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Approximately 600,000 youth are detained in juvenile facilities annually (Ramirez, 2008) and 50%–80% reoffend following their release (Reed, Miller, & Novosel, 2017). The majority of these youth (70%) have experienced serious trauma and need rehabilitation to recover and learn pro-social skills. Among effective behavioral interventions, music may serve as a catalyst for personal and interpersonal development (Cohen, 2009; Hickey, 2018; Marcum, 2014). To explore the role music may play in rehabilitation, I developed a string program at a youth development center. The resulting qualitative study posed the question, what benefits, if any, are experienced by members of a string ensemble?

Eight of Chatham Strings' members, aged 13 to 17, volunteered to participate in this study. The demographics of the students were White female (1), Black female (3), Hispanic female (1), Black male (2), and White male (1). None of the students previously played a string instrument. The data for this study included interviews with youth in the program, facility staff members, and field notes.

Four themes—Exposure and New Experiences, Pride and Recognition, Personal and Interpersonal Development, and Collaborating to Help Youth—emerged from the data analysis. The first theme documented the teens' journey as they moved from resistance to participation and success in the string program. In the second theme the youth described: experiencing satisfaction in their success, realizing their potential to do something positive, receiving positive reinforcement from others, and making people

they loved proud. In the third theme, youth reflected that participation in the string program improved emotional release, behavior regulation, frustration tolerance, time management, communication skills, and willingness to help others. The fourth theme, which was specific to staff participants, expressed that the string program contributed to the community effort of restorative justice. Implications for prison music programs are discussed.

BEYOND THE CORNER: INCORPORATING MUSIC INTO A
JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: KELLI'S STORY

Kelli's dad taught her to play the drums and a little guitar, and she sang in her middle school chorus. Her mom passed away when she was young, and by the time she was 13 or 14, various factors and her decisions landed her in a juvenile detention facility. Kelli spent most of her teen years in the justice system, transferred from facility to facility. She refers to directors of various facilities as her "parents." By the time she walked into my string class at Chatham Youth Development Center, she had been in detention facilities for about 4 years, with a year remaining before her 18th birthday and release. Kelli is reserved but pleasant, with a slow, warm smile.

Like Kelli, youth in juvenile detention centers are typical young people, the ones you see at the store or in your neighborhood. They played basketball in the park down the street. They went to the middle school near your house. However, many did not go to school often enough to play in the band or on a sports team. Many live in poverty (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014) and some have been involved with gangs (Daykin, De Viggiani, Pilkington, & Moriarty, 2012; Rameriz, 2008); others have substance addiction issues (Marcum, 2014; Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). One out of three has been physically and/or sexually abused (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Seven out of ten have experienced severe trauma, such as observing a murder (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Some of them have been involved in trafficking. All have committed an offense,

and usually multiple offenses. Each one is a face among the approximately 600,000 U.S. youth (Ramirez, 2008) who spend time in juvenile detention facilities each year. These youth are the faces of the United States' future generation of nurses, factory workers, poets, teachers, and voters, who, like Kelli, will reenter society facing major life decisions at a vulnerable age.

This case study chronicles the development of a string program (Chatham Strings) in a juvenile detention facility, a program that interacted with Kelli during her last year of confinement. The vision for Chatham Strings was to expose youth in detention to something new and challenge them to try something outside of their experience. Youth placed in juvenile centers tend to be resistant to new experiences, but as a veteran staff member commented, "If you keep a kid in the corner, they know the corner." Furthermore, if that corner involved a cycle of poverty, violence, abuse, and crime, returning to what is comfortable and normative is a serious problem. Many juvenile offenders re-offend after release (50-80%) because they return to the difficult situations from which many were taken. In order for these children to successfully reenter society and become productive citizens, we must break this vicious cycle. Music programs in the correctional system may be one way to try and help these young people experience something new and move forward. Chatham Strings is just one small piece of a more extensive network of help and support in the lives of juveniles, a network comprised of dedicated professionals who invest deeply in them. This study focused on the 20 young people who participated in the music program, specifically following the experience of eight youth who agreed to participate in personal interviews. As I interacted with these

youth weekly, I asked the questions: What benefits, if any, do students gain from playing in the string ensemble? Does the program have a part in helping individuals like Kelli acquire perspective and skills beyond the corner?

CHAPTER II

THE STATUS OF JUVENILE DETENTION IN THE UNITED STATES—AN OVERVIEW

Juvenile Offenders Defined

According to the 2014 Juvenile Crime and Victim report, about 24% of the U.S. population, approximately 74,181,500 people, were under the age of 18 in 2010 (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014) and thus considered juveniles. The term *juvenile offender* refers to the approximated 0.05% of America's juvenile population who have committed a legal offense. The term *crime* is being eradicated from juvenile justice vocabulary to reflect the paradigm shift in how youth are viewed within the correctional system. Approximately 1.6 million juvenile arrests are reported each year (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Many of the cases are dismissed or released under supervision, a juvenile equivalent of adult parole. The remaining youth are sent to some kind of detention facility. There are many types of facilities, but about 90% of detention facilities are centers, group homes, or residential treatment centers, with diagnostic centers and halfway houses comprising the remaining 10% of facilities (Cohen & Duncan, in progress; Feld, 2009).

The number of youth in detention facilities is difficult to determine because data are collected only once per year nationally, referred to as the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP). On a specified date, all detention facilities report their current population and facts about each young person in their custody, including age,

offense, and time spent in that facility. This information provides the data for the annual juvenile justice reports. On the 2015 CJRP date, 48,000 youth were in detention facilities (Hockenberry, 2018), a significant drop from past years (2011 reported 61,000 and 2010 reported 71,000), and a reflection of the decline in juvenile crime that started in the 1990s and continues to the present (Hockenberry, 2014; Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). The CJRP reports only the youth in detention on the census day, but about 600,000 juveniles go through juvenile facilities annually (Ramirez, 2008). In 2015, approximately 152 youths were in detention for every 100,000 juveniles in America (Hockenberry, 2018). Though 87% of detained juveniles are male (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014), girls make up one-third of juvenile arrests, and probation officers report that girls are more difficult to deal with than their male counterparts (Feld, 2009). The demographic ratios of incarcerated youths to 100,000 youths of their racial background are about 606:100,000 (Black), 228:100,000 (Hispanic), and 128:100,000 (White) (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). In 2013, 237 young people were released from North Carolina Youth Development Centers (YDCs). Of these 237 young people, 95% were male, and 70% were Black (North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, 2017).

Average Length of Stay

There are two classifications of juveniles held in residential facilities: *detained* juveniles, who are awaiting their court adjudication or placement in a facility; or *committed* juveniles, those who have already received their adjudication and have been assigned placement in a facility (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Adjudication is the term used in the juvenile justice system instead of the adult term “conviction,” and the

term “disposition” (instead of “sentence”) refers to the specifications of the adjudication (Feld, 2009, p. 253). The nature of the CJRP census makes it difficult to collect accurate data reflecting the total amount of time a youth has spent in the system because the census only reports the length of stay in the facility that the individual resides on that census day, not the entire length of stay from facility to facility (Hockenberry, 2018). Nevertheless, the data is clear that detained juveniles spend significantly less time in detention than committed juveniles. After 21 days, only half of the detained juveniles were still in detention, while half of the committed juveniles remained after 105 days, according to the 2015 report (Hockenberry, 2018). Of committed juveniles, 12% remain in detention for more than a year (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). The authors of the 2014 Juvenile Crime and Victim Report explain that “time in placement is driven both by punishment and treatment goals and, therefore, does not always coincide with offense seriousness” (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014, p. 198). For more serious offenses, other dispositions are until the young person turns eighteen and “maxes out” of the juvenile system. To give a practical face to these statistics, some of my students in Chatham Strings have spent most of their teen years in some sort of residential facility. Several entered the system when they were around 13 and were not released until a few months before they turned 18. During this time, they resided in multiple detention centers and facilities. Chatham Youth Development Center primarily houses juveniles with more serious offenses, so naturally most of the population at this center falls into the relatively slim 12% of lengthy stays. A child is usually committed to a Youth Development Center “for an indefinite period of at least six months [which] may continue until the youth’s

18th birthday. The commitment period might be extended until the youth's 19th or 21st birthday if the youth was committed for a particular violent offense" (North Carolina Department of Public Safety [NC DPS], 2020, para. 2). In 2013, 237 children were released from NC's four Youth Development Centers, where they had spent an average of 14 months (the range of detention time in a YDC was 6 to 18 months). Most are released on post-release supervision, which correlates to adult parole and is usually about 3 months long (North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, 2017; Platt, Bohac, & Wade, 2015).

Age at Admittance

Most of the discussion in the juvenile justice system is about the upper age limit; in other words, how old can youth be before they are considered an adult? The typical terms employed are "under 18" since upper age limits are different from state to state (Hockenberry, 2018, p. 2). However, 16- and 17-year-olds make up 51% of all youth in detention (Sedlack & Bruce, 2010) and of those released from North Carolina Youth Development Centers in 2013, 73% were 15 to 16 years old when they were committed (North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, 2017). In December 2019, the Raise the Age act went into effect. North Carolina is the last state to prosecute 16- and 17-year-olds as adults automatically, and while the state still has the option to prosecute certain cases as adults, it will no longer be inevitable under this law.

Bishop (2000) examined the transfer of juveniles into the adult criminal justice system and noted that the juvenile court operates on the belief that juveniles are less culpable than adults and more responsive to rehabilitative treatments (Bishop, 2000;

Jordan, 2017). Bishop (2000) delineated the adverse effects of transferring juveniles into the adult system on merely the criterion of age and without regard to offense type.

Loeffler and Grunwald (2015) studied the pros and cons of raising the age majority for juveniles. Supporters of raising the age make the case that this move would give older juvenile offenders placed in juvenile facilities more access to treatment that they would not get in the adult system (Gaes, 2002; Loeffler & Grunwald, 2015) and, as a result, reduce crime and recidivism. Opponents contend that it is better to put older juveniles who have committed serious offenses in the adult system since this decision could discourage further offenses (Loeffler & Grunwald, 2015). There are persuasive arguments on both sides of this debate. Frontline's documentary, "Stickup Kid," chronicles the life of Alonza Thomas, who was 16 years old when he attempted an armed robbery and was tried as an adult. He spent 13 years in adult prison, and most of the time he chose to be in solitary confinement for protection from older inmates. Thomas attempted suicide multiple times and emerged from prison, at nearly 30 years old, a broken man (Frontline, 2014).

On the other hand, a successful participant in Mincey, Maldonado, Lacey, and Thompson's (2008) study noted that a major reason that he changed was his placement in the adult system, which convinced him that he was doing the wrong thing and that it was serious. Until his placement in an adult facility, Mincey et al.'s participant felt like he had minimized and been careless about his involvement with crime (Mincey et al., 2008). Gaes (2002) examined this issue by looking at the type of juvenile typically transferred into the adult system—Serious Violent Juveniles (SVJs). Gaes gave the FBI definition of

violent crime as rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and homicide, and explained the background of the increased focus on SVJs. The mid-1980s to 1990s saw an unprecedented swell of violent juvenile crime, and juvenile laws started changing in response to the alarming trend. During this time, the juvenile court began to reflect its adult equivalent more closely. Gaes (2002) pointed out that when SVJs are held in adult facilities there is a concern that they will not get the help and treatment that they need, but when SVJs are held in juvenile facilities, there is a security concern for both staff and peers. The complexity of the age debate emerges in these two concerns, as well as the need for adequate programs that stand a reasonable chance of helping these young people reenter society (Gaes, 2002).

While the upper age limit is a hotly debated issue, there is much less discussion about the lower age limit because less depends upon it (such as the risk of being tried as an adult). Ages 10 to 17 is a typical age range given in most juvenile justice reports and statistics (Hockenberry, 2014, 2018). Youth under 10 years old are rarely adjudicated and are instead put on some type of supervision. Youth ages 10–12 years old make up 1% of juveniles in detention (Sedlack & Bruce, 2010). Even the Chatham Youth Development Center, which is known as the best YDC to place young boys, has never had a child under 10 years old because that is the minimum age required to be admitted to a YDC (NC DPS, 2020).

Recidivism

The question of readmission falls within the broader spectrum of recidivism. Recidivism is defined by the 2014 Juvenile Crime and Victim report as “the repetition of

criminal behavior” (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014, p. 111). This topic is complicated because recidivism rates vary widely depending on what marker event is used to determine recidivism. Among others, these marker events can be re-arrest, re-adjudication, or re-confinement. The marker event chosen will radically impact the recidivism rate: for instance, using re-arrest as the marker event will make the recidivism rate significantly higher than if re-confinement is used as the marker event (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Because each state’s juvenile system chooses its own marker event, there is no juvenile recidivism rate uniform across the whole nation (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). This phenomenon makes comparing juvenile recidivism rates from state to state very complicated and challenging, and knowing which event marker used is crucial for any type of coherent comparison. Data have shown that “juveniles with a prior confinement, juveniles adjudicated of misdemeanor offenses, and juveniles assessed at the highest risk level had higher recidivism rates” (North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, 2017, p. 13). In a 2018 documentary “Inside Juvenile Detention,” *The Atlantic* chronicled life in a Virginia juvenile facility and reported that more than 70% of juveniles in Virginia are re-arrested in 3 years (re-arrest being the event marker chosen) (*The Atlantic*, 2018). Reed, Miller, and Novosel (2017) observed that “50%–80% of the 81,000 youth released from custody each year will reoffend and recidivate” (p. 32). Conversely, the Chatham YDC’s licensed mental health clinician stated that recidivism at Chatham is quite low, about 13-20% (the event marker being re-confinement), adding that juvenile recidivism rates are significantly lower than adult recidivism rates. A specialized facility like Chatham that works intensely with its youth will tend to have

lower recidivism rates than a juvenile detention center in the same jurisdiction. Though the calculation is not simple, recidivism plays heavily in evaluating the effectiveness of programming, treatment, and facilities, which impacts government, funding, and taxpayers, as well as families and youth directly involved in detention (Bayer & Pozen, 2015; Reed et al., 2017).

