make sense of it (Glesne, 2011). The process of analyzing qualitative data is fluid, and ideally begins in the early stages of fieldwork, consistently reflecting on the data, and making connections and comparison. My own process involved a continuous reflection on emergent themes and patterns.

I began analysis by writing memos during observations. I kept a field journal capturing any analytic thoughts as they occurred, often underlining ideas and questions to revisit. Typing my handwritten notes later the same day added to my understanding and helped me select topics of particular interest. As observations progressed, I began to look for similarities, dissimilarities, and patterns.



Table 3.3 List of Artifacts

|   |
|---|
| Historical  |
| A written history of the RCO submitted by the RCO Artistic Director                               |
| Copies of past RCO Concert programs   |
| Funeral programs from two of Bethany's mentors  |
| Photographs of Annie and Bethany from when they were in high school                               |
| Current   |
| Laminated photo of Bobby McNeill that Annie carries in her purse                                  |
| Photograph of display honoring Bethany's mentors  |
| RCO Board Agendas   |
| RCO programs from concerts I attended during field study  |
| Church Bulletins and hand-outs  |
| Copies of concert programs from RCO conductor (related to his experiences with another orchestra) |
| Book given to me by James's father  |
| RCO website   |
| Church websites   |

Interviewing added another layer of understanding to the study. I was eager to engage with the participants and began interviews within the first week of fieldwork. Interviews followed a logical progression, loosely structured around the topics of *education, mentorship, and society/family*. Interviews were transcribed using HyperTRANSCRIBE research software. Lofland, in *Analyzing Social Settings*, suggests making every effort to personally transcribe all interviews.

Transcribing was a tedious yet rewarding process. Not wanting the work to accumulate, I began transcribing interviews immediately. Taking notes during the initial interviews made it difficult to focus solely on the participant's responses. Transcribing, therefore, allowed me to truly hear what each person said (Lofland et al., 2006, p. 107). This also helped me to review previous material as the interviews progressed. I was simultaneously engaging in new subjects and making connections to past data. I found

that I enjoyed hearing each person's stories and listening to the discussions a second time, paying attention to responses and revisiting topics that elicited strong emotions from the participants. Participants approached me a few times during rehearsals to discuss their interviews and expand on their explanations. As themes emerged, I became more aware of the things to focus on during interviews and observations.

In thematic analysis, the focus is to search data for themes using analytic codes. The researcher first examines data with similar codes and then observes how the data "changes or varies in relationship to other factors" (Glesne, 2011, p. 187). Thematic analysis is typically used in *grounded theory* where greater understanding of a particular issue is sought through examination of a finite number of cases. While this study is too limited in scope to be considered grounded theory, the purpose during analysis was to uncover emergent themes in the lives of three particular cases. I accomplished this by developing a set of codes based on the interview topics and then expanded the list to include any information of significance as it related to African-American participation in orchestras. I developed preliminary codes in my field notes and formally developed the list using HyperRESEARCH.

In order to use this program I first created a study file, then saved all interview transcriptions and observations as text files and imported them into HyperRESEARCH. I created a total of nine cases, one for each person interviewed, and then a separate case for my field notes and the focus group. By organizing the data in this way, I was able to select specific cases or multiple cases for comparison. While all sources provided valuable information, my chief concern was the perspective of the primary three participants.

Creating codes was a circular process. As mentioned previously, I began tentatively coding my field notes and interview transcripts with broad category codes, noting anything that appeared particularly interesting or unusual. As themes emerged, I found it necessary to go back to earlier codes for revision and expansion. This process recurred throughout the entire study—a constant revisiting of data and adjustment of codes.

HyperRESEARCH allowed me to systematically organize my codes. After transferring handwritten codes to my study file, I created code categories starting with the original subjects of Education, Mentorship, and Family and ultimately expanding the list to include Church, Community Music, Interviewer Perspective, Participant Traits, Situation Specific Codes, and Society categories as well. The HyperRESEARCH software made it possible to access my master code list from any case and to select specific codes or cases for evaluation. Codes often overlapped. In total, I generated 11 categories with 263 codes and 3757 occurrences (see Appendix F for a Master Code List).

### **Trustworthiness.**

Qualitative researchers bear the responsibility of convincing their audiences that their findings are based on critical investigation (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). For this study, I took a number of measures to evaluate the trustworthiness of my “reported observations, interpretations, and generalizations” (Mishler, 1990, p. 419). In addition to having a preexisting relationship with the RCO community, I spent 22 weeks in field study engaging with the participants and the group. I kept an ongoing field journal of observations and reflections. Interviews were recorded or videotaped, coded, and

returned to participants for revision and clarification. In order to gain further perspectives I formally interviewed participant's family members and two members of the RCO. I interviewed the three primary participants three times each and held a focus group to validate findings. The frequency and length of interviews helped me reach a point of saturation where data was repeated and confirmed throughout the study.

In order to provide external validity to the study, I kept an audit trail and engaged in peer review with my committee chair. Record keeping is important in qualitative research so that others "can recapture steps and reach the same conclusions" (Rudestam, 2007, p. 114). I kept meticulous records of the raw data and the tools used to synthesize and process that data. As a novice researcher, I also relied heavily on my committee chair for debriefing and support throughout the process. We were mindful that findings reflect the context of the participants' individual experiences and are not generalizable to the broader population. I have, however, done my best to present rich, "thick" data on the study participants within the RCO community and hope that this study will serve as a foundation for further inquiry.

#### **Ethics and human subjects review.**

In order to protect the privacy of study participants, I received training on human subjects testing and obtained permission from the Internal Review Board of the University of South Carolina before performing this study. I also solicited permission to observe events and recruit participants from leadership within the RCO. Before beginning interviews, I explained the study requirements and encouraged subjects to ask questions, assuring contributors that their participation was voluntary. I stored data on a password-protected computer and kept it in a secure facility. In order to protect the participant's

confidentiality, pseudonyms and non-identifying descriptors have been used for all participants and organizations. I have made every effort to faithfully represent the participant's lived experiences in these findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Through the process of interview and observation, participants shared their stories of how they began playing a string instrument, as well as what motivated them to continue playing as adults. In this chapter, I discuss the common themes that emerged from their shared experiences. The final phase of my analysis involved generating a code frequency report of all cases and examining patterns among the highest frequencies. In addition to the reflective process during field study, I took a week to review the frequency report and compare the results to the original sources. This led me to combine codes and helped me see larger patterns in the data. Through the analysis process, I found that many of the themes overlapped, for example, *school music programs* and *affordable music programs*. The programs offered in the local public schools were made available to participants at little or no cost, making this affordable; however, there were enough instances of other reasonably priced programs that I discuss each theme separately. I have narrowed my discussion to the ten topics most frequently mentioned.

#### **Community Connections**

The theme tying these results together is also the most frequently cited indicator of the study; the importance of meaningful community connections. For all the participants, social network ties played a key role in their exposure to string music and the support they received participating in orchestras. Connections between teachers,

students, local support organizations, and families laid the foundation for them to become involved with string music.

Annie and Bethany's families formed a support system as early as 1985, when the girls met at a Community Strings summer camp (the summer before their sixth and seventh grade years, respectively) to their current involvement in the Riverland Community Orchestra. Attending different middle schools limited their contact to Community Strings summer camps and rehearsals with the local youth orchestra. Their friendship, founded in music, deepened while attending high school where they both played in their school's orchestra. Annie's comment about an orchestra trip reveals the closeness of their relationship. "My senior year we went to Florida again, and Bethany and Lisa [Bethany's best friend] and I were roomies... That was probably the best trip that I had because I actually got to be in with friends that I trusted." During a focus group, Bethany and Annie shared about a summer that Annie spent with Bethany's family. Annie's mother would only allow her to stay with them because their families had built a relationship of trust, "I can't have you stay with just anybody. You can stay at Bethany's house." Annie and Bethany relate how music and singing was a constant feature of the Thomas' household:

Annie: I stayed with them one summer for, what, three weeks or something? And when I got home my brother's like, "What's wrong with you?" [shakes like she's shocked] "It's too quiet in here. We gotta have somethin' on [music]"... I mean, I can sing with the best of 'em, now.

Bethany: (holds her hands to her face and laughs).

Annie: Bethany's mom would come around the corner, "Is that on again [referring to a musical on television]? Sing it!"

Interviewer: Really?

Annie: Oh yeah, all the time.

Bethany: Yeah. Lisa called us the Von Thomas family [making reference to the singing Von Trapp family from *The Sound of Music*].

The relationship between Bethany and Annie has continued through adulthood; Annie considers Bethany one her best friends. Their mothers are also friendly with one another and I observed them sitting together at two Riverland Community Orchestra concerts.

The second most frequently referenced community connection relates to Bobby McNeill. During middle and high school Annie and Bethany formed a mentoring relationship with Bobby McNeill, their African-American orchestra director at Bryant High School, which lasted until his death in 2010. Bobby became a key mentor for them both musically and personally. Both women considered him a part of their family and he referred to them as two of his “adopted daughters.” Annie said that Bobby was her most significant music mentor because their relationship lasted longest. In addition to encouraging Annie musically, Bobby helped her manage challenging life events. When experiencing depressive episodes in high school, Bobby was her sounding board. When I asked her to evaluate the impact he had on her life, Annie responded that if it weren’t for Bobby, she “wouldn’t be alive today.” Bethany’s choice to seek music as her profession was influenced by a conversation they had while she was in high school. Bobby helped her evaluate what was most important in her life.

I remember...talking to Bobby and he’s like, “Think about what [you] couldn’t live your life with or without. If you didn’t have medicine in your life, would you be able to survive? And if you didn’t have music in your life, would you be able to survive?” I was like, “Hm, okay, if I didn’t have music in my life, I don’t think I’d be able to survive.” “Well, there you go. Now you need to figure out what you want to do. Do you want to do music education, music performance, you know?”

Bobby’s connections to the musical community in Riverland trace back to his childhood in Laurelton, a city approximately 100 miles southeast of Riverland. His history and the connections he made in his youth bolstered his success as an educator years later. Mr. and Mrs. Frankel taught music in the Laurelton public school where they



became two of Bobby's mentors. Bobby graduated from high school in Laurelton and attended the University of Riverland where he majored in Music Education. After establishing himself as a successful high school orchestra director, Bobby recruited the Frankels to teach music with him in the Riverland School District in the 1990s.

The Frankels touched the lives of many students in Riverland including Bethany, James, Destiny (James's cousin), and Annie's brother. Although they were a white couple, the African-American community welcomed them. Bethany said that they were the first white teachers she had that "treat all [their] students the same," and Destiny cites Mrs. Frankel as her primary musical mentor. Both Annie and Bethany's mothers trusted the Frankels, who invited children into their homes and took students on school-related music trips.

[Mr. and Mrs. Frankel], they're just like two old shoes that fit in everywhere...all the [black] kids loved them. Everybody was always at their house. They took them, you know, on trips and stuff. I remember Bethany and Annie going with them, just traveling...And they just love it. Kids just naturally flocked to them. Lots of fun.

Mention of Bobby and the Frankels was common throughout the interview process as mentors, friends, or colleagues.

Like the Frankels, Bethany's parents had connections to Laurelton and knew Bobby as a child. The Thomas' moved to Riverland when Bethany was three years old and her mother, Tandie, taught elementary music in Riverland School District 1. Bobby was reintroduced to Tandie when he student-taught in the same school district. Once hired, Tandie developed a mentoring relationship with Bobby. "Like I said, when...he got in the district the very next year, I kind of adopted him, you know, as a little brother. So I always knew him."

While Bethany remained in contact with Bobby throughout her college career, upon graduating with a music education degree, she returned to Riverland and became Bobby's colleague. Bethany and Bobby taught music in Riverland School District 1 until Bobby passed away in 2010. At his funeral Bethany shared her experiences as his mentee, "adopted daughter," colleague, and friend. Bethany inherited Bobby's job as the Orchestra Director at Bryant High School and during a visit to Bethany's orchestra classroom, she had pictures of Bobby and his orchestra classes dating back to the early 1980s. She pointed out a number of Bryant orchestra graduates who studied under Bobby and who continue to have an impact in the Riverland community. One notable graduate was cellist, Derrick Sims.

Annie, Bethany, and Destiny mentioned that Derrick had a meaningful impact in the music community. Derrick's ability as a cellist earned him a favorable reputation from early on. Annie looked up to Derrick, five years her senior, as a musical role model. Annie and Derrick performed in the Bryant High School Orchestra together for one year before Derrick graduated. Derrick went on to have a successful career as a cellist, receiving a professorship at one of the state women's colleges where he taught until 2011. Both Bethany and Destiny attended this particular women's college. Although Bethany had graduated before Derrick began teaching, she noted with pride that Derrick had taught at her alma mater. In a conversation about the few African-American professors she said, "it meant a lot to have him on campus." Destiny said that it was difficult when he left. "[Now] I think we have one other black professor, period, in the entire school" Both Bethany and Destiny felt it was important to have him as a professor in the music department and role model for black students.

Derrick's mother, Twyla Sims, also appeared as a community connection in Bethany and Annie's interviews. Twyla was an elementary music teacher in Riverland School District 1 as well as the music director of Annie's church. Annie sang in Twyla's church choir and started playing in bell choir under Twyla's direction when she was 12. During a visit to her church Annie shared that the current players in the adult bell choir were once students in Twyla's youth bell choir. Annie plays in her church bell choir as well as a community bell choir as a result of Twyla's influence. Annie's mother sang in Twyla's church choir before she retired. When I asked Annie's mother if she agreed that Ms. Sims had high standards she responded, "Oh, yeah. Oh, absolutely... You know, you just did what she said. There was no questioning." Twyla brought this same standard to her job as an elementary music teacher.

While she only taught Bethany for one year, Bethany listed Twyla among her music mentors. Bethany liked that she had high standards for her students. "She had us singing in parts. We would do some three part music and she never said, 'Oh well you might not be able to do this because you're in 5th grade'...she was good." Twyla was a skilled director of children's choirs as well as children's bell choirs.

The nature of the many connections in Riverland tying the music community together is generational, suggesting long-standing support and a close-knit population. Also worth noting is that most references to community connections denoted connections among African-Americans; relationships that have spanned over thirty years. One important exception is the Frankels who intentionally entered black schools in Charleston to reach African-Americans with classical music and continued their mission by teaching

in predominantly black schools in Riverland School District 1. These connections created a community of support among young players and their families and local educators.

The impact of these community connections continue through the participant's involvement in the RCO. Founded in 2005 by the Frankels and supported by Bobby McNeill, the RCO provides an opportunity for local musicians to participate in orchestral music past high school. The RCO is an environment where former students and teachers from the Riverland schools come together for the shared experience of creating music together in a fun and relaxed atmosphere.

### **School Music Programs**

Arts education is essential in developing an adult population involved in the arts. According to a 2009 NEA study on arts participation, arts education in childhood is the “most significant predictor of...personal arts creation throughout the rest of a person's life” (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011, p. 5). Without a string program available in the public school, Annie and Bethany may have never picked up a string instrument. Both participants spoke about the importance of receiving the opportunity to play a string instrument in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade as part of their elementary school curriculum. When I asked Annie to share her first experience with strings she said,

When I was in the 4th grade I remember Mrs. Fisher and some of her handy dandy assistants coming into the multi-purpose room at Johnson [Elementary School] and showing us instruments and saying, “Now, who wants to play this?” That was my first year in public school and I'm like, “This is just great, man. This is awesome. I want one of those sheets. I want to play that violin thing.”

For Bethany playing a string instrument was an alternative to her regular music class. She also experienced a string teacher coming to her school and demonstrating the instruments. For her, “it was the thing to do in 5th grade.”

Both Bethany and Annie's mothers were exposed to music in their childhood. Neither of them, however, had exposure to string instruments. Speaking with Tandie about why Bethany decided to begin playing a string instrument she responded that the availability of strings in the public schools was the primary factor. She felt that string music was a novelty of which the African-Americans of her generation were not exposed and saw the public school program as a great opportunity.

I came to Riverland in '76 and it [the string program] had just gotten started...and it was available. I think it's the idea that it was something different. You know, so many people had band and that was a common thing. And I think that's what really fascinated a lot of African-American parents who were educators, who didn't have the opportunity (you know, I didn't) to study strings. And here it was available in the public school for just the cost of renting an instrument or buying a few books. And you could commit to further study with Community Strings. It was just a great opportunity.

The string programs were so common in the African-American schools in Riverland School District 1, that students did not realize there was anything different or unusual about playing in orchestra. Bethany shared, "Growing up...I never thought about, okay this is a black person playing a violin...we just, 'Hey, you know, you can take orchestra or you stay in your music class.' 'Okay, I'll take orchestra.'" Participating in orchestra was accepted as part of the school's culture.

James's experience is unique in that he attended a private Christian school from K4 to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and has been home-schooled since. His ability to participate in string music, however, was indirectly influenced by the string programs in Riverland School District 1. James's first encounter with a string instrument was in K4 when he heard one of his classmates play the violin in a school recital. James expressed interest in learning to play the violin, but his father discouraged him. James's father believed that young men who participated in string music would become homosexual (a stereotype among some

African-American circles). James has an older cousin, Destiny, who began playing the violin in 4<sup>th</sup> grade as part of her public school curriculum. Destiny demonstrated great potential and excelled in her school music program. In support of her interest, Destiny's parents and allowed her to take additional private and group lessons with Community Strings. James's interest was renewed and Destiny's father convinced James's parents to allow him to play. James entered Community Strings when he was eight and continued until he was 16. Even though James did not attend public school, the prevalence of a strong string program in the local school district indirectly made it possible for him to begin playing violin.

### **Affordable Music Opportunities**

The affordability of music opportunities is related to the availability of string programs, the overlap being that the string programs in the public schools were available to students at little or no cost. Students could rent instruments if they did not want to commit to purchase. Annie remembered walking into a local music store with her father, "He told them, 'Yeah, we're gonna do the rent-to-own 'cause she's probably not gonna play it for too long.' (laughs) 31 years later [she is still playing]..." Bethany also enrolled in a rent-to-own program that eventually led to the purchase of her first violin. "She [Bethany's mother] did monthly payments and then at a certain point they said, 'Well, you've paid for the instrument. It's yours.' *Scrappy*, that's what I call my [first] instrument." Considering that neither Bethany nor Annie's parents were familiar with string instruments, affordable rentals may have helped them feel more comfortable supporting their children's interest because the financial risk was minimal.

In addition to school music programs, affordable local community groups were available for young people interested in advancing their playing. The most notable support program in this study is Community Strings. One goal of Community Strings is to give “accessible instruction to families throughout the [surrounding community].” All three participants took part in Community Strings, attending summer camps and enrolling in private lessons. James additionally took part in the group orchestra classes. Bethany’s motivation for taking private lessons was to play more competitively against her peers in the youth orchestra. Bethany took pride in the fact that even without private lessons she was able to perform in the advanced orchestra, but wanted to improve her ranking and noticed that the students who took private lessons won the top seats.

For young people interested in majoring in music performance or music education in college, private lesson instruction is essential. The disadvantage is that private lessons can also be expensive, adding a financial burden to parents who want to support their children’s musical development. Community Strings offers private lessons at a minimal cost by treating the lessons as a learning experience for music education majors at the university. Music education students learn teaching skills by practicing in a safe and structured environment, continually receiving feedback and instruction from their professors. Those unfamiliar with the professional string environment may not understand the value of private music lessons. Destiny expressed frustration that African-American string students did not audition well because they did not take private lessons.

In our race, people don't really take private lessons seriously. So they just...expect for their kids to be able to wake up and be able to play and it doesn't work like that. And so when they try out [for All-State], they don't make it 'cause they haven't had private lessons.

Annie, who took private lessons with Community Strings in high school, shared that the cost of the program appealed to her mother. “I started private lessons through Community Strings because they were less expensive, the schedule (day, time and place) was set, and I’m sure Mom liked the fact the student teachers had to answer to someone.” Community Strings provided a variety of affordable opportunities for young string students, supplementing and enhancing those available through the public schools.

Throughout the interview process, I heard multiple stories of teachers donating private lessons to students they recognized as having potential who would not be able to pay for instruction. Destiny and James both received private instruction from the Frankels at little or no cost. Destiny developed a close relationship with Mrs. Frankel and considers Mrs. Frankel her primary musical mentor. James also received free private lessons from Paula, a friend of Bobby McNeill’s who joined the Riverland Community Orchestra in 2011. Paula and James occasionally shared a stand during RCO rehearsals and Paula made suggestions for James to improve his playing. James valued her input and asked Paula for help preparing for an audition. She never charged James for meeting with him weekly before RCO rehearsals and they continued to meet for one year. When I asked James about his music mentors, he said that Paula was one of his favorite teachers.