Contributing Factors to Crime Involvement

Factors documented to contribute to delinquency are many and deeply disturbing in nature. Severe trauma has been experienced by 70% of youth in placement, with 67% reporting that they have seen someone hurt or killed (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Around 30% have been abused, sexually and/or physically (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Many have substance addiction issues (Marcum, 2014; Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014), have lived in poverty (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014) and/or been involved with a gang (Daykin et al., 2012; Rameriz, 2008). Dropping out of high school has been linked to incarceration (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014), as well as living in single-parent or dysfunctional homes (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014)—a foundational problem that cannot be overestimated—and unsurprisingly, incarcerated juveniles often have learning disabilities (Daykin et al., 2012) and negative associations with school and learning (Marcum, 2014). While Sherwin and Schmidt (2003) argued that aggression is simply a part of Black culture, an aspect that is misunderstood by outsiders and leads to more Black arrests, Sampson and Lauritsen (1997) pointed out that what may seem to be a targeted-race problem is often more accurately a reflection of the communities where lower socioeconomic Blacks and Whites live. “Discrimination appears to be indirect,”

they observed (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997, p. 311), and the statistics that merely show the racial proportions in the system do not reveal the underlying influence of the community contexts. In other words, equally poor Black and White youth most likely do not have equal living or family conditions and communities, with Black youth having less opportunity and more poverty surrounding them. Noting the crucial importance of the home environment, Forster and Rehner (2003) suggested that an essential part of preventing juvenile crime involves a community approach to social work among high-risk families to diminish juvenile delinquency (Forster & Rehner, 2003).

Rehabilitation: Success or Failure?

While the swell in violent crime among juveniles in the 1980s instigated a more punitive approach to juvenile justice, restorative justice is being advocated today. Various rehabilitative approaches are being tried within the system. These programs are then critiqued regarding their perceived effectiveness (Corriero, 2006; Geraghty, 1997; Mincey et al., 2008; Platt et al., 2015; Ramirez, 2008).

A juvenile court judge, Ramirez (2008) cited statistics that back his claim that the juvenile justice system is not rehabilitating youth very well. Seven hundred thousand youth are involved in street gangs, 1.5 million youth are arrested every year, and about 600,000 go through the juvenile detention system annually. Over 20 years, operating a detention bed costs taxpayers \$1.5 million. The causes of delinquency are usually “poverty, drugs, gangs, abuse and neglect, and truancy . . . We are confronted by a society that is becoming more complex, more mobile, and more dysfunctional” (Ramirez, 2008, p. 11). After stating his case, the author described four model counties in the

United States that have reduced youth detention by focusing resources on providing alternative services and opportunities (Ramirez, 2008).

Geraghty (1997), a veteran juvenile court lawyer, explained the history and purpose of the juvenile justice system, the importance of the system being kept separate from the adult system, problems with the system, and a vision for an improved system. Geraghty (1997) observed that because working with youth can be such difficult, overwhelming work, part of the challenge is retaining good staff instead of letting them burn out. Geraghty stated that programs which “forge a relationship” with youth are proven to be effective (Geraghty, 1997, p. 203). He also cited studies that have shown that youth who spend long periods in the correctional system often lose connections with family members and their home community and are more inclined to gang involvement and further offenses (Geraghty, 1997).

Corriero (2006) offered a juvenile court judge’s perspective on restorative justice and detailed a model juvenile justice system. At the same time, he acknowledged the complex task faced by judges and lawyers in juvenile courts, a task made more complicated because each U.S. state has different laws and procedures in dealing with juvenile offenders. He detailed the challenges that youth offenders face once they finish their time in detention and seek to re-enter society, youth who left society as children and often return to it at the inception of their working years. Additionally, many of them have lost connection with family, have little or no marketable skills, and do not have a place to live. Judge Corriero cited the necessity of helping them find jobs and reintegrate into society, noting that if this fails, society could end up supporting them for the rest of their

lives. The author advocated ways to bring juvenile offenders back into society and not let an offense committed in their youth define their future. He stated that his “vision of a model juvenile justice system is based on the belief that children ought to be given a second chance, after appropriate intervention, if to do so would not compromise public safety” (Corriero, 2006, p. 172). From his experience with youth, he concluded that it is crucial to encourage these youth to develop their skills and give them hope that they can be a necessary part of society (Corriero, 2006).

Mincey et al.’s (2008) qualitative study amassed data from nine young people who had completed a juvenile residential program and after-care oversight. After reviewing the philosophical changes in juvenile justice since the 1980s and summarizing several theories, the authors detailed the advice youth shared about how to start a new life and avoid re-offending. Several themes emerged across the group. One theme was the importance of competent and caring staff members who can make or break the program. Administration can be so focused on the needs of youth that they overlook the crucial importance of recruiting and retaining quality staff members. In another theme, the age debate emerged when one participant said that a major reason he changed was when he was committed to the adult system. That experience made him view his actions seriously. A different theme was on the enormous impact of family connection and involvement, and wanting to change to make a loved one proud. Not only staying out of trouble but being a responsible and employed citizen was an important theme; one participant said that he felt good knowing that police officers viewed him as a productive member of society and respected him. Participants stressed the powerful impact of relationships,

both negative and positive, saying that finding new friends, asking for and accepting help, and avoiding former associates were vital components of starting a new life. Another theme that participants emphasized was taking the time to set goals and make plans about finishing education and getting a job, among other decisions, before plunging back into life. They said that staying busy with positive things was crucial to success. In an additional theme, participants concurred that many young offenders' first good experience with school often occurs in a detention facility and that positive association can make a huge difference in their future involvement with education and learning (Mincey et al., 2008). Platt et al. (2015) advocated transitional programming as vital for youth to successfully navigate post-release society reentry, corroborating with the findings of Mincey et al. (2008).

Former President George W. Bush proposed a society reentry initiative and spoke of it in his 2004 State of the Union address. He stated that "America is the land of [the] second chance and when the gates of prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life" (as cited in Corriero, 2006, p. 171). This dissertation explores the role music may play in the rehabilitation of detained youth. Participation in a music program is one option among several effective interventions, such as vocational and educational opportunities, that the restorative justice model employs. The question that remains is: What programs are most effective in preparing for and aiding in a detained youth's reentry to society? The next chapter is an examination of literature on the impact of music, specifically its effects on people in the correctional system.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview of Chapter

This chapter opens with a summary of youth offender needs, which include personal, emotional, educational, interpersonal, and societal. A review follows of the literature on prison music programs and their potential to aid in rehabilitation goals. This review includes an overview of prison music programs in the United States. Researchers have investigated the possible benefits of these programs, including facilitating trauma recovery and emotional regulation, providing positive educational experiences, fostering interpersonal development, building community, collaborating in a musical setting, and altering societal perceptions of the incarcerated.

Needs of Juvenile Offenders

As the last chapter detailed, once youth are placed in detention, they need significant help. Trauma recovery is one of the fundamental needs of detained offenders. Without dealing with past trauma, youth will continue to struggle with emotional regulation, mental health issues, and learning disabilities. The high rates of juvenile recidivism, with youth remaining in a cycle of release and return to the juvenile justice system, are another manifestation of unsuccessful rehabilitation and trauma recovery.

Prison Music Program Overview: A Rehabilitative Approach

Music programs in prisons are a way that artists can contribute to the correctional system's goal of rehabilitation. The literature on prison music programs and their impact is expanding as more research is being conducted in correctional settings, both nationally and internationally. While much more research needs to be done, with multiple reviewers urging for more carefully designed studies (Daykin et al., 2012; Ezell & Levy, 2003; Harbert, 2013; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004; Williams, 2008), there are many helpful findings in the field.

Choirs

Prison choirs are one of the most common music programs in prisons because they require only voices, and therefore present minimal security challenges (Cohen, 2007, 2009, 2012; Harbert, 2013; Lucas, 2013; Voth & Waters, 1997). Mary Cohen, a professor at the University of Iowa, is currently one of the nation's leading researchers on music in prisons and has done extensive research through her Oakdale Choir. This prison choir employs a unique model of bringing "outside" singers in to sing with the "inside" singers, thus fostering community and impacting perspectives not only within the facility but also outside its walls.

Guitar Programs

After choir programs, guitar programs are also popular prison arts programs because they use a familiar, inexpensive instrument. The Austin-based guitarist Travis Marcum, working with Austin Classical Guitar, has developed guitar programs offered in juvenile facilities in Austin, Texas (Marcum, 2014). While Marcum works with youth in

his guitar programs, Henry Robinett teaches guitar classes to adults in California prisons under the auspices of the William James Association (Carnes, 2017). Both programs, which are only two of many similar programs, offer their students the opportunity to engage actively in music-making through learning to play the guitar.

Composition and Song Writing

Maud Hickey, a retired professor from Northwestern University, has explored the benefits of not only performing but creating music through her composition/song-writing classes in a juvenile facility (Hickey, 2018). Composition and songwriting are considered an effective means to engage people in a creative emotional outlet. Providing incarcerated people with the opportunity to create has been used by prison arts programs and organizations, including New York City-based organizations Decoda and Musicambia, among many others (Cohen & Palidofsky, 2013; Elsil, 1998; Parker, 2019; Thompson, 2016).

Music programs are valuable to incarcerated communities because they are a catalyst for personal development (Harbert, 2013; Williams, 2008). Harbert (2013) examined the role of music in helping incarcerated women. Music enabled the women to find connection with others, a sense of meaningful time, a restoration of the personal, escape from the stasis of time and routine in prison, structure, release of emotions, visibility in the prison, and growth in self-esteem through interacting with those outside the prison (Harbert, 2013).

Williams (2008) examined multiple studies on juvenile offenders who participated in prison arts programs and summarized the researchers' findings. These

findings indicated that engagement with music could help youth “reduce episodes of violence and anger; improve communication skills with peers and increase their participation in education; learn to complete long-term tasks.” Additionally, the surveyed research results showed that music involvement could help “re-shape identity, lead to an increased sense of improved relationships, . . . and finally, decrease risk factors such as social management skills, and impulsivity” (Williams, 2008, pp. 108–109).

Facilitating Trauma Recovery and Emotional Regulation

Because dealing with past trauma is an integral part of rehabilitation, it is worth examining which approaches may be helpful in this area of restorative justice. Various programming, including sports, vocational, and the arts have been implemented in juvenile facilities. Studies have shown that music can be an effective tool in trauma recovery and emotional regulation (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Foran, 2009; Hodges, 2013; Hoffer, 2017; Marcum, 2014).

Lucille Foran (2009) studied emotional issues in juvenile offenders, and observed that “for children and adolescents who have experienced trauma, the resulting impact on the brain is connected with difficulties in emotional regulation, behavior problems, poor concentration, and deficits in verbal memory” (p. 2). Foran noted that healthy emotional stability is formed early in children with responsive caregivers in an atmosphere that requires children to control their emotions and behavior and that developing this ability to control emotions is crucial for a child’s mental and physical health (Foran, 2009). In children who have experienced neglect or abuse, however, studies have shown that their thinking skills are rigid rather than open and absorptive, and this cognitive rigidity slows

cognitive development (Foran, 2009). She argued that teaching emotional regulation is central to trauma recovery because it has been documented that a lack of emotional regulation leads to diagnoses of mental illness and substance abuse. Conversely, children who learn to regulate their emotions are more socially competent and do better in school (Foran, 2009). Music can be helpful in trauma recovery in children because, as Foran (2009) noted, “music exercises more parts of the brain than almost any other single activity. Especially for children with learning problems, listening to music appears to help students access parts of their brains that function poorly or not at all” (p. 7).

Hodges’s (2013) study detailed his findings on the role music can have in helping people rebound from a traumatic experience, maintain that attitude of resilience, and continue to grow. While not overemphasizing its importance, Hodges (2013) affirmed that “music plays a critical role in enabling people of all ages to resist and overcome stress and trauma in a wide variety of settings and circumstances. Music is an enabling partner as those who have overcome trauma build a new life and sustain it over time” (p. 17).

Emotional regulation is an indicator of trauma recovery progress, a quality the Texas-based guitarist Travis Marcum (2014) noted as he observed the juvenile offenders in his guitar program. Marcum perceived that his guitar students learned to control negative emotions and behavior while in his music class because their fascination with the guitar overcame their natural reactions of frustration to challenges or new experiences. Marcum (2014) noted that “the students learn to express emotion musically. Often, my students tell me that they pick up their guitar when they are feeling frustrated,

angry, or sad as a way to work through these complex emotions” (p. 5). When Travis Marcum interacted with staff at the juvenile facility where he teaches, they told him that they saw a difference in the juveniles’ emotional state, commenting on “large changes in general well-being, happiness, cooperation, and communication as a result of playing music” (Marcum, 2014, p. 35).

In her numerous studies on prison choirs, Mary Cohen collected responses from inmates who expressed that they not only noticed their emotions more but had found a type of emotional release through singing in the choir. Kathryn Hoffer (2017), who directs the Hiland Women’s Prison Orchestra in Anchorage, Alaska, reported that many of the prison orchestra members expressed that, in making music, they had discovered that positive self-expression is possible. Studies by Marcum (2014), Hoffer (2017), and Cohen (2009), among others, demonstrate that participating in a music program has visible effects on inmate happiness. In 2009, Mary Cohen conducted a study in which she “examined well-being measurements before and after two performances of a group of prison inmates singing in a choir with prison inmates not singing in a choir.” She reported that her findings “indicated significant differences on four subscales: emotional stability, sociability, happiness, and joviality between the prisoner singers and the control group” (Cohen, 2009, pp. 47–48).

Providing Positive Educational Experiences

Progress in trauma recovery facilitates student learning. Healing allows youth to let down their defenses and be vulnerable enough to learn, which is vital for children to be willing to accept and absorb new information. Numerous researchers have explored if

arts involvement aids in a positive association with learning and found implications for positive association with learning and authority, involvement in an activity with positive outcomes, and sense of achievement education (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Foran, 2009; Geraghty, 1997; Marcum, 2014; Mincey et al., 2008; Voth & Waters, 1997; Williams, 2008).

Positive Association with Learning and Authority

Lucille Foran explained the connection between emotional health and the ability to learn in her 2009 study:

We are fundamentally emotional and social creatures. The role of emotion in education is gaining increased attention as neuroscience demonstrates what good teachers already know: emotions affect student performance. Researchers agree that emotional processes are required for the skills and knowledge taught in school to enter into long-term memory and to transfer to real-life situations. When a student is anxious, stressed, and emotionally reactive, the amygdala responds by blocking the absorption of sensory input. Under those circumstances, information taught cannot enter long-term memory processed in the hippocampus. Teachers are learning that they need to activate the brain's emotional systems to help students remember and apply what is being taught. (Foran, 2009, p. 8)

Similarly, Travis Marcum (2014) recognized the potential of music programs to not only help young offenders engage in positive emotional activities but also create a “positive school experience” for students “in critical need of positive connections to school” (p. 33). In his article, “Artistry in Lockdown,” Marcum noted that he

found that when these students engage in meaningful, high-quality music-making experiences, they learn to trust the teacher and the learning environment. And when a student is comfortable feeling vulnerable in a school environment (which is the only way we are able to make mistakes and overcome them), he or she begins to understand the positive outcomes of the learning process and associate the classroom with positive experiences. (Marcum, 2014, p. 4)

Marcum also guided his students to transfer skills learned from guitar study into other parts of their life, including their school work, and noted that many learned to make this skill transfer successfully (Marcum, 2014).