In order for young African-Americans to become involved with string music, affordable instruction may be essential. Barring a cultural connection to orchestral music, African-American parents might hesitate before committing this expensive, extracurricular activity. Through affordable school and community programs these study participants experienced playing in group settings as well as having one-on-one instruction.



Affordable opportunities for adults to participate in orchestral music may be equally as important as affordable opportunities for children. The RCO provides adults the chance to participate in string music at a low cost. Players pay annual dues of \$25 per year to participate in weekly rehearsals for a season lasting from September to May. The orchestra covers the cost of music; players invest their own resources for instrument purchases and repairs. The RCO is a valuable resource in the community for adult players who want to continue their musical growth.

### **Adult Mentors**

Adult mentors played an important role in the lives of each participant. For the purpose of this study, an adult mentor is defined as defined as a person that an individual interacts with, and can respect, admire, and pattern his or her life after. While participants identified male, female, black and white mentors, certain traits remained consistently important. Favorable music mentors provided opportunities for their mentees, invested their time and resources, held high expectations, took on the role of big-brother/sister, and engaged in a long-term relationship with their mentees. The adult mentors identified by participants were teachers and parents.

Mentors provided participants with musical opportunities that enhanced their development. One opportunity that both Annie and Bethany referred to recurrently was when Bobby McNeill gave them the chance, in middle school, to perform with his high school orchestra. Bethany shared that this was a particularly rewarding experience for her. “In eighth grade a couple of us were chosen to audition for orchestra. So as eighth-graders we got to go over and play with the high school orchestra which was just—that was magic on a stick.” Bobby also provided performance opportunities for his students

outside of school. He formed a student quartet to rehearse and perform at community functions. Chamber playing honed their skills and the quartet gave them real life experience as professional musicians. Annie remembered the experience fondly and appreciated that they were paid as professionals. “I made more then, than I make an hour now—I’m just saying.” Another opportunity that Annie received was the chance to attend concerts with the local professional symphony. Twyla Sims and her husband were season ticket holders and if they could not make a performance, Twyla gave her tickets to Annie. Annie enjoyed the concerts, and expanded her horizons by observing musicians at the professional level.

Another characteristic of mentors is they invested their time and resources. All three participants agreed the Frankels shared this trait. Thinking it strange for people to sacrifice so much of their time, Bethany approached Mrs. Frankel and asked her motivation for helping so many of her students. She replied, “Are you trying [referring to practicing]? Are you wanting to have these experiences? I don’t have any problem with that.” James told me that Mrs. Frankel sponsored him for his state Region audition last year. Since James is home schooled, he was unable to participate unless an adult member of the state educational association agreed to serve as a sponsor. I approached Mrs. Frankel about this and she said that it cost her \$100 because she had to renew her dues with the education association and then accompany James to his audition but she was happy to do it. The Frankels still have a reputation for lending instruments and music, providing transportation, and giving free lessons to students who are eager to learn.

When a mentor had high expectations, participants felt motivated to achieve the goals set before them. Bethany comes from a musical family. Her mother was an

elementary music teacher and her father had a deep bass singing voice. Bethany remembers from an early age that her father would challenge them musically during car trips. “When we were in the car, you had to sing your part and that was from an early age. And we learned intervals. If we were on a long trip, ‘Okay, switch.’ And you have to switch parts and everything.” Annie reflected that Bobby McNeill always had high standards for his orchestra. “I mean we wanted to perform for him and we did. You know...he expected nothing but the best and we tried to give it to him.” Destiny had a similar experience with Bobby and said that he had a higher standard of achievement for her, than he did for the other students. “Mr. McNeill used to challenge me a lot. Like, he had all the kids in the orchestra playing stuff, and he would just send me off in a practice room to, like, work on a concerto or something like that.” And yet, Destiny respected Mr. McNeill for it. “I didn't think it was fair then, but now that I'm looking back on it, he challenged me a lot...with music but [also] with life.” Life lessons were common in Bobby's classroom. He was said to have an “old soul” and would often take on the role of a parent or big brother.

Throughout this study participants referred to Bobby as father or big brother figure, acting as a listener, supporter, and protector. Bobby was someone Annie and Bethany looked up to who shepherded them through tough personal situations. Annie relates how it was more difficult for her to show her report card to Bobby than it was her own parents,

On report card day--oh I hated that...because I was not a stellar student. He [Bobby] would take everybody's report card. And I mean, you had to pass it in, 'cause he'd go down the list to make sure he'd seen it. “Mm hm. Mm hm. Tsk (sigh).” And, you know, giving him my report card was worse than giving it to my parents. It's just that disappointment you'd see in his face. “Child, c'mon. You know you can do better.” And just...oh, that look and just that disappointment.

Bethany felt that Bobby served as a father figure for a number of students. “Some of us...didn't have a father in our lives at some point, while he taught us—either in middle school or high school, and he [Bobby] would just kinda step in and be that father figure for you.” Both Annie and Bethany’s parents were divorced while the girls were in high school. Bethany may have been referring to Bobby filling the role of father after her parents separated. Although Annie and Bethany seemed to have a particularly special bond as two of Bobby’s “honorary daughters,” Bethany’s mother shared how Bobby acted as a big-brother to all of his students, especially the boys on his basketball team.

He just talked to them. You know, he would just talk *to* and talk *with* them. They would confide in him. I think musicians—music teachers, particularly, with performing groups—it's just like a coach with a team. You have an opportunity to really have a bonding relationship with your students. McNeill was like that, mm hm. He was good.

For many participants, the longest lasting relationships were the most meaningful. The longest mentoring relationship for Annie and Bethany was with Bobby McNeill. He began teaching both women while they were in middle school and continued to lend support during their adulthood. Both Annie and Bethany considered Bobby part of their family.

### **Peer Support/Influence**

Based on existing literature, I anticipated that mentorship would be a predominant theme in this study. I did not, however, anticipate the prominent role of peer mentorship. A recurrent theme throughout this research is the impact that peers had in supporting and encouraging one another to participate in string music. Peers include cousins, siblings, friends at school, and young people in the community. For the purpose of this study, I

define *peer* as a person who interacted with the participant and is less than ten years apart in age.

Annie had four key peer mentors that inspired and encouraged her to pursue violin. As mentioned previously, one of her peer mentors was Derrick Sims. “I remember him starting with cello and then you just kinda knew something was different. And I can actually say I’ve played with him because his senior year at Bryant [High School] was my seventh grade year.” Annie was able to perform with Derrick because Bobby McNeill recognized Annie’s talent and allowed her to perform with his high school group when she was in seventh grade. In addition to playing with Derrick, joining the high school orchestra put Annie in contact with Amanda and Ayesha who played a supportive and protective role as older students. “When I started at Bryant, they [Amanda and Ayesha] were, ooh, they were the big kids.” Amanda and Ayesha graduated a few years ahead of Annie and enrolled in the music school at the local university. During Annie’s senior All-State audition, Amanda, Ayesha, and another Bryant High graduate supported her. Annie did not place well and felt disappointed. “When they [the older students] came and saw the seating—I’ll never forget—Amanda’s mouth just fell open. She was like, ‘What happened!?’ Because Amanda knew me.” Annie also made frequent mention of Rachel, an older student in Derrick’s class who inspired her. “Rachel was just kinda my idol because she was the Girl Scout supreme and a violinist.” Annie admired both her performance ability as well as her character.

Bethany’s best friend, Lisa, was a key peer influence in her musical development. Bethany and Lisa met in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and remain close as adults. Bobby called Bethany and Lisa “Heckle and Jeckle” because of their friendship and mutual interest in string music.

They played violin together in school, youth orchestra, and All-state. They practiced their orchestra music together and played first and second violin in their high school string quartet. Lisa went on to become a doctor rather than pursue music; however, she continues to support Bethany. At the first concert of the RCO season, Bethany grabbed me and introduced me to Lisa—she had brought her family out to support Bethany’s performance.

James’s greatest peer influence is his cousin, Destiny. Destiny had high expectations of James and would make him practice his violin to her satisfaction. James’s mother would tell Destiny where he was having trouble and she would take him in a room to practice. “She’d make him play it ‘til he got it right...she didn’t take any excuses from him.” James spoke about Destiny’s playing with admiration. “So I remember back at Community Strings watching her and RJ [a friend of Destiny’s]. I used to go early a lot of time to my rehearsal—my orchestra—just to listen to them practice.” Destiny also encouraged James to join the RCO. Even though James had private teachers through Community Strings, he and his parents agree that Destiny had a more lasting influence in his development as a musician.

During a focus group with the three primary participants, I solicited suggestions for encouraging African-Americans to participate in string music. All agreed that peer mentorship is important. Annie said it helped for her to see older students in the local youth orchestra excelling in music. “I started youth orchestra, the string orchestra, my sixth grade year. And so, in addition to seeing other kids on string orchestra who could do weird stuff, I had also watched the full orchestra do things. And so that was neat.” Bethany agreed, and added that for her, being in a mixed-level orchestra class in middle

school was significant. “As a sixth grader, I was in a class with eighth graders who could do vibrato and they could shift and everything. So I never had any fear of that.” Seeing older students attempting difficult technical passages encouraged her to experiment. James emphasized the value of having mentors close in age. “People need mentors, someone to push them along when they...don't feel like doing it anymore, or just to help them along.” I asked if he was referring to a parent and he clarified that it should be “someone that's maybe a couple years above you and has been there.” All three participants responded confidently that peer mentorship could be a major factor in helping young African-Americans to play string instruments and overcoming the stigma that string music is not something for African-Americans.

### **Parental Support**

Annie, Bethany, James, and Destiny cited numerous ways their parents encouraged them to pursue a string instrument. I was able to interview both of James's parents as well as Annie and Bethany's mothers, and found that these relationships were loving, encouraging, respectful and supportive. One way parents show support of their children is by attending their musical performances. Through the interview process and observations at RCO concerts, I came to appreciate that all the participant's parents made the commitment to attend their children's concerts. Annie related to me that her mom and dad attended every one of her performances growing up. Whether it was a Community Strings recital, a high school concert or a Youth Orchestra concert, her parents were in the audience. It was not until she attended college, over 200 miles from home, that her parents missed a performance. “The first time I had a concert without parents there was my freshman year...And it was kinda strange like, *Hm. No Mom and Dad. This is weird.*”

While both of Annie's parents made an effort to attend concerts, Bethany's mother was her primary supporter. Tandie even attended three or four of Bethany's college performances. Annie and Bethany's mothers continue to support their daughters by attending RCO concerts, frequently sitting together. When I mentioned to Annie's mother that I enjoyed seeing her and Tandie at a recent performance, she responded, "I don't feel like there's another choice...If your children are participating, you go." Of the three RCO concerts I attended, I also saw at least one of James's parents in the audience for each concert. Destiny's experience mimics Annie's. She shared that both of her parents attended all of her concerts growing up and continue to support her in college.