Geraghty (1997) stressed the impact of good teachers on juvenile offenders. He observed that programs in which teachers intentionally build relationships with students tend to be very effective. Part of the success of rehabilitation depends on hiring and retaining caring and effective teachers, a challenge because of how draining, demanding and overwhelming prison work can be, and the trend of a high turnover rate among juvenile detention staff (Geraghty, 1997).

University of Edinburgh scholars Anderson and Overy (2010) examined whether positive experiences in prison arts classes changed young offenders' attitudes towards education and influenced them to seek out educational opportunities after their release. The results of the study showed that art classes provide more concrete goals than a math or English class and that achieving recognizable goals makes students feel more successful. They found that art classes were "an inviting and safe method of entry for young offenders who may have had negative experiences with previous education in their formative years" (Anderson & Overy, 2010, p. 2).

Williams's (2008) research also corroborated with these findings on arts involvement fostering a new and positive association with education. She maintained that, because of students' negative educational associations, gaining the trust of students and helping them feel safe enough to learn new skills must be the teacher's priority (Williams, 2008). Part of the challenge in a prison learning environment is the inherent

conflict with authority figures among the students. Lansing Prison's choir director Elvera Voth recognized this issue and built an encouraging atmosphere that eventually helped the men in the choir start to let down their guard and trust her (Voth & Waters, 1997).

Developing trust relationships with those in authority is a new experience for many program participants. Cohen and Duncan (unpublished) affirmed the effectiveness of arts programs in supporting positive teacher-student relationships. Mincey et al. (2008) noted that participants in their study

emphasized educational and counseling services as major contributors to their competency development. Teachers used non-traditional approaches in their lessons to command the interest of their students. Hands-on (practical) exercises captured the attention of their students as teachers facilitated the process of their educational experiences. (p. 22)

Involvement in an Activity with Positive Outcomes

Growing out of music program's effects on emotional regulation and positive association with education, playing music also allows inmates to engage in something with positive outcomes, with results of which they can be proud (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Marcum, 2014). Marcum (2014) stated that "for many, this is the first time they have felt a sense of pride for an artistic achievement" (p. 35). Inmates express that they want something meaningful to do during their time of incarceration. Anderson and Overy (2010) collected responses from inmates who indicated that "meaningful, engaging work makes serving time more manageable and . . . participating in such work can show themselves and others outside the prison that they can have the commitment to work" (p. 10).

Sense of Achievement

The Anderson and Overy study (2010) compared men in a music program, art program, and in a control group. They noted that inmates in the music program felt a clearer sense of achievement than in the art program or control group because they knew that they had made progress. A man in the control group taking an English class was unsure if he had improved, while guitar students were certain that they had made progress. The authors commented on this feedback that “this is one example of how establishing clear, achievable goals in arts projects, and in education classes in general, can help participants to recognize and understand their personal progress” (Anderson & Overy, 2010, p. 14). These findings indicate that when inmates are successful in a music program (for example, after a successful concert), that accomplishment bred a willingness to be open to and try other new things.

Fostering Interpersonal Development

Personal learning and development cannot be long confined to the individual. Poet John Donne (2019) summarized this concept when he wrote that “no man is an island, entire of itself; every man is part of the continent, a piece of the main” (p. 7). Changes in an individual simultaneously affect that person’s relationships and interactions with others. Often prisoners isolate themselves from other inmates in order to protect themselves from potential issues or misconduct. However, this defensive move also cuts people off from the community and support with other prisoners. Harbert (2013) observed that “Being in constant view can cause people to seek shelter and isolation, but isolation in defense of surveillance is not an experience of the personal; rather, it is

alienation” (p. 210). Music programs are a way to connect people in prison and to help them to develop trust and build community (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Cohen, 2012).

Mary Cohen (2012) described participation in a prison choir as a way to safely “meet others with similar interests who want to do something positive during their incarceration time” (p. 52). Because studies have shown that relationships are necessary for emotional regulation and health, Cohen encouraged teachers of prison music programs to be intentional about facilitating and encouraging healthy relationship-building among inmate musicians. Some of the singers in Cohen’s choir reported that being in the choir “‘has changed the way that I view other inmates.’ Others remarked: ‘I’ve noticed myself becoming more outgoing and communicative’ and ‘I’ve made a lot of friends since joining the choir’” (Cohen, 2012, p. 51). Anderson and Overy (2010) wrote that

playing music in a group is also an activity that takes trust, communication and a sense of humour, giving prisoners the opportunity to interact socially . . . Various studies have also reported that prisoners can develop their listening skills, turn taking and eye contact through playing music. The experience of participating in a group music or art project thus not only is a potentially enriching one, but it can also present a vital opportunity for prisoners to develop social and personal skills that they can utilize once they are released from prison. (p. 2)

Building Community

Music programs offer natural ways to get to know other inmates, and working together towards a shared goal is a tremendous bonding experience. Anderson and Overy (2010) collected responses from the men in their program who said they felt a sense of belonging and like they were a part of the group. Each rehearsal and performance is a

pro-social skill exercise for musicians in prison as they learn to trust one another, how to work together, and demonstrate qualities such as respect, patience, and care.

For music directors of prison music programs, it is also vital to remember that building community also means building trust and gaining respect from the staff at the facility. The staff are with the program participants day in and day out, and they can give valuable insight if they feel like the director respects them and views them as a valued teammate and mentor (Cleveland, 1993a). In the facility where I work, the staff members graciously and warmly accepted me and the program as their own. They became both allies and mentors to me, and I am not sure I would have persevered without their insight and wisdom. In his interview, one Chatham staff member kept referencing the program as something that made him proud to work at the center. I was struck by his view of the program as an extension of the center's success and was reminded of how vital it is to include the staff in the community engendered by the music program.

Because prison music programs facilitate interpersonal bonding and a sense of community, they can become something on which people in prison rely. Although sometimes factors outside of the director's control lead to the closure of a program, it is important to seek to maintain longevity with arts programming in correctional facilities. Cleveland observed that one participant in a prison music program

was adamant that when the power and force of the creative process was made available [to] prisoners that they should not be turned on and left behind. He said that once a prisoner had become addicted to what he called, the creative life force, we all had a moral responsibility to maintain access—to support the habit. He made it clear that for some it would be a matter of life and death. (Cleveland, 1993b)

Collaborating in a Musical Setting

The group aspect of music-making is a key component of prison music programs' benefits. Joining with other musicians to make music together is a beloved aspect of the craft, and chamber music has a unique ability to connect people. Apart from the pleasure and satisfaction of making music collaboratively, research affirms that there are social benefits to the experience. Ensemble playing is not only a valuable part of an arts experience but can also serve as a crucial tool in developing interpersonal skills. The importance of encouraging pro-social skills gains additional vitality when examined in the context of incarcerated populations engaging in making music together. Making music in community with others catalyzes developing and strengthening relational skills (Ferguson, 1964; Jackson & Burgess, 2016; Jacobi, 2012; Overy & Molnar-Szakacs, 2009; Rawlings, 2017; Silverman, 1986; Welchburg, 1963).

Collaborative music-making is uniquely suited to building relational skills because an acute awareness of and sensitivity to the other participants is essential to the success of the entire group. Silverman (1986) described how chamber music participants receive immediate feedback as they play together and, along with the feedback, a “compelling urge to get in tune, get in time, join the group—in essence, to cooperate” (p. 16). This cooperation is not optional but vital for the group to be functional. Welchburg (1963) observed that listening to one another is crucial and that “playing [together] is an exercise in democracy and a study in humility, a truly civilized pastime” (Welchburg, 1963, p. 34). Anderson and Overy (2010) have noted that “playing music in a group is . . . an activity that takes trust, communication and a sense of humour . . . [developing]

listening skills, turn taking and eye contact through playing music” (p. 2). Silverman (1986) has pointed out that competition is tacitly repressed and instead

group cohesiveness is reinforced . . . This synergistic process of coalescing with a common purpose results in a wholesome interdependency . . . Trust, sensitivity, warmth, and flexibility are among the characteristics expressed at an interpersonal as well as musical level. (p. 16)

The essentially interactive nature of ensemble music-making and the sensitivity it engenders can foster a unique sense of intimacy among participants. Ferguson (1964) noted that this intimacy “is impossible without an implied (even if only momentarily existent) unanimity of perception and feeling among the participants—a unanimity sensed rather than defined” (p. 3). Collaborative music-making, because of its intrinsically relational nature, is a natural setting for interpersonal skills to be awakened and developed.

In a prison music program setting, the first relational hurdle to overcome is often with the music teacher. Statistically, many incarcerated people, especially teens in juvenile facilities, have negative associations with authority, school, and learning. Rawlings (2017) found that young people who were not connected to school did not feel cared for or trusted by past teachers and that there was a direct correlation between this sense of disconnection and negative behaviors (Rawlings, 2017). Incarcerated musicians’ relationships with their teacher are crucial to their ability to absorb new material, be willing to learn, gain the confidence to attempt new skills, and master skills that are foundational to expressivity.

Thoughtful music teachers recognize the importance of facilitating positive peer relationships and encouraging healthy interactions between student musicians. They know that nurturing pro-social skills not only produces a positive atmosphere but is essential to collaboration and cooperation. Jackson and Burgess (2016) advocated using a philosophy of collaboration to develop and guide music programs (Jackson & Burgess, 2016). Though there is some overlap, and of course programs differ widely in focus, teaching music in the correctional system has its differences from teaching music in a high school. Artists who work with this population are generally focused on larger issues than simply teaching specific musical skills. Though a high-quality music program is important, these musicians use music as a tool to help incarcerated youth or adults in some way—whether it is emotional release, trauma coping, distraction from routine, positive goal setting, pro-social skill exercise, engagement with the arts, indirect engendering of positive learning experiences, or myriad other larger life goals. This viewpoint falls under the fundamental philosophic underpinnings of music therapy. Music is used as a means, not an end, and yet the “end,” making music, is a beautiful goal to pursue in itself. Since interpersonal relationships are integral to both music-making and successful societal functioning, using music collaboration to nurture relational skills is a natural and powerful symbiotic relationship. Though writing with a traditional, non-incarcerated music classroom in mind, Jacobi (2012) observed that “although social skills are frequently by-product of music skills, we have the potential to provide a stronger, more lasting impact on our students if we approach social skills as deliberately and purposefully as we approach music skills” (p. 68).

Not all effective prison music teachers work from this philosophy, however.

Henry Robinett stated,

I'm not a musical therapist . . . I have no doubt about the healing power of music in general. But I'm not trying to heal people. My job is to teach this guy a D chord, and a G chord, and C chord, and then get him playing some tunes. If I focused on the larger purpose as opposed to the nuts and bolts, then I'd lose everything. I have to form a relationship with the student that allows him to trust that I care about him and that playing this chord over and over again is worthwhile. With time, I hope, he'll be able to express himself through art, because I think that's a greatest thing a human being can aspire to. (as cited in Carnes, 2017, p. 12)

While the overarching philosophy of using music to access and facilitate life skills forms the backbone of my work, when I am working with the students, I am focused on the practicalities of teaching music, just as Robinett mentioned.

Collaborative music-making intrinsically encourages good interpersonal skills, and prison music programs that are ensemble-based tap into this natural byproduct. However, musical success being reliant on student musicians learning to work with one another can also be a challenge because incarcerated youth generally struggle with self-control and emotional regulation. When one ensemble member gets frustrated, defensive, or combative, the entire group can dissolve since the majority of the teens are not emotionally stable, and other group members tend to lash out or retaliate. Although life for these young people is challenging, music can help; as Hodges (2013) observed, "To the extent that one's personal and social identity are important in overcoming life's stresses, both everyday and traumatic, music can make a significant contribution" (p. 8).

Developing Pro-Social Skills

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine what types of pro-social skills can be developed through arts program involvement (Ezell & Levy, 2003; McCarthy et al., 2004). McCarthy et al. (2004) have described effects such as “critical thinking, self discipline, understanding that one’s behavior has consequences, self-efficacy, self-criticism, and teamwork—all skills that promote success in life as well as school . . . [as well as improved] self-image, self regulation, and tolerance” (p. 11). Ezell and Levy (2003) observed that students learned tolerance and respect by working with fellow students in an arts program. Williams (2008) documented more positive attitudes towards education, developed persistence to finish long-term projects, improved communication skills, and reduced impulsivity.

Additionally, students in a hands-on arts program, such as being a participant in a music ensemble, demonstrated skill acquisition in the areas of learning collaboration skills, how to accept feedback and criticism, planning skills, and teamwork. The performance component of a music ensemble especially encouraged the acquisition of these skills (McCarthy et al., 2004). McCarthy et al.’s (2004) study tied music performance to behavioral change because of the preparation and self-discipline necessary for a successful performance, noting that learning to transfer intentions into action is significant in character development. The authors advocated prolonged arts involvement because their findings indicated that isolated arts exposure does not promote real or enduring behavioral change (McCarthy et al., 2004).

All of the behavioral skills mentioned above translate immediately into interpersonal skills; that is, they are difficult to parse out independently of one another because interactions with other people are how such skills are acquired, practiced, and demonstrated. Often incarcerated teens or adults isolate themselves from other inmates in order to protect themselves from potential conflict or misconduct. However, this defensive move also cuts people off from community with and support from other prisoners. Many of them do not have access to even listen to music, which compounds their isolation. Overy and Molnar-Szakacs (2009) suggested that merely listening to music helps the listener feel less alone, giving a sense of “togetherness,” and that music participation is even more effective because of the awareness of one another and immediate adjustments required in ensemble playing (p. 499).

Group Belonging

Cohen (2012), Anderson and Overy (2010), and Ezell and Levy (2003) all documented feedback from prison music participants which indicated that working and performing with the group helped them make friends and build community. The sense of group belonging is nurtured by the vulnerability and mutual interdependence of learning and performing music together. Jacobi (2012) notes that the success of a music ensemble is often linked to the development of friendships between the musicians and a positive relationship between the musicians and their director. In one of Cohen’s (2012) studies, inmate singers reported that they felt more respected, got along with others better, made friends easier, connected with people outside prison, and felt their family relationships had improved (Cohen, 2012). Rawlings (2017) suggested through his research on music

programs and peer victimization that “students who bully others have high levels of moral disengagement” (Rawlings, 2017, p. 67)—that is, they are not regulated by a moral standard and do not have a sense of responsibility towards or care for their peers. The shared goals of making music collaboratively encourage a sense of belonging, group identity, and a community that people and perhaps especially people experiencing incarceration and its accompanying isolation—need. The fostering of interpersonal skills that invite a sense of community also discourages bullying, an expression of self-absorption.

Collaborative music-making is a unique catalyst for interpersonal skill development because of its intrinsically relational nature. While it is not a miracle tool able to change every person, allowing incarcerated people to engage in something larger than themselves, a group that draws them into the shared goals of community, can also allow them to embrace the small changes that make significant life differences.

Altering Societal Perceptions of the Incarcerated

Prison music programs not only can help people develop personally and interpersonally but also in their perception of and interaction with the “outside”—society outside the correctional system. One difficulty is the label of “prisoner” that can become a person’s identity. Anderson and Overy (2010) observed that “arts programmes can perhaps give prisoners the opportunity to develop an identity that is separate from ‘prisoner’; they can identify themselves as a musician or artist” (p. 48). Becoming a member of a musical group can give the participant identity options beyond the person’s incarceration label.

Music programs provide people with an opportunity to interact with music, an opportunity that is novel to many of them. Their new experiences and achievements give them credibility and also a point of common interest with people outside the prison. Mary Cohen's prison choir is called The Inside Singers, and she brings in volunteers ("outside singers") to sing with the inmates ("inside singers"). This innovative and effective model reflects her desire to alter the perspectives of both groups of people. Feedback in her studies showed that working side by side with people from the "outside" evoked positive and often surprising responses from the inmates. "Some prisoners remarked that relating to others is difficult in prison," Cohen (2012) noted,

One stated that he was surprised that he can "relate to normal people without apprehension" after 40 years of incarceration . . . The relationships created with community singers have given the prisoners a connection to life outside the institution. One described the community singers as "a bit of fresh air every Tuesday." (p. 51)

In her article "Harmony Within Walls," Cohen went on to write,

As the prisoners began to realize how much the volunteers enjoyed the opportunity to sing with them, they shifted their self-perceptions and began to realize they were "accepted" by the people from outside the prison. In turn, prisoners began to build their internal social networks with other prisoners who shared their interest in choral singing and they also found new friends among the volunteer singers. Two prisoners, who perceived that their ability to relate to others had diminished considerably after years spent in prison, realized they could relate easily to people who shared an interest in music and singing. One wrote that his sanity was "slipping away" the longer he was incarcerated and found choir to be an activity he valued. Another noted that he was surprised he could interact with outside people during the choral program without apprehension, particularly because he had spent 40 years in prison. According to these comments, it appeared that the choir afforded a means for prisoners to interact positively with others, that is, to feel worthy in the eyes of people they admired, as well as to provide a sense of self-gratification. (p. 52)

Through Cohen's choir, the inmates also realized that they could contribute positively to society. Finding new friends, both inside and outside the prison walls, is crucial for successful reentry to society as well as for healthy living (Mincey et al., 2008). Cohen and Palidofsky's (2013) study on young women in detention and their collaboration with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra also found that not only were the youth positively impacted by involvement with the musicians, but the outside artists' perspectives were altered by their time with the young people (Cohen & Palidofsky, 2013).

The Other Side—The Invisible Victim

Along with all the benefits, it is important to remember that behind every person participating in a correctional system music program is the face of a victim, some alive and some dead. Hirsch (2012), along with detailing how music programs can essentially benefit both the incarceration population and the authorities (Hirsch, 2012), brought up this complicated issue. She addressed the complexities of giving people in prison a voice by examining the controversial 2002 documentary series *Music Behind Bars* that gave a murderer fame and, in the meantime, further hurt his victim's family. Public outrage followed, charging that the series glorified crime and celebrated the man who had murdered this 15-year-old girl who was aspiring to be a performer. Mary Cohen, in a private conversation, also related from her personal experience how important it is to keep victims in mind. This issue is complex and important, not to be minimized in the well-intentioned zeal to give incarcerated people both opportunities as well as exposure.

This study explored the impact of music on youth in detention and grew out of my personal journey. I wanted to be able to use music to impact detained youth positively. After over a year of research on music programs in correctional settings, I immersed myself in developing a strings program at the Chatham Youth Development Center. After the program had been established for a year, I conducted a study to explore if there were any benefits to the youth involved in the string program. I had read research studies conducted with similar populations that indicated music's positive impact. I wanted to know if my students were experiencing any benefits, and if so, what those benefits were. As a participant observer, I interacted with students and staff about the program and used those interviews and my field notes to construct a narrative.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

Research Method—The Nature of Case Study Research

In qualitative case study research “the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a *case*) . . . over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information . . . and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Data collected can include observations, interviews, and other documents in order to gain a thorough understanding of the problem. In an instrumental case study, “the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue” (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). In other words, one uses the selected case in order to understand the problem better (Creswell, 2013). A bounded case includes a single issue defined within specific stipulations, for instance, all the interviewees being at the same site at the same time. An in-depth description of the case’s context is vital (Creswell, 2013). Case study research can pose several challenges, including clearly defining the case and determining the boundaries of that case (Creswell, 2013).

The experiences of those involved in the Chatham Strings Program are best examined through a bounded case study. The bounds of this case included the location (Chatham), the time during which the students participated, and the individual students’ common experience of being adjudicated offenders placed in this facility. I acted as a

Participant Observer in this study as I taught and observed the students and interacted with staff who contributed descriptions of their perception of the program to provide additional perspective. This instrumental case examines whether there are benefits to Chatham students because of their participation in the string program. I used purposeful sampling by selecting the site and participants. Data included field notes, interviews, and a focus group discussion. My data analysis utilized an approach recommended by Creswell (2013), where “Qualitative data analysis may be both a description of the story and the themes that emerge from it” (p. 75).

Description of the Research Site—Chatham Youth Development Center

The description of juvenile justice and the demographics of its population, as well as the enumeration of some of music’s benefits to people in correctional facilities, is fairly one-dimensional without a more intimate understanding of specific individuals’ experiences. One can easily dismiss statistics, but when one meets the faces of those statistics, they are hard to forget. My research has grown out of directing a strings program at the Chatham Youth Development Center in Siler City, NC. Chatham Youth Development Center is one of four Youth Development Centers (YDCs) in the state of North Carolina. These facilities are “the most restrictive, intensive dispositional option available to North Carolina’s juvenile courts” (NC DPS, 2020, para. 2). They are devoted to youth who have committed serious offenses such as sex crimes or murder, or repeat offenders for whom the courts want a more intensive, rehabilitation-focused option. The goal of the Youth Development Centers is to “provide mentoring, education and therapeutic treatment to prepare youth for a fresh start when they re-enter their

communities” (NC DPS, 2020, para. 1). A juvenile detention center is the juvenile equivalent of adult jail (generally for short incarceration), while a Youth Development Center is the juvenile equivalent of adult prison (for long-term incarceration).

According to the North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission (2017), of the 237 young people released from NC YDCs in 2013, 80% had a history in the juvenile justice system, and 84% were adjudicated for a felony. Chatham can hold 32 youth and is divided into four units of eight youth each—two male units and two female units. Chatham is a simple brick building that looks more like a school than a prison. The building’s design is in a horseshoe shape, with the administrative offices, visitation area, gym, and kitchen along the front, and the female units coming off one side and the male units on the other side. The male and female sections are separated by a yard with a garden, a seesaw, and an open area for playing sports. A tall fence closes off the side of the yard not surrounded by the building.

When a youth enters Chatham, the nurse and mental health clinicians, as well as educational specialists, assess the youth. One of Chatham’s nurses explained to me that upon admission many youth are reluctant to answer the more sensitive medical questions such as their involvement with sex, drugs, and alcohol since they have committed so many offenses that they are not sure for which offenses the judge has sent them to Chatham. Most of these youth have never been to a dentist or eye doctor. All of Chatham’s currently detained youth are on psychotropic drugs because of mental diagnosis, although these types of drugs are not automatically dispensed to all of Chatham’s youth. Most of the youth have been sexually abused, and many of the girls are

afraid that they are pregnant upon their arrival since they have been sexually active, on the run, and often using sex as a way to get money. Some of the girls have been involved in trafficking.

Chatham's principal explained that the youth take a psycho-educational test upon arrival and that their educational records are transferred from the last school they attended. They start their schooling based on the last grade recorded in their record. Many, however, have not been in school for years because of detention, suspension, or truancy, and their association with education is often negative—which is not surprising, in part because of the effects of the trauma that most have experienced (Foran, 2009). Chatham has teachers for the four core subjects—Math, Science, Language Arts, and History—and uses an online resource for electives. In addition to their subjects, instructors teach study skills and counsel students. Patience and encouragement are crucial in this difficult school environment. Students report that they have never received this level of academic help before their experience at Chatham. Units move together from class to class throughout the day, so each classroom contains many different grade levels. The students do individual work from packets or work on a computer, with the teacher helping each one as needed. Chatham frequently has special events in which teachers recognize students for progress in behavior or the subject matter, and these certificates seem prized by the youth in residence.

The research literature reflects the challenge of schooling while in detention. Young, Phillips, and Nasir (2010) recognized that education is considered part of rehabilitation, besides being required by law. Reed et al. (2017) advocated career

preparation and literacy education for youth offenders. This study noted that low reading ability contributes to juveniles becoming involved in crime and struggling to find work. The authors champion not only general reading skill improvement but vocational literacy (Reed et al., 2017). Improved academic success often leads to improved social behavior, so improving students' reading skills can have powerful effects on their future success (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2003).

Successful re-integration following a youth's release from a detention facility is another area of concern for the youth detained at Chatham, consistent with national reports (Cole & Cohen, 2013). Many of the youth returning to school on the "outside" have a negative reputation both with peers and teachers. School personnel need to maintain the delicate balance between displaying positive attitudes towards the returning youth, to give them a second chance, while at the same time being vigilant with returning youth who have committed violent or sex offenses or have past gang involvement to ensure the safety of other students. Post-release supervision usually stipulates that the youth attend school, so truancy is one reason that youth may quickly reenter the juvenile justice system. Cole and Cohen (2013) conclude that the heart of the complex issue of reintegration into school on the *outside* is communication and cooperation between schools and juvenile detention centers to try to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for youth trying to reenter school.

Chatham's program model uses a therapeutic way of interacting with the youth to develop pro-social skills, with a focus on teaching, training, rehabilitation, and successful society reentry. The Director of Chatham, Charles Dingle, said that he tells his staff, "We

only have them for a season, but while we have them, let's give them our best," and this compassionate approach is reflected in the way the staff interacts with the youth.

Chatham's Model of Care is based on levels: Stage 1 is the lowest and most restrictive for youth just admitted to the facility, and Stage 4 is the highest level, affording more freedom, personal choice, and responsibility. In Stage 1, the youth focus on acquiring the Five Basic Skills, which are (a) Accepting Feedback, (b) Accepting No for an Answer, (c) Asking Permission, (d) Following Instruction, and (e) Greeting Skills. While the goals stay the same throughout the program, as the youth progress out of Stage 1, the staff develops an individualized skill plan based on the needs of the youth. While some youth do not have to complete the program in order to be released, this Model of Care gives the incentive to achieve higher levels because of the additional privileges earned with each level. Each youth has a treatment team comprised of people on campus who can respond quickly to situations; the youth also has a larger service team, with people reviewing all aspects of the youth's life. This larger team includes mental health workers, the social worker and youth counselor, the center's nurse, school teachers at the center, court counselors, and guardians. Social workers connect the youth to resources both inside and outside the center. Both the treatment and the service teams meet regularly to review how the youth are doing and to adjust their care as needed.

Days at Chatham are extremely structured. There are set times to wake up, eat, attend classes, go to therapy or counseling, have reflection time, and other activities. Bedtime is determined by the levels, with earlier bedtimes for those on lower levels and later bedtimes for those who are on higher levels and have those privileges.

Several volunteer organizations come to Chatham on the weekends to provide programs for the youth, including religious groups, and currently a program providing training for interested youth to become certified as nail technicians. Chatham's director encourages exposure; he wants the youth to experience new things. As a veteran staff member said, "If you live your life in a corner, you only know that corner." That perspective, and the director's prior experience with Greensboro Symphony musicians when he worked at the Guilford Detention Center, influenced his enthusiastic welcome of the string program into Chatham's life. I inform the administration of how many openings I have at a given time (depending on how many instruments I have available), and they select the young people whom they think are ready and deserving of the opportunity.

Description of the Program—Chatham Strings

In the 18 months since the program's inception, 20 teens have been involved in Chatham Strings. The demographic statistics of the teens are about 75% Black and 25% White/Hispanic, and most of them have never experienced classical music or string instruments. Using string instruments donated to the program, I teach youth at the center how to play violin, viola, and cello in weekly group classes, and the teens perform in a chamber group. The purpose of the program is less about training musicians as it is allowing young people to have new experiences, take on new challenges (e.g., learning to play an instrument, work in an ensemble, read and write music) and be successful in them, exercise pro-social skills through working closely with peers, and provide a positive outlet for emotions. The students have given multiple concerts in the Center for

peers and staff, a concert at the Juvenile Justice Central Office in Raleigh for directors of detention facilities, played in my January 2019 doctoral recital at UNCG, and performed as part of the Chatham Youth Development Center's Black History Month program and Cultural Awareness program. Chatham Strings also performed its own community concert at the University of North Carolina Greensboro's Tew Recital Hall and Bennett College's Pfeiffer Chapel. In October 2019, Chatham Strings performed at the NC Juvenile Justice "Raise the Age" Conference in Winston-Salem for around 250 Juvenile Justice personnel such as directors, social workers, juvenile judges, and mental health clinicians from across the state. Chatham Strings has also been featured in two articles in the North Carolina Department of Public Safety's *On the Scene Digest* (see Appendices D and E).