Destiny: We just had a concert on Monday and my family came up there and supported me.

Interviewer: I can see from the things you're telling me that your parents were very supportive of you.

Destiny: Yes! They go everywhere...Even when I don't want 'em to go. They're very supportive.

In addition to having parents attend concerts, the participants' parents invested their financial and emotional support.

Participation in string music can be expensive. The parents I interviewed not only funded their children's instruments, but also private lessons, participation in Community Strings, membership dues for the youth orchestra, school music trips, accompanists for recitals, and music books. Some parents had greater financial resources than others, but all of the parents gave what they could to support their children's involvement in string music.

Throughout her interviews, Annie spoke highly of her parents and mentioned numerous ways they provided for her. They supported whatever activities interested her (including dance, theater and Girl Scouts), so when Annie demonstrated talent and



enthusiasm with the violin, her parents provided opportunities for to attend orchestral concerts. Annie fondly remembers her first concert experience. “They did a concert at the zoo and I was so excited...and I was such a nerd I had my dad buy one of the concert posters...I had it hanging in my room for the longest time.” Annie’s parents were equally supportive of her brother’s pursuit of string music. Annie’s mother, Diana, shared a humorous story of the lengths she would go to in order to transport her son and one of his friends to orchestra rehearsal every week. Diana’s son played the bass while his friend played viola, so Diana had to fit herself, two boys, and their instruments in her car. “You put it [the bass] across—roll the window down and you put it in and you stick one little part outta the window...Hopefully it won't rain. We did that for...three years.” Both Annie and Bethany had younger siblings who participated in string music. Bethany’s mother mentioned that it was common for all the children in a family to participate in Community Strings together.

Destiny described her father as an encouraging man. When I asked why he urged Eugene to allow James to play violin, she replied,

My dad doesn't like to see kids discouraged. So, like, if a child wants to play the banjo, if they really, really wanna play it, and their parents say, “No, you're not gonna play the banjo. It's a banjo.” He'll say, “You're gonna let that child play the banjo 'cause what if that changes their whole life?”

Destiny’s parents were also encouraging for her. When she started playing the violin and listening to classical music, they listened with her. When Destiny entered high school and it became evident that she would major in music, her parents allowed her to receive extra instruction in music theory during the summer.

Music is a major time-commitment. Participants frequently referred to music activities and the dedication of their parents, driving back and forth to lessons, rehearsals

and concerts. Tandie had three daughters who participated in string music—Bethany and her two younger sisters. Tandie sacrificed six evenings a week to bring them to practice. “We had one year when I went down to [the university] every day except Saturday...But yeah, it was interesting. Hoooo! That was...a lot of time that you put in.” James stopped participating in both Community Strings and the RCO his junior year of high school because he didn’t have enough time to focus on his other school subjects. “I was getting about 5 hours of violin each week,” over three days of rehearsals. While the availability of string programs in elementary school was a significant factor in the participants’ initial interest in strings, these musicians would not have been able to grow beyond school programs without their parent’s long-term support and willingness to invest in their development.

### **Adaptive Behavior**

All participants in this study had exposure to white culture in their childhood and developed adaptive behaviors. For the purpose of this study, *code switching* refers to the ability of African-Americans to speak bi-dialectally, switching between Standard English and Black English depending on the social context (DeBose, 1992). The three primary participants as well as Destiny shared the necessity of adjusting their behavior in different social settings. Annie and Bethany said that they learned the term *code switching* in college. James and Destiny were unaware of the term, but articulated their awareness of how they alter their speech and behavior in different contexts. The participant’s exposure to, and comfort with white culture in childhood may have prepared them to participate in the predominantly white orchestral environment as adults.

Of the participants, Annie seemed most comfortable in diverse situations. Diana expressed that her husband tried to provide their children with an assimilated upbringing, “you know, 'cause he [Annie’s father] didn't work in a world separated. He worked in a very integrated world.” Annie affirmed her mother’s statement, “Dad was just... he was the one who just pushed doing stuff with other folks—and that's a good thing.” This led to Annie becoming equally comfortable in either black or white settings. In her predominantly white women’s college, she primarily spent time with white students. And a lot of people will say, “Annie, you know, sometimes I forget you're black.” I'm like, “I know.” Even at [college] I generally hung with white students.” Annie shows awareness of how others perceive her. The only time she spoke dialectically was when imitating a family member. Annie consciously alters her speech when interacting with “urban black people” in her job as an EMT, yet she prefers to speak otherwise.

Bethany had exposure to white culture in her early childhood as well. Her elementary school “was just a big mixture” of black and white students. When transferring to an all-black school in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Bethany had difficulty. “I had major cultural differences trying to adjust from a, ah, I don’t know, a mixed situation to...an all-black school.” The other children found her mannerisms confusing, “Why are you dressed like that? Why do you have on tennis shoes with your skirt? Why do you have on this? Why are you doing this?” Bethany shared that it took her about a year to adjust and establish friends at the new school. She continued to attend all-black public schools until college. When faced with the decision of where to attend, Bethany determined to challenge herself and enroll in a predominantly white women’s college.

I said, “I think in order to be able to get along in the real world I want to go to something opposite of what I’ve experienced for most of my life”...So I’ve been

a majority and I've been a minority and I kinda learned some different things, some coping mechanisms and whatever else.

Bethany demonstrated courage in assessing which college environment would benefit her the most. She is aware that she adjusts her speech in certain situations to be more "formal" at times, but likes when she can relax and be herself.

James seamlessly adjusts interactional styles. I have observed him in RCO rehearsals speaking casually and dialectically with African-Americans his own age and more formally a few moments later with Euro-American adults. James's father is a pastor and while James's home church is all black, his father frequently speaks at white churches and brings his family along. During my first interview with James and Eugene, Eugene commented that "the churches we go to, usually we [are the] only blacks." James added that he is "used to getting along with different races and different groups of people." In an interview with James, Destiny and James's sister, they described the pressure they experience to adapt at school. James and his sister are the only two black students in a regional home school group.

James: So it's basically me and her [his sister], the only two black kids there, so you have to learn to, like, kinda filter what you're sayin'.

Sister: If...I talk regularly, they won't understand.

James: Exactly.

Interviewer: Really?

Rachel: I've tried that and they be like, "Huh?"

Destiny: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

Sister: You have to, like, say it clear.

James: Clear, and in their terms, so.

Interviewer: Like, in white-people terms?

James: Mm hm.

James is comfortable with multiple interactional styles and enjoys speaking with people from different backgrounds. One of the reasons he enjoys participating in orchestras is that he likes “meeting different people.”

In order to succeed in an integrated world, the participants in this study have learned to adapt their speech and behavior to receive acceptance in white environments. In some instances their parents have promoted exposure to white culture, in other instances it was a conscious choice by the participants. Developing a diverse set of interactional styles has made it possible for these participants to fit comfortably in the orchestral environment. Although the RCO has more African-American participants than most orchestras (an average of 19% during the 2012-13 season) it remains predominantly white. The fact that every participant recognizes the necessity of his or her own adaptive behaviors suggests that for African-Americans to participate in the predominantly white orchestral field, they must feel comfortable with white cultural norms.

### **Involvement in Church Music**

The church holds a prominent position in African-American society. It has a long history of use as a political vehicle (Harris-Lacewell, 2007) as well as a center for community support (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The participants in this study all attend black churches in Riverland with strong music programs. During the focus group interview participants agreed that the church has not only been important to their own musical development, but also as a means of reinforcing the importance of music in general, “So church plays a big role...saying, ‘You don’t have to do [music] as a career, but you need to see how important it is.’” While the style of music and worship in each of

the participant's churches is distinct, all study participants agreed that the church has been foundational to their musical development.

Annie's church has provided a breadth of musical opportunities throughout her life. The music is primarily based in the classical music tradition with only a moderate gospel influence. At a recent Christmas service, I observed performances by the adult choir and bell choir with guest vocal and instrumental soloists (Annie performed as a violin soloist and member of the bell choir). Her church also has an active youth choir and men's gospel quartet. Annie's father sang as a member of the gospel quartet when he was alive. He called the other men "The Pips" and they referred to him as "Gladys." Annie said this made sense because he "was kinda the diva of the group." Annie's mother mentioned that the adult choir has not been as strong since Twyla Sims retired. I, however, observed a vibrant choir that sang anthems in four-part harmony. Both of Annie's parents participated in the church choir when Annie was young, giving her exposure to live music and inspiring her to join the children's choir. "I couldn't wait to join the choir...every Wednesday night was adult choir rehearsal, and my brother and I had to go...and play with the other kids. That was just a part of our life." During high school Annie played in her church's orchestra (no longer active) and also joined the bell choir, an atypical group for most African-American churches. Her enjoyment of bell choir music has continued into adulthood and, in addition to playing in church, she is the only black member of an advanced community bell choir.

Bethany's church experiences mirror Annie's in a number of ways. Bethany's mother recounted memories of "dragging" Bethany to church choir practices because she was the church pianist. Bethany received exposure to choral music at an early age and

grew accustomed to hearing her mother play the piano. Like Annie, Bethany also received performance opportunities in church. When Bethany was younger her church showcased the talent of their young people and giving her valuable experience performing in a safe environment. Bethany received her first regularly paid music job through church. When one of her peer mentors (a pianist at church) graduated from high school, Bethany inherited her job as the Sunday school pianist. She was required to prepare hymns for class each week with at least the bass and soprano lines covered. Bethany felt that these church experiences helped better prepare her for a career as a music educator.

Attending James's church challenged my perceptions of black church music. His church offers primarily gospel music and spirituals; however, the music is presented in a way that I had not been familiar with. The pastor, James's father, would call on a parishioner to share a song. That person would then walk to the front of the church and sing a capella into a microphone. The job of the keyboard player and organist was then to determine the song as well as the key and to accompany the singer. James's church demonstrates an oral tradition, where musicians play and sing everything by ear.

James's church provides him with opportunities to experiment and playing multiple instruments. During the service I attended James played the drum set, and said that sometimes he plays organ and keyboard as well—none of which are his primary instrument. His church offers him a nurturing environment to experiment with other instruments. His experiences in church have also helped him develop improvisational skill and the ability to play by ear.