Description of Participants

Eight of Chatham Strings' members volunteered to participate in this study. Of those eight students, four of them were members of the original Chatham Strings class at the center. None of the students had played a string instrument before joining Chatham Strings. I do not know the young people's specific offenses or why they are at Chatham; that information is protected under law. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of these young people.

Jardana was one of the original six students who participated in Chatham Strings' pilot run. She is a Black student who was about 16 years old when she first joined the string program. Jardana had an extensive background in music and said she listened to rap, hip hop, R&B, and some classical. She knew how to read music from

being in choir and playing guitar, piano, and French horn, and so she learned the violin quickly and soon became the strongest member of the group. Her sparkling, take-charge personality made her a natural leader, and she often taught other students how to do something that they found a challenge. Personable and with a quick smile, Jardana seemed to enjoy performances and talking with audience members after the concerts. She was a committed member who only missed class if she was not allowed to attend because of an infraction. Jardana was one of the first students to take an interest in composition, and she wrote a melody which she titled *Third* for her baby brother, who was due to be born. I added harmony parts so that the rest of the group could accompany the melody, and she tenaciously learned how to play the solo part, even though she found it challenging. She took great satisfaction from the public performances of her piece. Jardana was interviewed for the first NC Juvenile Justice article on Chatham Strings, and her comments were featured in the article, another accomplishment she treasured. Jardana was released just before her 18th birthday, after being in Chatham Strings for about 13 months.

Darrisha was a 14-year-old Black student when our paths crossed in Chatham Strings. She was another of the original six members in the program. During our first meeting, Darrisha was enthusiastic about the Introduction to Strings concert that some colleagues and I performed at Chatham before I started the program; she was fascinated by the instruments and told me she wanted to learn how to read music. Darrisha said she enjoyed listening to many genres of music. Her grandparents played string instruments and had an extensive collection of them in their home, and while she was never allowed

to touch the instruments, their involvement with strings made her curious. Though Darrisha took reasonably quickly to the violin, she was a challenging student. She was defensive and guarded, so she perceived any feedback as a personal attack. She also tended to anger quickly and become frustrated with other students. Darrisha sometimes missed class because she did not want to come, in addition to the times she was not permitted to come because of an infraction. During the 13 months she was in Chatham Strings before her release, I saw improvement in her willingness to accept feedback because she enjoyed the concerts and felt successful after them. That positive feeling made her more interested in improving, which, she realized, meant accepting input and trying to work with others.

Kelli was introduced in the opening of this dissertation. She is a White female who was 16 or 17 years old when she joined Chatham Strings. Rap was the genre of music to which she listened exclusively. All the males in her family, she told me, had felonies on their records. Kelli remained in Chatham Strings for one year, until she was released shortly before her 18th birthday. She had some musical background, singing in middle school chorus and playing the drums and guitar before coming to Chatham. Kelli is reserved but pleasant and was a focused student who was always willing to help the other students.

Maria, a Hispanic female who speaks Spanish at home, was in Chatham Strings for seven months before her release. The types of music Maria listened to were hip hop, R&B, and “oldies” (90s music). She had been playing an instrument since fifth grade in her school band and had learned saxophone, clarinet, and percussion. She was intrigued

by stringed instruments and was excited to learn a new instrument. She learned the violin quickly and was soon helping others learn new things. Maria was somewhat reserved, but pleasant and an attentive, engaged student. She was excited when she got to play a short solo in one of her last concerts with the group.

Evangelia is currently in Chatham Strings and has played the violin now for about 7 months. She sang in chorus before coming to Chatham and said that whenever she heard string music in the past she thought it was boring, although she enjoyed listening to hip hop, rap, R&B, and pop music. The opportunity to learn something new made her interested in Chatham Strings. Somewhat laid back, with a quick and warm smile, Evangelia learned more slowly than most of her classmates. She and a classmate collaboratively composed a piece, *Improvization*, which they performed in a recent concert.

Stephen joined Chatham Strings at the same time as Evangelia. From the beginning, he begged me to play the cello, but he had to start on the violin because all of our cellos were in use at that time. After five months of playing the violin, a cello became available, and he made the switch to the larger instrument. Stephen's favorite type of music is rap. A White male who will talk incessantly, Stephen played trumpet, trombone, saxophone, and drums in the band before coming to Chatham. His niece played the cello and that is why he was so determined to learn that instrument. Stephen is funny and can be a handful in class because he is so active.

Jimar was another of the original six members of Chatham Strings. A Black male who got along easily with the other students, Jimar was 13 years old when he joined the

group. He participated in the string program for about 14 months before he was released. He played the trombone in band before coming to Chatham and mainly listened to rap, like most of the students, but uniquely his family occasionally listened to classical music. When I first met Jimar, he told me he wanted to be in the string program so that he could learn to play, and so he could be around the girls. Jimar started on the violin, but switched to the cello after about 6 months, once a cello became available. He liked the cello better but found the switch more challenging than he expected. Jimar never got in trouble during the time I knew him and was a faithful member who was always in class.

K'eon has been in Chatham Strings the longest of any of the students. He was part of the original class and was fairly new to Chatham when he joined 15 months ago. K'eon was 14 when I first met him. He is fascinated by music, and had played piano and also several band instruments before coming to Chatham. He said he listens to “everything” and mentioned hip hop and jazz, among other genres. K'eon played violin for a few weeks before I switched him to cello, a move he approved because, as he would tell me in his interview, “‘Cuz I knew the violin was small, but I was big, so when I saw the big instrument, I was like, ‘alright, I’m playing that.’” Tenacious and persistent when he wants something, K'eon is the only student I have had at Chatham who decided to learn vibrato. K'eon is a Black male who is also gifted in visual art, and his drawings cover a part of his unit; one staff member commented “his talents are off the roof.” Although I do not know the nature of K'eon's offense, he is under strict restrictions and is not allowed to play at events off-campus. After the rest of the original class left, K'eon said with some despair that he thought he might stay in detention until he is 21. K'eon

never missed class unless he had gotten into trouble. K'eon loves music and is a focused student in class, but when a supervisor admiringly said to me early in the program, "if you can deal with K'eon, you can deal with anyone," I realized that his class behavior had not transferred to other domains in his life. If there is a fight, K'eon is usually in the thick of it and is antagonistic with staff. One of the staff members commented with regret, about K'eon that

he's his own worst enemy. He can't get out of his own way. He's the best painter here, he's the best painter, drawer, stuff like this—his talents are off the roof. His behavior—the other way. But he just—some kids get it fast, other kids get it later. He gonna get it the hard way. He's going to have to run into some more brick walls. (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Description of PI

I am a third-year DMA cello performance student at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. My interest in sharing music with people in incarceration has grown out of various experiences in my life. As a teenager, I played the cello at the local detention center for several years, and that was my first exposure to the correctional system. While people in the correctional system were not consciously on my radar for many years after that experience, my desire to bring music to places and people for whom it is less accessible and to use music to help people in vulnerable seasons in their lives only grew over time. When my uncle was incarcerated about 6 years ago, I began to think about people in that setting. While speaking with him on the phone, I began to notice the loneliness, the isolation, and the potential stagnation of prison time. Thinking about his experiences helped the general trajectory of my goals coalesce, in a sense, and gave me a

concrete plan about where and how to use music. I am not motivated in opposition to the correctional system but instead wanting to be an aid to its rehabilitation process for my fellow human beings. While there are aspects of the correctional system that are broken, the fundamental brokenness of people and society is the reason both for the need of a correctional system and also for some of the system's problems. I do not believe that problems with the correctional system nullify the legitimacy and need for such a system in our society. Some artists who do meaningful and effective work in a prison setting have a basic philosophic framework that most incarceration is wrong, and part of the motivation for their work is a sort of silent revolt. While the outcomes of our programs may look very similar, my worldview does not align with that framework, although our desire to provide an enriching arts experience to people in a difficult situation would mesh. My goal for Chatham Strings has been to come alongside the correctional system, and specifically Chatham Youth Development Center, and provide a program that creatively supports Chatham's goal of restorative justice and successful society reentry for its youth.

Research Procedure

The data for this study includes interviews with youth in Chatham Strings, interviews with staff members at Chatham, and my own observational field notes. As the PI, I acted as the narrative inquirer and participant observer in this study. The study posed minimal risk to the participants as there was no intervention or experimental aspect of this project. I simply described what the participants and I experienced through involvement with the string program. In order to conduct this study, I had to complete

human subjects training and submit a proposal to UNCG's Institutional Review Board for approval. Because the study involves a doubly vulnerable population—they are minors and incarcerated—the IRB application process was complicated as the IRB committee wanted to ensure that the youth were protected. In order to safeguard the identities of the youth, Chatham's director requested that the assent forms not include the full name of the youth participants, and the IRB allowed the youth to give verbal assent rather than signing their names. Youth in detention are wards of the state, so a waiver for Parental Permission, typically required in studies with youth, was requested by the director and approved by the IRB.

I recruited student participants who were enrolled in the string class using an oral recruitment script, which I read to the students at the end of one of our Saturday morning classes at Chatham (see Appendix A). Participants in this study were eight Chatham Strings members who elected to participate in the interview process. Because this study is a descriptive case study, there was no intervention or treatment, no control group, and no need for random selection. This sample is a convenience sample based on interested students only. Participating in the study had no effect on the youth's standing in the string group or on their case at the judicial level. I interviewed each student participant for 10 to 20 minutes and interacted with them using IRB-approved questions (see Appendix A). The interviews were audio-recorded. Additional to the individual interviews, the youth participated in a group interview focused on questions relating to working together as a team in the string program. This interview was also audio recorded.

For the staff component of this study, I invited specific staff members to participate in interviews. The staff members who agreed to be interviewed for the study include Chatham's director and three staff members who work each day with the youth at Chatham, including the youth enrolled in the string program. The interviews with each staff member lasted about 15 minutes and were audio-recorded. Apart from the data-interviews, I wrote field notes after each class, concert, or event involving the youth, noting my observations, feelings, questions, and ideas.

Data Analysis

Saldaña (2016) notes that "qualitative analysis calculates meaning" (p. 10), and the primary work in data analysis is noting patterns (and deviations) that coalesce into emergent, global themes. For this instrumental case study, I used grounded theory methods for interacting with the data. After transcribing the individual interviews, I coded each interview using in vivo (actual language) and process (using gerunds) coding methods. Mixing the coding methods was helpful; the process coding provided an action-based code while in vivo coding used the actual words of the youth, which was particularly important to me. The youth all have their own unique voice and story, and I wanted to preserve that individuality. Because of the complexities of the group interview, I did a "gist" transcription, noting salient quotes or issues about which the youth were particularly animated. After reading and re-reading 16 months of field notes, I wrote analytic memos on them. I began to group related codes into categories from the interviews and field notes. Four themes emerged from the data analysis. Three of those

themes were common themes, representing shared experiences mentioned by all the participants in the study (youth, staff, and PI). One theme was specific to the staff.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The Chatham Youth Development Center is a unique facility with specific resources that are available to its youth. As a result, the experiences of the youth at Chatham cannot be generalized and may not represent what youth experience in other facilities. The youth all have their own journey, as well, and so their experiences differ.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Four Emergent Themes

The data for this study include student interviews, a student focus group, staff interviews, and field notes. These data provided multiple perspectives on a common experience, and staff member checking increased the trustworthiness of the results. Four themes emerged from the data analysis. Three were common, representing shared experiences mentioned by all the participants in the study (youth, staff, and PI). These themes included Exposure and New Experiences, Pride and Recognition, and Personal and Interpersonal Development. A fourth theme emerged from the responses of staff participants of Chatham Strings contributing to the community effort of restorative justice. The in vivo quotes in each theme are exact transcriptions from the interviews conducted with the youth, using the actual words and syntax of the youth in order to preserve their unique voice and personality.

Theme 1: Exposure and New Experiences

Participation in Chatham Strings was described as a completely new experience by all the participants in the study. The youth were not only unfamiliar with the classical tradition in which string playing is grounded, but what they had heard of classical music made them conclude that it was boring. String instruments were also a surprising new family of instruments for most of the youth. Exposure to both string instruments and the

classical genre were only the beginning of new experiences, once they joined Chatham Strings. I categorized the broad theme of New Experiences into five subthemes: being discouraged from learning new things, being given an opportunity to learn something new, enjoying new experiences, transferring openness to new things into other domains, and being given another chance to engage differently with life.

Being Discouraged from Learning New Things

Curiosity about new things and a willingness to engage in unfamiliar activities were foreign qualities to most of the youth. Because of the troubled backgrounds and difficult home life that most have experienced, this aversion to new and potentially positive things was problematic, contributing to the vicious cycle of problems with the law, return to the familiar but dysfunctional life, and subsequent encounters with the legal system. Familiarity with dysfunction and bad influences is a large part of the problem because these youth were not encouraged to break out of the cycle; in fact, a staff member commented that “many come from a mindset that trying new things is frowned upon by a lot of their peer groups” (A. Camacho, personal communication, May 11, 2019). Chatham’s director agreed that “a lot of them have been in experiences where people have told them that they couldn’t do something” (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019). Maria shared with me that “people would always tell me . . . like I couldn’t do stuff and they would like try to put me down growing up” (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019). The discouragement Maria experienced as she grew up influenced her initial approach to being in Chatham Strings:

I didn't think I would be able to do stuff like this because it looked so complicated when they were doing it . . . like I never thought I would do stuff like this, I never like—I come in here [to Chatham] I've done a lot of stuff that had been out of my character, like when I do step or the strings or now I'm in, like, the nails program, like something different that I never thought I would do in life growing up, but I like it (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

Even apart from the disparaging formative feedback that still influences many of the youth, the boys in the original class encountered an additional challenge when they joined Chatham Strings. Classical music was already outside their experience, but there was also the extra stigma of being a male string player. A staff member said she was concerned that the boys would refuse to join the group because it was perceived as a “feminine” activity. While boys did join, the first boys who participated in Chatham Strings were teased by peers on their unit (M. Hughes, personal communication, May 25, 2019).

Another staff member explained,

I think [a lack of openness to new things] can be pretty typical of teenagers but I think it is . . . a bit heightened in the demographic we're dealing with because there's a certain – I know in the Hispanic community they call it *machismo* which is like being macho and being manly is very emphasized, and so music, a lot of the time, especially woodwinds and orchestral instruments, is viewed as a more feminine activity. So seeing as many of the boys as we did see want to participate and actually do really well with it impressed me a lot. (A. Camacho, personal communication, May 11, 2019)

The first three boys involved with Chatham Strings dealt with teasing from their peers, but their participation made it easier for current boys at Chatham to join without dealing with the same degree of stigma.

Apart from the initial gender stigma, K'eon showed some resistance to learning to read and notate music because, he said, “I'm Black. I can't do this. Black people don't do

this.” He had already told me that he would like to be a producer in the future, so I challenged his assumption: “That’s not true. And it is something you have to learn if you intend to be a producer. How can you work on recordings if you can’t follow sheet music and tell artists where to start or where to fix something?” (personal communication, August 3, 2019). Though he may not have been completely convinced, K’eon was willing to try after our conversation.

Being Given an Opportunity to Learn Something New

In my field notes, I often described the youths’ first reactions to their violin or cello as nearly reverential. On the original group’s first day of class, I wrote “their faces and the way they [held] the instruments was so touching” (personal communication, May 26, 2018), and another day, that “[they] are so focused and quietly delighted” with the newness of everything they were learning and experiencing (personal communication, June 16, 2018). Most of them had no idea what a cello was, and the boys in one of my classes called violins “little guitars” on their first day. Another one of the youth exclaimed that she had “never been this close to a violin before!” when she was first handed her violin (personal communication, July 20, 2019). The youth were generally guarded and defensive, so catching those moments when they were intrigued enough to let their guard down was unique and special. Jardana described joining Chatham Strings as “a different experience, like stepping outside the box” (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019). According to a staff member, that uniqueness was part of the program’s strength: “This right here was totally out the box for the majority of them. So, I thought it was a wonderful idea” (D. McLean, personal communication, June

10, 2019). For K'eon, the opportunity to learn a string instrument was what drew him to the program: "When I heard about [the program], I was like, I got nothing to do, I like music, and I play instruments, so I could add that one to my list. You know, learn more . . . I never played a string instrument before . . . So I was like, it would be cool for me to learn a string instrument" (K'eon, personal communication, April 27, 2019). Jimar voiced similar thoughts when he said he joined Chatham Strings "Cuz I wanted to learn how to play like, um, the cello—stuff like that—'cuz I never played one" (Jimar, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

Enjoying New Experiences

Learning a string instrument was such a new experience for the youth that they felt tentative and unconvinced that they would enjoy it or be successful. Darrisha was curious because her grandparents played string instruments; she explained, "I wanted to try something new, and see like what my grandma, my grandpa's talking about" but she added that she was surprised she liked it because "the way my grandma . . . described it, I thought it was boring but when I actually got a hint of it, it's kinda fun!" (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019). Even though Maria had played in band before coming to Chatham, she was doubtful that she could learn a string instrument:

Because I've never played a string instrument before so I was really interested in that and it give me an opportunity to learn something new . . . What most surprised me was the just strings, it was, I mean it was just different to me because I've never done it before . . . It's given me like a new experience, it's given me like a new thing to do . . . like you're teaching us something different... But I like it a lot because it's like, the violin I really like because to me it just seemed so complicated when people play it but like as I've kept coming here and you kept explaining stuff to me like it's like I can play it like it's nothing now.

But I really like it . . . I really enjoy it . . . I like it a lot . . . (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019)

Recognizing that they could learn something new, even something as foreign as a string instrument and classical music, was surprising to many of the youth. As one staff member stated, it was not something that someone could tell them theoretically; they had to learn it for themselves. And being involved in the string program was a catalyst, at least in this area, for that realization.

I mean, I'm not surprised. I already know they can do whatever they put their mind to do. They have to learn that. I knew that from the beginning. So I wasn't surprised; I was happy. I think I cried the first [concert]. I think I teared up. That was big—to be the first group to get in front of your peers, play a violin and a viola, and a cello—that's very unheard of for some of them so that was a big deal. So I was proud of them. (M. Hughes, personal communication, May 25, 2019)

Learning that they could succeed in doing something unfamiliar can be a key to breaking the cycle of returning to the dysfunctional familiar that traps many of these youth. One of the staff members highlighted this possibility when he commented that

This right here . . . was so far off their radar . . . And this, if anything, it made them see they could do something different. It made them see, "I don't have to keep doing what I used to do; I could do something different and be good at it." (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Chatham's director corroborated, "[the program] has opened up their minds to say, 'you know what, I can do this, and that I do have some talents'" (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019). Chatham embraces a teaching and exposure process that

encourages the youth to realize they can be successful in new things. The director explained,

They don't know, you know, and when they don't know, they just don't know, so like, you don't get frustrated, you teach them. I mean, you just teach them, that's all, and I'm sure you've seen it, when they walked in your class, they just didn't know. I mean, so you just got to start from ground zero, but I'm telling you, when you give them a little something, then they see, "you know what, I can do things in life." (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

After Chatham Strings' second concert, I observed the youths' responses to their successful performance:

The kids did well and seemed to have a lot of fun. They were laughing and enjoying themselves . . . Kelli was thrilled that [a guest musician] complimented her on her position. [A viola student] said he got unexpectedly nervous, but that it was good. K'eon gave me his great slow smile when I asked him about it. Jardana was glowing; she was having a blast. Jimar was happy, too (personal communication, December 4, 2018).

Realizing they can enjoy and succeed in something unfamiliar made the youth want to encourage their peers to try new things. A staff member said that when the first six youth joined Chatham Strings and were successful, "they opened the box for somebody else to do something different" (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019).

Another staff member observed,

I think that once the kids that aren't in the program heard the current people play, they were like, "oh, they're really learning something in there. They sound good. Aww man, you really played that violin." They asked more questions about the instruments . . . They was more like, "maybe that's something I should look into." (M. Hughes, personal communication, May 25, 2019)

Another staff member related that, as the youth in the program began to have new things to talk about, their peers on the unit started to progress from skepticism to interest. He said,

So I watched them . . . [go from] “I don’t want to be a part of it” [to] “Can I be a part of it?” based on them having so much good feedback from the group, it made others want to be a part of it. So—I was like, “Wow . . . See, you try something different, you might like it!”—and they did. And they did. They really, really did enjoy this right here. (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Jardana expressed her pride that her involvement got others interested in playing strings:

I got a lot of my friends to try it—peers, friends—to try it—and I like that they’re stepping out of their box. Some kids won’t even look at a violin—not because they don’t necessarily like it, but they’ve just never been exposed to that side of culture, so they would just shut it out. But they see me, and then they want to try it and they end up liking it. And yeah, I like that. (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

In an interview for a NC DPS publication, Jardana also commented that “before this, nobody would have come out and said I like classical music, but now others have seen it’s cool and want to try it” (M. Jenkins, *On the Scene Digest* 2018 article). A staff member also remarked on the contagious nature of the string group’s success:

I think that what kind of surprised me was, when we came around with the second wave, the people who were starting to ask to participate. I think they watched their peers succeed and feel pride in their work and wanted to earn that same feeling. So I wouldn’t say—I said surprised—but it was interesting to watch that effect spread. (A. Camacho, personal communication, May 11, 2019)

As I observed the youths’ peers at their concerts, I noted that “After we play, I always get the sense from the audience that the kids listening are a little taken off guard

by the music; like they're processing it because it's so different—both the instruments and music genre” (personal communication, February 22, 2019). Despite the novelty of the instruments and music, as time went on, I noticed increasing interest and acceptance in their response. In my field notes from our second concert at Chatham, I wrote,

Units A and D came for the concert, as well as the five visitors, staff, teachers, and a few people from the Central Office in Raleigh . . . The audience was incredibly enthusiastic, warm, and supportive. The applause was amazing! One of the social workers who was at our first concert noted the same thing. The first concert, there wasn't a sense of support from the other kids but this time it was markedly different. (personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Transferring ‘Openness to New Things’ into Other Domains

“Exposure is powerful,” one staff member observed (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019), and the impact of exposure has ramifications beyond the youth learning that they could be successful in one new area. Success in an unfamiliar realm affected the youths' willingness to try other new things. Many started to realize that if they could learn in one new area, they could succeed in another area, even if the areas are unrelated. They learned that the issue is not what they are attempting, but their willingness to attempt something new. Evangelia realized that

I like learning new things . . . I learned that I need to stop limiting myself, telling myself what I can't do and allowing things, you know allowing new things like the nail program, like the . . . strings to teach me new things, so I'm not always bottled up in the same things. I'm doing new things. (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019)

A staff member related,

I think that seeing how rewarding [participating in the program is] is going to open them up to being more willing to try something they may have considered too eccentric or weird to do in the first place . . . That's kind of my hope, that's it's kind of going to be leading into . . . potentially exploring career interests – actually I'm pretty sure that has had an impact, because we had one of the students who was wanting to be a video game designer but is now looking at like carpentry, and that's come out of like nowhere. So I think it's kind of already having that kind of impact of 'well, if I can be successful at this one thing that I didn't think that I could do, then maybe this could branch off somewhere else' . . . That's kind of where I'm hoping that it's leading, that it's planted the seed of being able to try something new and diverse that they didn't consider at first. (A. Camacho, personal communication, May 11, 2019)

Another staff member said,

I think the kids found out something they didn't think they could do before, they can do it now. They seem like it's something they want to look forward to maybe pursuing when they go to [college] . . . look at more options to joining different groups, if not a string program, at least some type of group. (M. Hughes, personal communication, May 25, 2019)

And Chatham's director, commenting along the same lines, spoke of his vision for

Chatham to be a place where the youth are exposed to different opportunities and how he saw the string program assisting in that goal:

I've seen the kids grow. [Chatham Strings] has opened the door for them to see other things in life, and, you know, I've tried to approach this facility in a way that, where we want to introduce our kids to as many different things, because when you give them other opportunities and allow them to see other talents, then they can turn from possibly doing wrong and turn it into a positive when they get back home. (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Being Given Another Chance to Engage Differently with Life

Having the opportunity to be successful at something new can change perspectives and give a sense of greater possibilities. For youth trapped in the small circle of their experiences and background, being given a chance to engage in something different can give a sense of a second chance. One staff member mentioned how important it is that the youth feel like they are “still a kid” (D. Mclean, personal communication, June 10, 2019) and that their life is still before them. He explained,

[They] made mistakes . . . You give them a chance to do something different. That’s what they need. “Give me a chance to make it right.” Some do, some don’t. Some get better, some get worse. But you give them a chance. That’s all they need. Every child needs a chance—here, outside of here—give them a chance. (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Chatham’s director explained that having the opportunity to engage in a positive team effort is new for many of the youth. “A lot of these kids, they weren’t going to school—they were kicked out or suspended or skipping class. Now they’re sitting still long enough where they’re going to class and so they’re doing well in class” (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019). For many of them, their time at Chatham is the first time they are “being more like a normal student, even though they’re with us and they can’t leave, but they’re now doing normal student things and they like it, they love it” (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019). And because the youth are in a structured, safe setting, they are in a position to learn skills that can affect the rest of their lives.

We win because I see in their hearts and their minds and their eyes, “hey I’m doing something special that nobody probably thought that I could do, but I’m having opportunity to do it here”—and it’s just going to go a long way with them in life. You know, being a former athlete and being in the band and stuff myself, I mean, you remember those things because they do help shape who you are. Doesn’t matter where you get it from, it’s just that you get it and you be a part of it and it does help, that process in life. So I think that we have done a lot for these kids and I hope that more can be able to touch the [string] program and continue it to grow . . . [The string program is] probably something that they never would have touched in public sector, but now they’re touching it. So that’s what’s most powerful about it, working with these types of kids and bringing programs such as yours to work with the kids. (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Another staff member, a veteran in the juvenile justice system, said that he saw the youths’ involvement in Chatham Strings as vital in expanding their horizons:

I see the difference. I know ones who tried, I know ones who wanted to be a part . . . You opened a whole new avenue, and that’s what’s so important. If you keep a kid in the corner, they know the corner. You give them an instrument, [and they say] . . . “I’m going to [perform at] a college! You took me from the corner to a college. You took me from Chatham to a college. You’ve taken me to a place I would have never thought!” So this right here was so beautiful. You took so many kids somewhere that they never thought they would go, could go—“because of something I did good? I’m here for—what?—x, y, z! I’m going to Raleigh, I’m going to UNCG, I’m going all over!” (D. Mclean, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

A particularly vivid experience made me think in a deeper way about the interconnectivity of exposure and curiosity, and the resulting impact on the receptiveness and openness of the youth. A brilliant young double bassist and recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Xavier Foley was performing with the Greensboro Symphony in November 2019, and he agreed to come to Chatham during that week. During his visit, Xavier and I went to each of Chatham’s four units. We spent about 10–15 minutes on

each unit, and during that time, Xavier interacted with the youth and played for them. In my field notes, I described the experience:

The kids—and staff—were rapt and engaged. He made them *feel* things. They asked him about the bass, about himself, about how he feels when he plays, about writing music, about why he sometimes closes his eyes, etc. They were intrigued. Both the Chatham Strings students and their peers were engaged, but the Chatham Strings students seemed to feel some credibility with him, like they belonged in a special way. The staff was dazzled. They'd never heard anything like him. I could tell the kids felt special that he came. They had something new to occupy their thoughts for the rest of the day. They felt intrigued and taken somewhere new. Xavier gave them a gift. He doesn't understand them so doesn't quite get the magnitude of it. (personal communication, November 22, 2019)

The next class day, though, was when I observed something markedly unusual. When I arrived, the youth were brimming with curiosity. They had a lot to say about Xavier, including that he was “really into it.” They also had many questions about how he did certain things or made specific sounds. The students were still clearly inspired from their interaction with him. As I observed them, I was struck by the realization that curiosity makes a person soft, open, receptive, and absorptive. It was making the youth focus on something outside themselves, and engage in wonder. Curiosity is an emotion, and emotions are not sustainable. But a moment of wonder had unlocked something inside the youth. That softening does not mean that the unlocked place, that shaken defense, will stay open, but maybe if that place has been rarely if ever opened, the experiencing of wonder and curiosity can prepare that person for more opening, more softening. Even though emotions cannot be expected to be consistent or sustained in the same intensity, a moment of curiosity cannot be discounted as meaningless just because it is temporary. One-time experiences can have a powerful impact. Trauma is an example of a negative

one-time powerful experience. Conversely, I wondered, can moments of wonder and awakened curiosity be a positive, impactful experience? Can piqued curiosity be a key to getting beyond the defense mechanism? While the qualities of receptivity, openness, and curiosity do not normally characterize the youth, that day they were softer and more receptive than I had ever seen them, and I felt moved by the marked change in them (personal communication, November 23, 2019).