## **Valuing Education**

Education is a core value of Annie's family as evidenced by the education level of family members and the obstacles they overcame to achieve their educational goals. Her paternal grandfather completed his high school education by walking ten miles to school (each way). To ensure that his children would graduate from high school he moved his family into a house directly across the street from a school. Annie said that this "was very important to him—that his kids wouldn't have to walk and they were able to get an education." Both of Annie's parents completed their undergraduate degrees. They met at a HBCU where Annie's mother received her undergraduate degree in education. Historically black colleges and universities, HBCUs, are institutions established before 1964 to serve the higher educational needs of the black community. Annie's father was unable to complete his degree at that time due to family health concerns, so he transferred to a technical school in Riverland where he was the first African-American to graduate. According to Annie, "he was the only black student in this inaugural class. He was...a little nervous. You know, they asked if he wanted some police protection." After achieving her undergraduate degree, Annie's mother obtained her Master's in Education from another HBCU and continued taking coursework at a predominantly white university, obtaining a specialist degree in education. Annie began her college career at a prestigious women's college, but never completed her degree. Though she has not yet received her bachelor's degree, she took additional courses at a medical college and currently works as an EMT. She describes her family as educated and feels that her friends in high school also came from educated families. Bethany was part of Annie's circle of friends with "educated parents."



Bethany comes from a family of educators. When nearing graduation from high school Bethany was presented with the question of *where* she planned to attend college, rather than *if* she planned to attend. She received her undergraduate degree from a predominantly white women's college (a different college than the one Annie attended) and her master's degree from a regional HBCU—the same university her mother and grandmother attended. Bethany expressed interest in carrying on the family tradition and attending her mother's alma mater for her undergraduate degree, but the school did not offer orchestra. For Bethany that was a determining factor. The availability of a quality orchestra was her primary concern in selecting a college. "I wanted to do orchestra...[the HBCU] didn't have orchestra." Bethany's family members share her commitment to education.

The level of education among Bethany's family members is considerable, especially considering that desegregation had not started in the southeast United States until the 1960s, around the time her parents entered college. Bethany's parents met in Laurelton while her mother was working on her master's degree and her father attended a military university. Bethany's father was part of the first class of African-Americans allowed to attend the military academy. Rather than attend a HBCU after high school, Bethany's father first entered the Air Force and waited until the military academy desegregated to enroll in college. Bethany's parents passed this value onto their three daughters, all of whom are educators with master's degrees.

James's educational background is unique in that he was primarily home schooled. Although Eugene did not graduate from college, he wanted his children to receive a quality Christian education. James and his sister attended a private Christian

school from kindergarten through fifth grade and have been home schooled ever since. To supplement his coursework at home, James attends classes at a regional home school facility where he takes honors-level courses. James is proud of the fact that he takes honors classes and plans to attend the local, predominantly white university once he graduates.

One theory exploring the connection between a person's education level and interest in arts activities is *cultural omnivorousness* (Mark, 2003). This theory suggests that there is a positive relationship between education level and the number of cultural forms people enjoy (DiMaggio, 1987; Erickson, 1996). Individuals that are more educated tend to like both popular culture and high art more so than those with lower education levels. This may explain why these study participants became involved in string music. According to Bethany's mother, the availability of the string program in Riverland elementary schools "fascinated a lot of African-American parents who were educators." Annie noticed that her peers in orchestra came from educated families. "Most of the kids who were on, particularly the orchestra, had parents who were um, either educated, you know, at least had the high school education or if not beyond, or you know, hard workers, that kind of thing." The high education level of these participant's parents may have led them to be more receptive to a cultural activity that lacked a connection to their experiences. None of the parents played string instruments, yet they supported their children's involvement.

### **Intrinsic Motivation**

One criterion for selecting participants in this study is that they are volunteer players with the RCO, suggesting that they are intrinsically motivated to participate

(Amabile, 1993). The participants and their family members made numerous comments concerning the player's enjoyment in being involved in orchestras. From their first exposure to string instruments as children to their continual involvement in orchestra, the participants all shared insights into their motivation for playing.

As previously mentioned, Annie showed exuberance when first given the opportunity to play the violin. Her mother commented that when Annie was a child she practiced even being monitored. "My take on it is, if you wanna be good, you have to practice. But I am not gonna force you to practice...So, I just never made her." Annie's motivation continued through high school where she says she was "married" to her violin. "In high school my violin was my best friend. You know, during lunch if I didn't feel like hanging out with some of the other folks I'd go and practice." As an adult Annie continues to play for the psychological benefits, "I need to play for my sanity." After living in Laurelton where she had not played violin for a few years, Annie moved back to Riverland and subsequently joined the RCO. "When I came back here [to Riverland] there was still...there was something missing. I've heard people describe a 'God-shaped' hole. Well, I had God. Maybe not enough, but then I realized it was a 'violin-shaped' hole." Annie clarified that it is not enough to perform occasionally in church or practice on her own. Her greatest musical enjoyment comes from performing as part of an orchestra.

Although Bethany works in the music field as high school orchestra director in Riverland, she continues to voluntarily perform with the RCO. Her love for music was evident from early childhood. Bethany's mother encouraged her to experiment on the piano and attributes Bethany's initial interest from always having "music in the house."

In addition to playing violin, her primary instrument, Bethany sang in her school choir and was proficient enough to make the All-State choir in high school. In middle school she wanted to take another instrument (in addition to the violin); however, her financial situation prevented it. Bethany sought opportunities to learn beyond what was offered in her music classes. In elementary school she asked Mrs. Sims for help with piano and continued to play piano, “just for fun,” through high school. For Bethany, music is not just her profession, but her passion as well.

James displayed interest in playing the violin from his first exposure at the age of four. He participated in Community Strings for nearly a decade and anticipates that he will continue to play in college. When I asked him to describe how important it is for him to play James responded that he sees it as “Somethin’ I do for fun.” After attending one RCO rehearsal in 2011, James asked if he could play with the group and was warmly received by the Frankels. For James, as well as the other participants, playing the violin is an activity that brings him enjoyment.

## **Conclusion**

The predominant theme tying subtopics together is the importance of meaningful community connections. When I initially began the coding process, I considered a community connection to be a coincidental relationship between the participants and the broader African-American music community. As I continued to analyze the relationships and their importance, I found that these connections created support systems amid families, friends, churches, schools, and community music groups. Bobby McNeill, for example, touched a broad segment of the music community and continues to influencing a second generation of African-American musicians. Bobby was instrumental in founding

the RCO and recruiting players from among his former students. The friendly and relaxed atmosphere of the group is welcoming to players of diverse backgrounds and brought Annie, Bethany, and James together. Annie shared how she still hears his voice during RCO rehearsal and wears her high school ring to honor him at every concert. She carries his picture in her wallet and had it laminated to prevent damage. Bethany honors Bobby's legacy by sewing into the lives of her students. During our second interview, I had the privilege of meeting Mia, one of her orchestra students. Mia does not fit in socially with her peers, so Bethany finds ways to encourage her, "When I find something that we have in common I'll say it out loud, 'Okay, we must be related because we like this that and the other.'" Bethany treats her like a little sister and referred to Mia as her "honorary I-don't-know-what," emulating some of the same mentoring traits she saw in Bobby. Most striking to me throughout this process, was the realization that one person can have such a positive impact within a community that the results last for generations.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The problem of low African-American participation in orchestral music is well-documented (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990; Iyengar et al., 2009; Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011). While there has been interest in the subject of diversity in orchestras, very little qualitative research exists exploring this trend. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that motivate African-American musicians to begin and maintain involvement in orchestral music. The research question guiding this study was, “Are there common themes in the lives of African-American musicians that contribute to their sustained involvement in classical, orchestral music?” To better grasp the complexities of the question, I conducted a case study of three African-American musicians participating in a volunteer community orchestra. In this chapter I provide a discussion of the results in the context of existing literature and contains suggestions for further study.

I constructed this study through an *interpretivist* lens, searching to understand the perceptions of Annie, James, and Bethany through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. Based on preliminary research, the interviews centered on the subjects of educational background, mentorship, and family and cultural influences. In many ways, the results support and expand current research and offer interesting alternative views.

## **Education**

According to Novak-Leonard and Brown, “arts education in childhood is the most significant predictor of...personal arts creation throughout the rest of a person’s life” (2011, p. 5). To further explore this trend, the NEA funded a study investigating the connection between arts education and adult consumers of the arts titled, “Arts education in America: What the declines mean for arts participation” (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). This study confirmed that arts education in childhood may act as a gateway to adult participation; according to the NEA study, children who received an arts education were more likely to participate in arts lessons as adults and attend arts performances.

The Riverland School District has a strong orchestra program. Founded in 1973 with funding from a national arts grant, Riverland is perceived as “a state leader in involving African-American students in orchestra music” (Riverland School District Honors Orchestra program insert). Riverland is primarily an urban school district with 15 orchestra teachers serving 7 high schools, 9 middle schools, and 28 elementary schools. The district has been designated one of America’s Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation (NAMM) (Riverland School District Honors Orchestra program insert). In addition to general music classes, elementary school students were allowed to participate in orchestra and chorus.

During a focus group, I asked participants what motivated them to begin playing a string instrument, and Annie and Bethany cited their school string programs. They took general music classes in elementary school and began playing the violin in fourth and fifth grade, respectively. In both cases, the girls were offered the opportunity to learn a

string instrument as an alternative to taking a general music class. In both cases, they continue to play through adulthood.

Although James did not participate in a formal school music program, his interest in string music began through a school connection and he continues to participate through community groups. James attended a private school until fifth grade and has been home schooled since. During the interview process, James did not mention taking music classes in elementary school; however, he developed an interest in the violin after hearing another student perform. James asked his parents to let him learn to play the violin when he was four. Although reluctant at first, they eventually allowed him to take private and group string classes at Community Strings, a local music program connected to the university. James began his formal music training at eight, and continues to play through high school.

Education level can affect arts involvement. Research has shown that people with higher levels of education are more likely to attend arts performances (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990; Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011). In the case of those involved in this study, however, I found that most attendance at music events was in support of a family member. Although the participants came from educated families, they rarely attended classical performances unrelated to their own musical involvement. On the other hand, I found that these participants came from educated families and were receptive to classical music. People with high levels of education tend to be more tolerant of “cultural forms disproportionately liked by members of ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups” (Mark, 2003, p. 321). The participants in this study had parents who pursued college degrees and were supportive of their children’s interest in string music. Annie



commented that her friends in high school orchestra had educated parents (at least high school degrees). This theory is known as *cultural omnivorousness*.

Education is a core family value for study participants. The participant's mothers all have college degrees, with two of the mothers holding masters' degrees. Annie and Bethany's fathers graduated from predominantly white colleges amid racial tensions in the south. This pursuit of higher educational degrees may have led the participant's parents to be more receptive to their children's interest in string music, an art form unfamiliar to their culture. Bethany's mother, Tandie, shared that the string program in the public schools, "really fascinated a lot of... African-American parents who were educators, who didn't have the opportunity—you know, I didn't—to study strings. It was just a great opportunity." Annie noticed that among her orchestral peers, many of them came from educated families. Conversely, James's father, who only received his high school diploma, was reluctant to allow James to play the violin. He had concerns that James might develop into a homosexual. He explained, "I came up, you know, from the ghetto, football and stuff like that. You know...you can't go that way." His response reinforces a second aspect of *cultural omnivorousness*, that marginalized groups and minorities are less likely to participate in unfamiliar arts activities. It took the positive influence of James's mother and uncle to convince his father to allow James to play.

### **Mentorship**

Mentorship was the most frequently cited theme throughout this study. Participants often spoke of the importance of having positive music mentors to guide and encourage them. This supports Hamann and Walker's findings regarding the importance of music teachers as role models for African-American students (1993). Among 811

African-American students, music teachers were the most commonly cited role models. Bethany's mother, a music educator, suggested that music teachers are in a unique position to bond with their students. "I think musicians (music teachers, particularly), with performing groups...it's just like a coach with a team. You have an opportunity to really have a bonding relationship with your students." The participants referenced numerous music mentors including parents, teachers, and church music leaders.

One particular mentor, Bobby McNeill, had a profound impact on Annie and Bethany. Bobby referred to them as "honorary daughters" and taught them from middle school through high school. He guided Annie through emotional challenges and helped Bethany discover her own calling as a music educator. Bobby continued to maintain a relationship with both women until his death in 2010.

Mentors of any ethnicity may positively influence young people, however, according to Hamann and Walker (1993) mentors of the same ethnic background are more important for African-American youth. Results from this study confirm this finding in some ways and contradict it in others. Bobby McNeill was an African-American mentor who had a profound impact on his students and surrounding community. Throughout the interviews, participants referred to him as a father-figure to his students, and suggested that the kids in Riverland were in need of a strong male mentor. Bethany said, "Some of us...didn't have a father in our lives at some point while he taught us—either in middle school or high school, and he would just kinda step in and be that father figure for you."

One of Bobby's students, Derrick Sims (African-American) became a successful cellist and taught at a state women's college. Both Bethany and James's cousin (Destiny)

attended this same college and shared that they felt it was important to have him as a professor in the music department and role model for black students. For Bethany, “it meant a lot to have him on campus.”

In contrast to Hamann and Walker’s findings (1993), there were numerous instances of participants citing white music mentors as significant to their development. Annie’s first string teacher was a white woman, Ms. Fisher, who continued to support Annie through high school. Ms. Fisher was one of the first orchestra directors in Riverland School District 1 and conducted one of the local youth orchestras. Annie shared that after Bobby, Ms. Fisher was her second most important musical influence. The Frankels, a white couple who taught in Riverland School District 1 mentored Bethany and Destiny. Bethany said that the Frankels were the first white people she met that treated all their students the same. The Frankels invited children into their home and often took students on music-related field trips. Destiny said that Mary Frankel was her greatest music mentor. When I asked James about his teachers, he also cited a white woman as his favorite music mentor. These results in no way minimize the importance of African-American role models; however, for participants in this study, the most important qualities in a mentor was their dedication and love for their students. The Frankels were able to break racial boundaries and have such a positive influence in the African-American music community.

### **Family/Society Influences**

The principal of *homophily* suggests that people with similar interests and backgrounds are more likely to form social ties than those with dissimilar backgrounds (Mark, 2003). Such network ties create the foundation for cultural tastes (Erickson, 1996;

Kandel, 1978). These cultural indicators, then, become social boundaries by which communities establish their identities (Katz-Gerro, 2002). In the current study, I found that community support was the overarching theme tying the research together.

Social network ties played a key role in the participant's exposure to and continued involvement in string music. Connections between families, friends, churches, schools and community music groups formed a system of support throughout the African-American music community. Within this system, families looked after each other's children, music teachers built trusting relationships with parents, churches gave string students opportunities to perform, and community members worked together to support African-American children interested in string music.

Research has shown that arts preferences are greatly influenced by family culture (Cavalli-Sforza et al., 1982; Hebdige, 1979; Smith, 1985). The cultural preferences of parents rub off on their children. Annie, Bethany, and James's parents were highly supportive of their involvement in orchestral music. They dedicated their time and financial resources to transporting children to lessons and rehearsals, purchasing instruments, and attending performances, even though none of the parents played string instruments.

People are more likely to be receptive to a new cultural idea if it already has a connection to their values and cultural tastes (Mark, 2003). Although none of the participant's parents played string instruments, they all valued classical music. In nearly every instance the parents sang or played the piano, and participated in their churches music programs.

The church holds a prominent position in African-American society and has long been a center of community support (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Participants shared that involvement in church music helped them develop musically. Annie grew up singing in her church's children's choir and playing in the bell choir. During high school she participated in a church orchestra (no longer active) and continues to accompany the adult choir on violin. Bethany shared how her church provided opportunities for her to perform solos in a nurturing environment. She learned how to deal with performance anxiety by playing in front of a supportive community of friends and family. James plays multiple instruments in his church including drum set, organ, and keyboard. His musical experiences in church have helped him develop improvisation skills and the ability to play by ear. While the influence of church music confirms the overall importance of community support, it may be worth specifically exploring how the church supports young African-American musicians.

Adult learning opportunities contribute to improved quality of life (Boswell, 1992). According to the NEA *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (Iyengar et al., 2009) personal performance of classical music increased from 1.8 percent of the adult population in 2002 to 3.1 percent in 2008 (nearly 7 million adults). Adults who have played instruments in high school are "exploring performing opportunities through whatever instrumental...ensembles they can find" (Boswell, 1992). The meaningful music connections in the Riverland Community led to the creation of the RCO. The founders, Mr. and Mrs. Frankel, formed the orchestral with the intention of welcoming local players of any ethnicity. Orchestra members include community members as well as teachers and graduates from the Riverland public schools. Annie considers playing with

the RCO a form of therapy. She believes that playing on a regular basis as part of the group helps her find emotional balance in other parts of her life. For Bethany, the RCO gives her a chance to enjoy music in a relaxed atmosphere. James participates with the RCO because playing the violin is his pastime and he enjoys the social benefit of meeting new and interesting people. Without the RCO, these participants may not have continued their orchestral involvement beyond school.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited in that it focuses on the lives of three particular African-American musicians in the Southeast United States and the results are not generalizable to the broader population. I recruited the three primary participants because of their sustained involvement with the RCO and their interest in the study. Ideally, I would have liked to interview more subjects with a broader age range and set of life experiences. Annie and Bethany had very similar childhood experiences, having attended the same high school and graduating one year apart. James's perspective added contrast by virtue of his age and gender; however, I would have liked at least one more male perspective. Also, due to time constraints I was only able to make formal observations for 22 weeks.

### **Future Research**

A unique finding of this study, and an area for further research is the role of peer mentorship in helping minority musicians maintain involvement in orchestral music. During a focus group with Annie, Bethany, and James, I asked the participants suggestions for encouraging African-Americans to participate in orchestras. They all agreed that peer mentorship is essential, and shared from their experiences how peers encouraged their musical development. Annie said that seeing older students in youth

orchestra playing challenging music inspired her to do the same. She also received encouragement and emotional support from the older players in her high school orchestra. After placing poorly during an All-State audition, the older students rallied to support her. As a music teacher, Bethany sees the benefit of placing students of varying ability together in the same class. She feels that this exposure helps the younger students overcome the fear of trying new things such as shifting or vibrato. James's cousin, Destiny, is a prime example of a peer mentor, pushing James to do his best and encouraging him to join the RCO. Three years his senior, Destiny tutored James on his playing. James admired Destiny's musicianship and frequently attended her recitals and school performances. This study revealed that these relationships may be significant in helping African-American children to maintain involvement in orchestral music. As James put it, "People need [peer] mentors, someone to push them along when they...don't feel like doing it anymore, or just to help them along."

Another suggestion for further research concerns the adaptive behaviors participants demonstrated in order to interact comfortably in predominantly white, orchestral environments. All participants in this study had exposure to white culture in their childhood and developed the ability to *code switch*, or speak bi-dialectally, alternating between Standard English and Black English (DeBose, 1992). The participants have each developed a sophisticated set of interactional styles. Annie's parents intentionally exposed her to multiple cultures to help her succeed in an integrated world. She is equally comfortable in black or white settings and shared with me that four of her five best friends are white. Bethany took it upon herself to enter a predominantly white women's college after graduating from an all-black high school. She wanted to

develop the skills to “get along in the real world,” and felt it important to experience a predominantly white setting. James, the youngest participant, seamlessly adjusts interactional style. He uses Standard English around his white classmates and teachers and Black English at home and with his family. One of the reasons James enjoys participating in orchestras is because he likes meeting people from different backgrounds. The implication of this finding may be significant. For African-Americans to feel comfortable in the predominantly white orchestral environment, this may require familiarity with white culture and the ability to adjust interactional styles.

### **Implications**

While there has been interest in the subject of diversity in orchestras, very little qualitative research has been developed exploring the topic. An online discussion hosted by Polyphonic.org in 2007 invited a panel of diversity experts throughout the United States to tackle some of the more pressing issues surrounding orchestral diversity. Questions challenged the current lack of diversity, orchestral hiring practices, and the responsibility of orchestras to help diversify the pool of qualified candidates. While such questions are complex and difficult to answer, it is clear that the subject of diversity ranks highly among orchestral musicians and administrators.

In this study, I found that the predominant theme is the importance of a supportive community. For all participants, social network ties played a key role in their exposure to string music and the support they received participating in orchestras. Connections between teachers, students, local support organizations, and families laid the foundation for them to begin and maintain involvement with string music. The lack of diversity in orchestras will not be solved by changing tenure policies or focusing on one myopic



issue, but rather creating supportive musical communities with connections between schools, families, and music organizations. Likewise, for African-American children to succeed as orchestral musicians, it requires the presence of parents, educators, and community members, dedicated to supporting their musical growth.