Theme 2: Pride and Recognition

The second broad theme that emerged from the data was the pride and recognition the students experienced through being in Chatham Strings. Pride in various personal accomplishments was noted in several subthemes, such as acquiring a skill that could be shared with others, collaborating with peers on something positive, taking satisfaction in their successful performances, overcoming nerves in performance, and realizing their potential to do positive things in life. The sub-categories of feeling recognized by receiving positive reinforcement, making someone they loved or respected proud of them, and getting attention for something positive instead of negative was the relational side of this theme.

Pride: Acquiring a Skill that Could be Shared with Others

K'eon said that “what really surprised me is like how fast I learned” to play the cello, and that skill acquisition made him feel proud. “Once I learn it, get on it—like the song we practiced today . . . when I heard you play it and I got the fingering down—it’s over, I got it” (K’eon, personal communication, April 27, 2019). As Evangelia was preparing for an upcoming performance, she commented that she was excited because

she was going to be the one sharing what she had learned with her peers: “I feel good ‘cuz everybody’s gonna be sitting down and I’m going to be performing!” (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Maria told me that she liked playing the violin “because like I feel like I be catching on quick and I can do it myself” (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Maria also said that because she knew she could play the violin, she felt confident that she had something to show, even in a situation that intimidated her. Reflecting on a concert at Chatham, she told me

I mean, I was kind of shy because it was in front of the whole staff, I mean the whole facility . . . That was like the first time we were all put together in one spot and it kind of made me nervous—because I don’t really know these kids. But at the same time it kind of gave me more assertive because I was like “okay they can’t judge me like that.” But I mean I like it, it gives me, like, I’m showing them something that I can do. (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019)

Pride: Collaborating with Peers in a Positive Endeavor

For many youths, working with peers was not a new experience. Gang involvement or merely being involved with the wrong crowd were experiences most youth at Chatham had in common, but collaborating with peers towards a positive goal was an unfamiliar experience for many of them. Several staff members said that the pride the youth felt in what they were learning and doing was a new experience for them. Jardana described a concert experience when she recognized and relished this positive collaboration:

[I saw] my peers in a different light than what they normally talk about, doing something completely positive, like no undertone, no nothing, it was just positive and everybody was just enjoying everybody. I liked that. And we was all just together, in one accord. (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Another student experienced a sense of community and remarked after his first concert that it was great to “do this together” (personal communication, December 4, 2018). And a staff member added how much he enjoyed seeing “how it made them feel. To see them, to see their reaction to go out doing it and playing it and going different places—how it made them feel, like, I’m being able to commit, I’m in front of everybody, I’m doing something positive” (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019).

Pride: Taking Satisfaction in Success

The most common response I heard after concerts was “it was straight. It was good” (personal communication, August 11, 2018). The youth truly enjoyed the concerts and felt like they had been successful. Jardana described playing a concert at the University of North Carolina Greensboro as “refreshing” because “I hadn’t been on stage for a while . . . And in front of my peers, for the concerts here [at Chatham], it was—why is that word coming? – delightful! I don’t know why that’s the word that was here and I’m going to say it, that’s the word” (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019). Evangelia related that at her first concert “I was excited and scared . . . And the other [more advanced] group sounded so great so I’m excited for next time . . . We did so good” (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Kelli said that “it was fun playing in front of a lot of people. It was very interesting . . . it kind of like brought me back to when I used to be on stage . . . I will say . . . [my favorite concert was the one] we did at UNCG . . . Because it was, like, everyone enjoyed it, I enjoyed it” (Kelli, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

Pride: Recognizing Their Potential to do Good Things in Life

Being a part of Chatham Strings also helped the youth realize, at least in part, that they were not discarded; no matter their past, they still had potential. Jardana explained the perspective of many of her peers when she told me that those in the string group

. . . got picked, so they feel like you—like, being their voice—they feel like, they feel like you see some potential in them . . . Some people in the group have never had nobody see that in them, so it's different for them. That's why some of them want to give up, some of them want to get mad, some of them don't focus—they're not used to that type of thing. (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Evangelia did not learn the violin as quickly as her peers, but being in the program still encouraged her sense of worth. She commented, “You worked with me and you believe in me. And I haven't had many people to do that. So, it feels really good” (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Maria came from a background where she was routinely discouraged and told she could not succeed. She felt like her success with the violin contradicted those voices from her past. Being in Chatham Strings, she said, “just shows I'm actually doing something . . . So like doing this kind of like, I feel like it kind of proves them wrong: like, I can—I can do stuff and I can like make people proud and I can do good stuff in life also” (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

Pride: Overcoming the Pressures of Performance

Performing, Jimar said, was one aspect of Chatham Strings that surprised him. He just thought he would learn to play an instrument. “Like I wasn't expecting concerts and stuff . . . We were like performing in front of people . . . like at UNCG, and stuff like that. That surprised me . . . because there were like a lot of people” (Jimar, personal

communication, April 20, 2019). The performance part of music can be stressful for professional musicians, so it was unsurprising that it was a challenge to some of the youth. The ever-colorful Stephen described one concert:

I mean, at the beginning, I was nervous, but at the end, I was like, heeeeeeeey! . . . Well, when you said, “alright, we got a concert coming up,” my first thought was, aww shoot. I was like, I’ve messed up now. But then, once I learned how we did it, I was like, oh, it’s nothing. But then the one we did yesterday—I’m not going to lie: I had butterflies . . . ‘Cuz at first I went out I was confident, then everybody started coming in and I thought oooohhh, saw [Chatham’s director and assistant director], I thought, I don’t know about this now. I had to go sit down. But then [another group member] said, “man, you gonna be quiet or play?” I was like, “I’m gonna play anyway.” ‘Cuz I was like, “you better not mess up either!” . . . Yeah, we was helping each other. (Stephen, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

A staff member also commented on the youths’ reactions to performing:

Some of them were kind of stressed. They were worried about playing in front of groups but once they seem to be in it, at that point, they kind of got through it . . . One of them—she really freaked that one time. Yeah—but she got through it. (M. Hughes, personal communication, May 25, 2019)

Darrisha was the student the staff member was referencing, but she is not the only Chatham Strings member to freeze before a performance. As we prepared for performances, we talked about handling nerves, and that adrenaline is normal in performance, and not necessarily negative. Darrisha told me about her previous performing experience and compared it with playing in Chatham Strings:

I have got on stage before and rapped and stuff, but it was different. Like, I blocked everybody’s face out – it was like nobody was in the room. It’s different now . . . because I was using stuff to make it like weren’t nobody in the room, and inside here [Chatham], like, you can’t do that so it’s like, now I got to face the

world, basically. And it challenges that I think that I can't do—I'm actually doing it. (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Recognizing that she could perform without relying on drugs was a significant discovery for Darrisha.

Recognition: Receiving Positive Reinforcement from Others

While the youth and staff commented on various personal realizations of pride and self-worth through their involvement in Chatham Strings, there were also observations about the importance of being recognized and encouraged by those around the youth, especially those who watched their performances. The audience's reactions to the concerts influenced how the youth viewed being in the program. A staff member related that the youth were

... very proud when they come back of how they did... especially very excited when people would come up to them and compliment about their work. I think they may not at first have thought that it was such a big deal, but I think after hearing someone else come up and compliment them it was a very big boost to their self-esteem. Especially about the actual work, the playing. (A. Camacho, personal communication, May 11, 2019)

K'eon was enthusiastic about the concerts because the audience's response made him feel special. He said that he relished "how much props we got, like, after the concert. They're always talking about, oh you did good, you did this, you know how to do this" (K'eon, personal communication, April 27, 2019). Jardana related that her peers' positive response to performances was encouraging to her: "[They] was like, you did really well. Like you say, you did really well, you was interesting, and they like it" (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019).

Darrisha told me that the reaction she heard from the audience after her first concert was so encouraging that she decided to stick with the program.

My favorite concert was when we first did our first concert, like here. Because people on my unit really was like, that's not boring! And they really believed in me, 'cuz that's when the old group was here. So when they seen us they was blown away. Like when we went on the unit, it was like, "woah—y'all did amazing!" . . . Yes, everybody's congratulating us and saying that we did awesome . . . Every time we perform it's like everybody's just like clapping their hands, saying "good job!" . . . I like all our concerts, but that was, like the first one was the one that really had me, like I really want to keep doing this. (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Recognition: Making People They Love Proud

In addition to the positive reinforcement from their audiences, the youth were excited to tell their parents and others they respected that they were part of a string group. Their announcements were often met with surprise. Evangelia related her conversation with her mom: "It's fun, telling my mom 'oh, well I can play the violin now.' 'No, you can't!' 'Yes, I can!'" (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Kelli was eager to tell her dad that she was playing violin because it is his favorite instrument, and "he was excited, keeps bragging about me" (Kelli, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Darrisha said, "I tell my mom—mom, I'm really doing this. Like, I'm really doing this" (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019). After Chatham Strings' first concert at Chatham, I noted in my field notes that one of my cellists said that when she told her parents she was playing the cello, they responded, "that's not like you," but were happy. A social worker and Chatham's principal related how thrilled this girl's parents

were that she had participated in the string group (personal communication, August 6, 2018).

In addition to parents, staff members are often highly respected by the youth, and their responses matter. K'eon told me about a staff member's reaction to the concert, which made K'eon feel special. "He was talking about how we almost made him cry, and stuff like that, yesterday when he was listening. 'Cuz he was like—he was like, we knew how to look at our music, how to read our music, and we know how to play it" (K'eon, personal communication, April 27, 2019). One staff member shared his pride in the youth after a performance:

It made me like really happy. It made me like, it was worth it . . . like wow, I'm a proud parent—they're none of my kids, but I feel like a proud parent would feel. Like, that's my daughter, that's my son up there performing. It was lovely. It was nice. Yeah. I really, really enjoyed it. (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

The responses she received after performances made Jardana feel noticed and valued. She was so excited when the Communications Officer interviewed her for the first article on Chatham Strings. She talked about the interview and her favorite performance, the performance in Raleigh for juvenile detention center directors:

That was crazy. You know the word clout? . . . 'Course you got clout among my peers but it's like—I call it political clout, like it's crazy to have political clout and I'm 17. I have directors that know me by my first name and they want to do interviews with me and I'm in newsletters—like, that's crazy to me! . . . Yeah [the directors] know me. Like, it's crazy. I shook a lady's hand and she knew me. The director that – the man that did the interview he's like, he knows my first name. I think that's crazy . . . And they want to call me for opportunities and see what I'm going to do afterwards—I think that's crazy. (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

The recognition Jardana received from those she respected had a significant impact on the importance she placed on being a member of Chatham Strings and also how she viewed herself.

Recognition: Receiving Attention for Something Positive, Not Negative

The youth at Chatham received attention for the offense they committed, but it was negative attention that changed the course of their lives. Even before their involvement with the justice system, many youth have struggled in school and gotten attention for bad behavior. Receiving attention for doing something positive was a new experience, as staff members mentioned. Evangelia summarized her reaction to this type of attention: “I felt good, but then again I was shy ‘cuz all eyes was on me and I liked that attention ‘cuz it was positive, it wasn’t negative” (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

Theme 3: Personal and Interpersonal Development

The third theme was how involvement with Chatham Strings catalyzed personal and interpersonal development. Personal development categories included emotional release, behavior regulation, persevering, increased tolerance with frustrations, and better use of time. Interpersonal development categories included improving communication skills, growing patience, emotional impulse control, accepting feedback, staying on task, recognizing the interdependence of working in a group, teaching and helping peers, and showing kindness even if they disliked their colleagues. When youth talked about the social skills they used in the group, they often employed the terms that are used in Chatham’s Model of Care.

Personal Development: Releasing Emotions

The youth at Chatham tend to be emotionally brittle. Even small frustrations can make them explode into anger, and emotional upheavals escalate quickly. Evangelia described how playing the violin provided some emotional release for her. “Plucking the strings sometimes when I’m upset gets my anger out and then my bow, just, yeah, just holding it makes me wanna, it just, I don’t know, it just lets, it releases some anger. It’s just cool, calm, and collected” (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). In an interview for an article, Kelli agreed: “Whatever I carry with me, the music is a stress reliever and it helps take my mind off other distractions which occur through the week. I can come in here and it puts a smile on my face” (M. Jenkins, *On the Scene Digest*).

Personal Development: Regulating Behavior

Because the youth liked participating in Chatham Strings, their interest encouraged them to make good decisions outside of the class. If the youth had gotten in enough trouble that they were confined to their room, they were not allowed to go to string class that day. This rule reinforced self-control and thinking about the consequences of actions. Chatham’s director explained,

Part of our requirement when we was establishing this [program] was we needed kids who were going to do right – I mean, they’re not perfect, but they had to maintain a certain standard. So I will say that it has enhanced . . . that is another nugget that we can use to manage behaviors and push kids towards success. (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Maria acknowledged that her excitement about participating changed some of her choices.

I don't spazz out or anything like that because I know that like, on the unit I won't be acting out because I know I have better stuff to do, like on the weekends because this gets me out and it gives me something to do, like something new. (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019)

Bradley animatedly described how much he looked forward to going to string class:

I mean, yeah, 'cuz now every Saturday I wake up and I'm like, "I'm going to strings, I'm going to strings, I'm about to learn something new." Like . . . I'm like, "hey Chile, what time we got strings?" and "McLean, what time we got strings?" Same thing—11 o'clock. Just speed the clock up and tell them it's 11 o'clock . . . But they say, it's not. So, I wait and then I'm like, "okay, let's go then!" They don't speed the clock up but—but make it 10:59 or something! (Bradley, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Recognizing that being part of Chatham Strings is a privilege and that they did not want to lose an opportunity because of a moment of reaction helped some of the youth self-regulate and choose their responses more carefully.