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## APPENDIX A – Adult Consent Form for Primary Participants

The following consent form was signed by adult primary participants prior to interviews.

### **Consent Form**

*Study Title: **Orchestral Perceptions***

Principal Investigator: Kimberly Williams

#### **Introduction and Purpose**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kimberly Williams. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina's School of Music, and I am conducting research as part of the requirements for my DMA in Orchestral Conducting. The purpose of the study is to investigate the factors that influence a person's decision to join an orchestra. This form explains what you will be asked to do if you decide to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask any questions you like before you make a decision about participating.

#### **Description of Study Procedures**

You will be asked to complete three brief interviews and one focus group. This is an opportunity for you to engage in a meaningful discussion about factors that positively and negatively influenced your decision to participate in an orchestra. The interviews will last approximately 30 minutes, and will be digitally recorded. You will then be provided with a transcript of each interview so that you may clarify your responses. Your interviews will be kept confidential—no one else will have access to your responses.

#### **Risks of Participation**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research except the slight risk of breach of confidentiality, which remains despite steps that will be taken to protect your privacy. Study information will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked facility. Your confidentiality will be protected at all costs. The results of this study may be published or presented at meetings, but your identity will not be revealed unless you have given me written permission to include your name/identifying information in the report.

#### **Benefits of Participation**

Taking part in this study will help me understand the key factors that promote a diverse orchestral atmosphere. By participating in the interview, you will help shed light on the importance of mentorship, school programs, a supportive family environment, and/or any other factors that positively influenced your decision to make playing in an orchestra part of your life. As a token of appreciation, you will also receive a \$10 Target gift card at the end of your interview.

#### **Contact Persons**

For more information concerning this research, you may contact me, Kimberly Sullivan at (803) 767-5102, or email [kim@scphilharmonic.com](mailto:kim@scphilharmonic.com). You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Gail Barnes at (803) 777-3389 or email [gbarnes@sc.edu](mailto:gbarnes@sc.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: Thomas Coggins, Director, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, Phone - (803) 777-7095, Fax - (803) 576-5589, E-Mail - [tcoggins@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:tcoggins@mailbox.sc.edu).

#### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason, without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept confidential.

I have read and understand the contents of this consent form, and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study, although I have been told that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. I have received a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX B – Parental Consent and Student Assent Form

The following consent form was signed by the primary participant who is under 18 years of age, and one of his parents.

### **Parental Consent and Student Assent Form**

*Study Title: Orchestral Perceptions*

Your son/daughter is invited to participate in a study of his/her participation in orchestras. My name is Kimberly Williams and I am a doctoral student at The University of South Carolina's School of Music. As part of my dissertation, I will be conducting interviews with members of the Columbia Community Orchestra. This study looks at the factors that influence a person's decision to join an orchestra. I am asking for permission to include your son/daughter in this study because in order to get a well-rounded perspective, I want to include orchestra members of all ages. I expect to have 3 participants in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, he/she and I will meet three times to speak about his/her experiences. I will first give your child a survey, and then ask questions about both positive and negative experiences in orchestras.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your son/daughter will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name in any written or verbal report of this research project.

Your decision to allow your son/daughter to participate will not affect his/her present, or future relationship with The University of South Carolina, or the Columbia Community Orchestra. If you have any questions about the study, please ask me now. If you have any questions later, call me at (803) 767-5102. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Gail Barnes at (803) 777-3389 or email [gbarnes@sc.edu](mailto:gbarnes@sc.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, contact: Thomas Coggins, Director, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, Phone - (803) 777-7095, Fax - (803) 576-5589, E-Mail - [tcoggins@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:tcoggins@mailbox.sc.edu).

You may keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

**For Parents:** By signing this consent form, you are allowing your son/daughter to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your son/daughter to participate in the study, simply tell me. You may discontinue his/her participation at any time.

**For Minor:** I have read the description of the study in this form, and I have been told what the procedures are and what I will be asked to do in this study. Any questions I had have been answered. I have received permission from my parent(s) to participate in the study, and I agree to participate in it. I know that I can quit the study at any time.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Minor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Minor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C – Adult Consent form for Secondary Participants

The following consent form was signed by adult, secondary participants, prior to interviews.

### **Consent Form**

*Study Title: Orchestral Perceptions*

Principal Investigator: Kimberly Williams

#### **Introduction and Purpose**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kimberly Williams. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina's School of Music, and I am conducting research as part of the requirements for my DMA in Orchestral Conducting. The purpose of the study is to investigate the factors that influence a person's decision to join an orchestra. This form explains what you will be asked to do if you decide to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask any questions you like before you make a decision about participating.

#### **Description of Study Procedures**

You will be asked to complete one interview. This is an opportunity for you to engage in a meaningful discussion about you and your participation in the Columbia Community Orchestra (CCO). The interview will last approximately one hour, and will be digitally recorded. You will then be provided with a transcript of the interview so that you may clarify your responses. Your interview will be kept confidential—no one else will have access to your responses.

#### **Risks of Participation**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research except the slight risk of breach of confidentiality, which remains despite steps that will be taken to protect your privacy. Study information will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked facility. Your confidentiality will be protected at all costs. The results of this study may be published or presented at meetings, but your identity will not be revealed unless you have given me written permission to include your name/identifying information in the report.

#### **Benefits of Participation**

Taking part in this study will help me understand the key factors that promote a diverse orchestral atmosphere. By participating in the interview, you will help shed light on the importance of mentorship, school programs, a supportive family environment, and/or any other factors that may have positively influenced your decision to participate in the CCO.

#### **Contact Persons**

For more information concerning this research, you may contact me, Kimberly Williams at (803) 767-5102, or email [kim@scphilharmonic.com](mailto:kim@scphilharmonic.com). You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Gail Barnes at (803) 777-3389 or email [gbarnes@sc.edu](mailto:gbarnes@sc.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: Thomas Coggins, Director, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, Phone - (803) 777-7095, Fax - (803) 576-5589, E-Mail - [tcoggins@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:tcoggins@mailbox.sc.edu).

#### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason, without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept confidential.

I have read and understand the contents of this consent form, and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study, although I have been told that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. I have received a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D – Interview Questions

The following list of questions was used as an outline for the interview questions. Where appropriate, the interviewees were asked to expand upon their answers.

### FIRST INTERVIEW

Topic: Education

1. Are you the first member of your family to graduate from college (high school)?
2. Did either of your parents play instruments?
3. What was the racial makeup of your elem, middle, and high school?
4. Was your school environment supportive of the arts (financially, emotionally)?
5. Do you feel that there were enough music programs offered for the students?
6. Were your parents supportive of your decision to play a musical instrument (financially, emotionally)? Did they purchase an instrument for you? Did they pay for private lessons? Did they attend school concerts or recital?
7. Were your peers supportive of your involvement in music?
8. What led to your decision to attend a HBCU (if applicable)?

### SECOND INTERVIEW

Topic: Mentorship

1. Tell me about your mentor.
2. What was/is your relationship to your mentor?
3. How long did that relationship last?
4. Did you have more than one music mentor?
5. Did you have a mentor outside of music? What qualities did you admire most?

### THIRD INTERVIEW

Topic: Society/Family

1. What musical groups are you involved with besides \_\_\_\_\_ (their current affiliation)?
2. What led you to become a member of the CCO (or other orchestra if applicable)?
3. How long have you been a part of the group?
4. If respondent is in the music profession: What led you to become a \_\_\_\_\_?
5. If respondent is not in the music profession: You are a \_\_\_\_\_. Since music is not your profession, why do you continue to play your instrument?
6. Tell me about the music programs offered at your elem/middle/high school.
7. Did you go on any trips or competitions?
8. What kinds of musical activities were you involved in outside of school?
9. Did you experience any prejudicial attitudes or stereotypes because of your involvement in music? This can include race, gender, or peer pressure. *Studies suggest that African American teenagers face peer pressure and are teased for working hard to obtain good grades, speaking standard English and participating in non-sports-related activities.*
10. Did you find this to be true for you (if participant is African-American)?
11. Do you think classical music is primarily seen as a “White” activity?

## APPENDIX E – Focus Group Questions

The following list of questions was used as an outline for the focus group questions.

Where appropriate, the interviewees were asked to expand upon their answers.

1. Over the past month we've talked about three areas in your backgrounds— Education, Mentorship, and Family support. Of these three areas, which was most significant in encouraging your participation in an orchestra? Were there other influences or events besides those areas?
2. Talk about the values/guidelines with which you were raised (strict/lenient, etc.).
3. Do you think mentors are important for young musicians? How so?
4. Why did you pick a string instrument instead of a wind instrument?
5. Please share your motivation for participating with the CCO. What makes this orchestra unique?
6. Please share how role models have touched your lives.
7. What would you do (or other support) to create more diversity in orchestral environments?
8. What can teachers/mentors do to encourage more orchestral participation?

## APPENDIX F – Master Code List

The following list of codes was created using HyperRESEARCH software to categorize data.

### CHURCH MUSIC

- Ch: Gospel/Spirituals
- Ch: All Black
- Ch: Church Music
- Ch: Classical Tradition
- Ch: Exposure to Instruments
- Ch: Involvement in Church Music
- Ch: Losing Classical Tradition

### COMMUNITY MUSIC

- Co: Adult Community Music Group
- Co: CCO
- Co: CCO-Accepting
- Co: CCO-Accommodating
- Co: CCO African-American Participants
- Co: CCO-Amateur
- Co: CCO Attendance
- Co: CCO-Bored
- Co: CCO-Casual
- Co: CCO-Challenging
- Co: CCO-Churches
- Co: CCO-Commitment
- Co: CCO-Demographics
- Co: CCO-Disorganized
- Co: CCO-Extended Relationship
- Co: CCO-Family Friendly
- Co: CCO-Friendly
- Co: CCO-Friendships
- Co: CCO-Fun
- Co: CCO-History
- Co: CCO-Input Valued
- Co: CCO-Late Arrival
- Co: CCO-Late Start
- Co: CCO-Learning Environment
- Co: CCO-Leaving Early

Co: CCO-Low Attendance  
Co: CCO-Low Budget  
Co: CCO-Loyalty  
Co: CCO-Minority Participants  
Co: CCO-Negative Perception  
Co: CCO-Outreach  
Co: CCO-Positive Atmosphere  
Co: CCO-Relationships  
Co: CCO-Recruiting  
Co: CCO-Relationships  
Co: CCO-Relaxed  
Co: CCO-Respect for One Another  
Co: CCO-Retention  
Co: CCO-Routines  
Co: CCO-Seating  
Co: CCO-Secondary Instrument  
Co: CCO-Social Need  
Co: CCO-Stories  
Co: CCO-Structured  
Co: CCO-Supportive of Players  
Co: CCO-Team Player  
Co: CCO-Variety of Music  
Co: CCO-Volunteers  
Co: CCO-Welcoming  
Co: Community Orchestra  
Co: Family-Like Relationships  
Co: Performance Opportunities  
Co: Professional Orchestra  
Co: Scholarships  
Co: Solo Opportunities  
Co: String Project  
Co: Summer Music Camp  
Co: Youth Orchestra

#### EDUCATION

E: All-Black School  
E: Arts Valued  
E: Education Level-Father  
E: Education Level-Maternal Grandfather  
E: Education Level-Maternal Grandmother  
E: Education Level-Mother  
E: Education Level-Participant  
E: Education Level-Paternal Grandfather  
E: Education Level-Paternal Grandmother  
E: Education Level-Sibling  
E: Education Valued



E: Gifted and Talented/Honors  
E: HBCU  
E: Home School  
E: Limited Orchestral Opportunities for African-Americans  
E: Magnet School  
E: Opportunities to Play String Instruments in School or Connected to School  
E: Performance Opportunities  
E: Predominantly White College  
E: Private School  
E: Scholarships  
E: School in Dangerous Area  
E: School Music Programs  
E: School Music Trips  
E: School Musical Groups  
E: White Teachers in Black Schools  
E: Women's College

#### FAMILY

F: Accepting of Other Races/Cultures  
F: Classical Music Valued  
F: Close Family Relationships  
F: Close Family Ties  
F: Exposure to Music Before Age 10  
F: Exposure to String Music Age 10 or Earlier  
F: Extended Family Involvement in Music  
F: Family History  
F: Grandparent Involvement in Music  
F: High Standards  
F: Music Expensive  
F: Music in the Home  
F: Music Time Commitment  
F: Occupation Participant  
F: Occupation Sibling  
F: Parental Support  
F: Private Music Lessons  
F: Sibling Involvement in Music  
F: Sibling Participation in Strings  
F: Sibling Support  
F: Very Religious

#### INTERVIEWER CODES

I: Determined  
I: Positionality  
I: Subjectivity

#### MENTORSHIP

M: Big Brother/Sister/Father Figure

M: Black Female Role-Model  
M: Black Male Role-Model  
M: Coach  
M: Communicator/Confidant  
M: Community Mentor  
M: Consequences  
M: Considered Family  
M: Developing Program  
M: Emulating Mentor  
M: Father  
M: Funcode  
M: Giving  
M: Helpful  
M: High Expectations  
M: Influence Away from Music  
M: Influence Toward Music  
M: Investing Time/Resources  
M: Legacy/Honoring Role Models  
M: Life Lessons  
M: Long-Term Relationship  
M: Loved  
M: Loyal  
M: Mentees Protective of Mentor  
M: Mentor  
M: Mother  
M: Motivating/Challenging  
M: Negative Experience  
M: Nice  
M: Nurturing/Encouraging  
M: Patient  
M: Peer Influence  
M: Peer Support  
M: Primary  
M: Protective  
M: Proud of Mentee  
M: Providing Opportunities  
M: Recognizing Talent  
M: Respected  
M: Rewarding Behavior  
M: Significance of First Mentor  
M: White Female Role Model  
M: White Male Mentor

PARTICIPANT /FAMILY

P/F: Attendance at Classical Concerts

## PARTICIPANT

P: Attire  
P: Care-Taker  
P: Comfortable  
P: Conscientious  
P: Courageous  
P: Cynical  
P: Determining Factor  
P: Discomfort  
P: Firstborn  
P: Girl Scouts  
P: Helpful  
P: High Standards  
P: Hobbies  
P: Hospitality  
P: Humble  
P: Intrinsic Motivation  
P: Landmark Event  
P: Leader  
P: Long-Term Involvement in Orchestras  
P: Minority  
P: Most Significant Musical Influence  
P: Musical Tastes  
P: Negative  
P: Nerdy  
P: Overcoming Obstacles  
P: Personality/Preferences  
P: Practical  
P: Protective  
P: Secondary Instrument  
P: Self-Confidence  
P: Sensitivity to Racial Issues  
P: Shy  
P: Soft-Spoken  
P: Strong  
P: Suggestions for Improvement  
P: Wanting to Discuss Topic/Speaks Openly  
P: White Friendships

## SOCIETY/FAMILY

S/F: Attendance at Classical Concerts  
S/F: Breaking Racial Barriers  
S/F: Community Connection  
S/F: Exposure to Other Cultures  
S/F: Influence of Church Music

S/F: Lower Middle-Class Indicator  
S/F: Occupation-Father  
S/F: Occupation-Maternal Grandfather  
S/F: Occupation-Maternal Grandmother  
S/F: Occupation-Mother  
S/F: Occupation-Paternal Grandfather  
S/F: Occupation-Paternal Grandmother  
S/F: Parental Involvement in Music-Father  
S/F: Parental Involvement in Music-Mother  
S/F: Private Music Lessons  
S/F: Racism  
S/F: Segregation  
S/F: Upper Middle-Class Indicator  
S/F: Value Hard Work

#### SOCIETY

S: Acceptance of Racism  
S: Adaptive Behavior  
S: Affordable Music Opportunities  
S: African-American Band Tradition  
S: African-American Choral Tradition  
S: African-American Organ Tradition  
S: African-American Preference for Jazz  
S: African-American Tradition-Playing By Ear  
S: African-Americans Unfamiliar with Strings  
S: Black Pride  
S: Breaking Racial Barriers  
S: Classical Music Perceived as White or Elitist  
S: Community Connection  
S: Community Support  
S: Coping with Racism  
S: Cost Possible Cause of Low Participation  
S: Few African-Americans in Orchestras  
S: Giving Back  
S: High Standards  
S: Lack of Parental Support Possible Cause of Low Participation  
S: Lack of Traditional Values  
S: Low Expectation of African-Americans  
S: Lower Middle-Class Indicator  
S: Negative Prejudicial Attitudes About String Music  
S: Orchestra Perceived as a White Activity  
S: Possible Cause of Lack of African-American Involvement  
S: Poverty  
S: Prejudicial Attitudes/Stereotypes  
S: Racism/Bias  
S: Rejection of African-Americans for White Behavior

S: Segregation  
S: Suggestions for Improving Diversity  
S: Support for African-American Involvement in Orchestras  
S: Upper Middle-Class Indicator  
S: Welcoming Environment for African-Americans  
S: White Flight

#### SITUATION CODES

Sit: Comfortable with My Presence  
Sit: Environment  
Sit: Friendship with Participants  
Sit: Hospitality  
Sit: Interviewer Discomfort  
Sit: Interviewer Perspective  
Sit: Late  
Sit: Laughter  
Sit: Location  
Sit: Significant

## APPENDIX G – List of Characters

The following list of characters will help the reader identify participants and community members. Pseudonyms are used to protect participant identities.

### PRIMARY PARTICIPANT 1

#### **Annie Jones**

Diana Jones, Annie's mother

### PRIMARY PARTICIPANT 2

#### **Bethany Thomas**

Tandie Thomas, Bethany's mother

### PRIMARY PARTICIPANT 3

#### **James Richardson**

Eugene Richardson, James's father

Destiny, James's cousin

### RIVERLAND COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA MEMBERS:

Paula Rogers, friend of Annie and private-lesson instructor to James

Richard Corley, conductor

### ADULT MUSIC MENTORS:

Mrs. Fisher

Mr. and Mrs. Frankel

Bobby McNeill

Twyla Sims, Derrick's mother

### PEER MUSIC MENTORS:

Amanda

Ayesha

Derrick Sims, Twyla's son

Lisa

Rachel

RJ

APPENDIX H – Recital Programs

The following recitals were submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting.

University of South Carolina School of Music

*Presents*

**Kimberly P. Sullivan**, *conductor*

in

Doctoral Recital

October 15, 2006 • 3:30pm • Saxe Gotha Presbyterian Church

Overture to Rienzi

Richard Wagner  
(1813-1883)

Lake Murray Symphony Orchestra

December 4, 2006 • 7:00pm • Large Rehearsal Room, Koger Center for the Arts

Symphony no. 7, op. 92, A major

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

Poco sostenuto  
Allegretto  
Presto meno assai  
Allegro con brio

USC Symphony Orchestra

*Ms. Sullivan is a student of Dr. Donald Portnoy.  
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting degree.*

University of South Carolina School of Music

*Presents*

**Kimberly P. Sullivan**, *conductor*

in

Doctoral Rehearsal Recital

November 29, 2006 • 3:45pm • Large Rehearsal Room, Koger Center for the Arts

Rehearsal of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in A Major

Symphony no. 7, op. 92, A major

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

Poco sostenuto  
Allegretto  
Presto meno assai  
Allegro con brio

USC Symphony Orchestra

*Ms. Sullivan is a student of Dr. Donald Portnoy.*

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting degree.*



University of South Carolina School of Music

*Presents*

**Kimberly P. Sullivan**, *conductor*

in

Doctoral Lecture Recital

April 5, 2007 • 7:30pm • Large Rehearsal Room, Koger Center for the Arts

Lecture and performance of Schumann's Konzertstück

Konzertstück, D. 345, D major

Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

- I. Lebhaft – Sehr lebhaft
- II. Romance. Zeinlich langsam, doch nicht schleppend
- III. Sehr lbhaft, mit grossen Ausdruck

USC Student Chamber Orchestra

Soloists Patrick Clayton, Paul Clayton, Jessie Garcia, and Stewart Livingston

*Ms. Sullivan is a student of Dr. Donald Portnoy.*

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting degree.*

University of South Carolina School of Music

*Presents*

**Kimberly P. Sullivan**, *conductor*

in

Doctoral Recital

April 21, 2010 • 7:00pm • Rutledge Chapel, University of South Carolina

Soldier's Tale

Igor Stravinsky  
(1882-1971)

Performers from the South Carolina Philharmonic, USC School of Music, and the USC  
Theater Department

*Ms. Sullivan is a student of Dr. Donald Portnoy.*

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of  
Musical Arts in Conducting degree.*