Personal Development: Dealing with Frustrations and Persevering

People often feel exasperated when they find something challenging, so that reaction is not unique to the youth at Chatham. But the background and tendencies of the youth and the program's use of unfamiliar instruments and a foreign genre of music made them especially prone to frustration. Whenever I taught them a new concept, someone in the group would complain, "it's too hard" or "I want to quit." I described one such incident in my field notes:

Today I started teaching *Pomp and Circumstance* to the Advanced class. They complained that it was too hard, so I told them that their other option was playing open strings with the Beginner class. I told them that I was giving them the melody because I thought they had all the tools they needed and would want to take the challenge, but that they also couldn't expect to get it in one day; it is a

process. They were instantly mobilized by the mention of the Beginner class, and declared they could get this, after all. (personal communication, May 4, 2019)

The longer the youth were in the program, the more resilient they became. While someone who had played for only 8 weeks will instantly become discouraged, someone who had been in the program for 6 months demonstrated more patience with themselves because they had proven to themselves that they could overcome challenges. Jardana had been in the program for about a year when she was released, and she said, “I learned . . . it just taught me more patience and more diligence. And repetition is key so I can figure it out, so I can do it right” (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019). Stephen also said, “When I first started, I failed. I’m talking about—I tried to play all your [pieces]—but then after that failure, I kept trying.” After Stephen started experiencing success, he was less discouraged with challenging things and also began encouraging others not to quit. “Like, my peers are saying, like even if I mess up and they mess up too, like say, ‘what—you quitting now? You’ve come this far, don’t quit now!’ Like, it like, how do I say it, cheering them on or something like that? . . . Yeah, encouraging them” (Stephen, personal communication, April 27, 2019).

Though K’eon had a reputation for being tough to deal with (a supervisor once told me, “If you can handle K’eon, you can handle anybody”), his intense interest in music made him exceptional at persevering. He was the only student to attempt to learn vibrato, and as I taught him this fairly complex skill, I observed in my field notes that “K’eon is remarkable for his tenacious persistence. He tries until he gets something. I respect that quality in him” (personal communication, June 8, 2019).

Darrisha was one of the most challenging students because she would get defensive and angry when she did not feel competent or in control. Like Jardana, she was in the program for over a year before she was released. She told me that she learned that “You might get frustrated, but don’t give up. And that’s what you taught me. No matter how many times I wanted to say, forget it, you told me to keep trying. Until, like, I got it. So I kept trying and I haven’t gave up since” (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019).

Staff members expressed that they also noticed the youths’ developing perseverance. One of them told me that, after a concert, “I was so proud of them and they were even more proud of themselves because they started a task and completed the task.” I asked her if it was rare for them to see something through, to which she responded, “Something positive, yes” (M. Hughes, personal communication, May 25, 2019).

Another staff member described his observations:

I was very proud of watching them stick to something that . . . honestly can be hard for a lot of people and how dedicated they were with it. And then . . . there was a lot of pride, because we stick with these kids for a long time, and for a lot of the kids, their time here can be very difficult, and so watching them succeed at something that doesn’t have a direct impact on . . . whether they get extended or not . . . something that’s not directly related to their treatment plan, like education . . . watching them care about something that isn’t like “get me home faster, get me home faster” I think provided a lot of relief for them in terms of making it seem [that] . . . this isn’t about punishing, it really is a rehabilitation program. (A. Camacho, personal communication, May 11, 2019)

This staff member also mentioned that, as the youths learned to deal with challenges and persevere in the string group, he was noticing those skills transferring into other domains in their lives (a result Marcum [2014] also noted in his study):

I've noticed that, not immediately and not completely, but a lot of the students that we've had that are participating in your group are beginning to show increased patience and tolerance to things that otherwise would have frustrated them immensely so a lot of them are able to accept feedback or instructions much quicker than previously, and I think that the continuous instruction that you give with the music, and they keep on getting it wrong, you keep on giving it again . . . has been a big component in helping increase their patience and tolerance for frustration. (A. Camacho, personal communication, May 11, 2019)

Personal Development: Using Time More Productively

Chatham's carefully organized days are the first structure many of the youth have experienced in their lives. Merely having to get up and go to school is a change for them. Having to deal with time management at all is unfamiliar and new. Many of the youth also mentioned that time goes by slowly on the unit. Jimar said that having an extra activity like Chatham Strings, "it's, like, good, [to] do something . . . learning new instruments . . . in here instead of just sitting on the unit" (Jamir, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Evangelia agreed, "It's something for me to look forward to and helps my time go by. And I like learning new things. I play an instrument, and yeah, it's cool" (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Evangelia candidly observed that waking up early on Saturday mornings to go to string class was a challenge for her because she would rather sleep. She found that maintaining her schedule on weekends was helpful: "I wake up early all the time and that's helped me during school days that I wake up early too. So it just helps me be on routine and stuff like that" (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). A staff member also commented that he thought that "having one thing scheduled outside of the school week

has impacted” the youths’ time management, being on time, and getting assigned work done by deadlines (A. Camacho, personal communication, June 10, 2019).

Chatham’s director mentioned the importance of youth learning to fill their time with positive things in order to keep out of trouble, and this issue emerged in the focus group discussion amongst the youth. Stephen commented, “You gotta look at it like, if it can keep you out of trouble, do it, or at least try it” (Stephen, personal communication, May 4, 2019) and Maria added, “And it keep you busy, too and it makes you time go by faster. Some of y’all can take this out there and it’ll keep you off the streets” (Maria, personal communication, May 4, 2019).

Interpersonal Development: Improving Communication Skills

Personal development is often simultaneous with interpersonal skill development, and the youth mentioned that they were forced to improve their communication skills in order to work with peers in the string ensemble. Kelli said that being in the group “gives me more experience of working with people.” She realized that learning to communicate with people, including when to compromise, was necessary: “A lot of it is when it comes to like socializing, making sure that I say things where people understand, and kind of meet them halfway in the middle” (Kelli, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

Jardana mentioned that it was crucial to “figure out personalities. You don’t need to know everything about someone, but gotta know who you’re working with. You can’t approach everybody the same way” (Jardana, personal communication, May 4, 2019).

Maria said that she had developed communication skills in the group, a skill that she had also been working on in other domains during her time at Chatham. She had to learn

“communication skills because, like, I do, like, I mean I try not to be, but I do really tend to be kinda shy and I’m not really outspoken as much, but here I’ve learned to like speak up for myself and be more assertive” (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019).

Stephen also mentioned the importance of social skills within the group, including nonverbal communication such as cueing one another to start a piece. Darrisha concurred, “‘Cuz we gotta communicate when we, like when we first start. Like, we got to deep breathe to know when to start and then, like in the middle you gotta—if you feel like you getting thrown off, you look at your other partner and you start where they is” (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019). Stephen said, “You gotta like talk to the people that’s in the group with you to see, to make sure they’re all in the same page” (Stephen, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Additionally, Stephen recognized the importance of interacting with audience members after a concert:

I expected to learn. I mean obviously I expected to learn to play, but I also learned to like, ‘cuz I knew with this you gotta have social skills to be able to do it, too . . . ‘Cuz, ‘cuz say you’re going to do a concert. Someone doesn’t know what anything is called and they come up and they try to ask you, if you don’t got social skills you’re gonna end up saying something like, “oh it’s a little guitar.” And they’re going to go tell everybody—but it’s a violin!” (Stephen, personal communication, April 20, 2019)

Interpersonal Development: Improving Patience and Emotional Impulse Control

Learning in a group setting is a challenge because students learn at different speeds. Even if the pacing of the class is continuously adjusted, attempting to challenge the fast learners but not overwhelm the slower learners, moments of frustration are inevitable. Chatham Strings’ group setting is crucial to the program’s personal and social

skills goals, but the frustration level is exacerbated by the type of youth involved in the group. In their interviews, several of the youth attested that the frustrations of learning a new instrument—both personally, as they try to acquire a new skill, and socially as they relate to one another—made them more conscious of needing to control their impulses and be patient with one another. In only one example of many, I noted in my field notes that “Trying to balance the widely divergent levels of Maria and [another student], and now Stephen on cello is a challenge, to say the least. Maria’s been very patient” (personal communication, July 27, 2019).

In the focus group interview, Stephen said, “You gotta learn to work at everybody’s pace . . . you gotta have patience . . . [because] some go slower and some go faster. You gotta keep going until you work at the same pace” (Stephen, personal communication, May 4, 2019). Maria concurred, “That can get frustrating sometimes, ‘cuz you want to just move on” (Maria, personal communication, May 4, 2019). When Kelli talked about having patience with her peers, she admitted, “It’s like, sometimes when I get frustrated and emotional I lose control” (Kelli, personal communication, April 20, 2019). When working with her peers, Maria said she was “Using my emotional impulse control . . . and ignoring minor inappropriate behavior . . . Like, if say, like a peer says something and it might annoy me and something like that, but I don’t respond to it” (Maria, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Evangelia said that playing in Chatham Strings “taught me how to work together with people and, yeah, just work as a team and be patient with others. And they’re patient with me. So it’s taught me, you know, we can get through this—we gotta just work together” (Evangelia, personal

communication, April 20, 2019). Darrisha also described the importance of self-control and patience in the group:

Basically it's like, sometimes like they—like, “you messing up,” so emotional impulse control too ‘cuz you could be like, “no, *you* messed up!” But really, we don't blame it on each other no more. You know how we first came, we was like, “you the only one that's messing up.” Now it's like, we all together, we a team, so if he mess up, all of us mess up. (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Interpersonal Development: Accepting Feedback

One of Chatham's Five Basic Skills is “accepting feedback,” and the youth acknowledged that being in the string group reinforced this skill. K'eon said he struggled with this skill both in and out of string class:

I had to learn how to accept feedback and to listen . . . When I first got here [to Chatham], I was like, “no, no, I want this, I want that, I want to do it now, at my time!” So then I had to learn to chill out and know how – know how to do things right, the right way. (K'eon, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Evangelia recognized her growth in this area as well. “You know, how you're like ‘listen up,’ and just, you gotta hear it. So that's a big problem I had, not hearing stuff, I only heard what I wanted to hear. With strings, you gotta hear all of it and then just go all together” (Evangelia, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Jimar mentioned that “accepting feedback . . . like, following instructions” was crucial to learning the cello (Jimar, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Darrisha said, “listening to what other students say” and accepting their feedback was also important for the group to function well (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019).

In the focus group, K'eon was candid: "Sometimes we do understand and we don't want to do it" (K'eon, personal communication, May 4, 2019). Darrisha explained that "some people don't want to be taught, and they won't learn" (Darrisha, personal communication, May 4, 2019). She recognized that willingness to accept feedback was necessary for any learning to happen. K'eon listened in string class because he wanted the information enough to stay on task and accept the feedback:

The hardest thing, I'll tell you, is—cuz, getting off task, that's easy for me to do. I'll be like, I'll be in [school], doing my work, and somebody say something—I'm laughing at it, then I'm just talking, then it just fall all apart . . . 'Cuz I—it's just like—I gotta listen 'cuz if I don't listen that means I won't get it. 'Cuz, like, if I listen I'm going to just play it—it's going to be easy for me. Like, but if I don't listen, I'm going to be lost. I'm not going to know where we are or what we're doing. So, me listening just helps, all the way. Like, that's my thing, like, I listen to stuff, then I could . . . do it again and then I got it. I got it, like. (K'eon, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Interpersonal Development: Recognizing the Interdependence of Ensemble Playing

Over time, the youth started to realize that they had to learn to work together to be successful. The youth who learned quickly had to recognize that the peer who struggled could not be ignored or left behind because ensemble playing is a team effort. Everyone contributed and impacted the group. Stephen remarked, "What I learned most of all was that if someone, even if someone else ain't on the same track as you, to help them get on the same track as you. To like, it's a team effort; you can't do it yourself" (Stephen, personal communication, April 20, 2019). Darrisha said,

I have learned that even though like your team . . . they might mess up or be off, you continue your tempo. Like, you know you, so if others of you mess up, you keep going . . . But I think the most challenge was basically like, [playing] with

everybody else. Because some people be off and then I end up getting off. So I was like—that’s the challenge . . . And we got to that point when we worked together. (Darrisha, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

K’eon also saw the group develop its ability to recover from mistakes and remain cohesive:

What’s challenging is when someone messes up, the whole team messes up. At first, we then fall apart and can’t get back together, but by the end, we could . . . What surprised me was like, like, how the group, like the tempo, the rhythm, we could all play together. And, you know . . . some people just fall off, but they can come back easily, like that. (K’eon, personal communication, May 4, 2019)

Interpersonal Development: Helping Peers

Recognizing that the group’s success depended on individual members understanding and playing their parts encouraged several members to help one another. Kelli learned the violin quickly, and she realized that part of her role was “basically helping people who it was hard for them to catch on as quick. So, like, going over it with them” (Kelli, personal communication, April 20, 2019). K’eon said, “Remember how the boys and girls were split up at first? And some of us didn’t get [the concepts we were learning]. But when we came together, we helped each other get it” (K’eon, personal communication, May 4, 2019). Jardana explained to her peers in the focus group what she had learned: “If you go faster, use that as your blessing. If you go faster, and you already got it down, then you teach others” (Jardana, personal communication, May 4, 2019).

Interpersonal Development: Kindness

Recognizing that the group had to work together to be successful was a challenge because the youth in Chatham Strings were not necessarily friends. Some had been in fights with other members. There was tension between others. Interpersonal flares sometimes surfaced during rehearsal. Though Chatham does not allow romantic relationships between youth, the youth sometimes decide that they are dating someone, and with that comes breakups, emotions, and inevitable turmoil. Jardana said that, in the string group,

It's like, you got to look at each other—we're not peers no more. Not like it's wrong, but you got to look at each other as colleagues or we're band mates now. Like you got to look at it like that. You got to cast the other stuff out, you can't mix stuff . . . It's hard for everybody . . . not mixing it, not mixing life with this. You know, keeping things separate, focus. It's hard for everybody, I struggle with it, but you just gotta do it. (Jardana, personal communication, April 27, 2019)

Maria said she learned about “being nice to [peers], because sometimes you may not like people but you still gotta, like, be able to cooperate with them” (Maria, personal communication, May 4, 2019).

Theme 4: Collaborating to Help Youth (Staff Only)

The staff participants indicated that they felt pride in Chatham Strings, a sense of ownership, and the conviction that the string program was part of the community engaged in rehabilitating the youth. A staff member commented that “It instilled a lot of pride in me in seeing like we, as a collective facility and community are making a difference” (A. Camacho, personal communication, June 10, 2019). Chatham's director said that

This [program] has been a tremendous help . . . and it has been great and refreshing for me, as well as for the campus, to experience this . . . And it does take a community, and this is our community behind these four walls, this is the community, and it takes all of us moving in the same direction to help the kids. (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

The director went on to talk about how Chatham Strings was helping society see the youth as people with potential:

We have gained such momentum, you know. Now I'm going to say your program is recognized around the state. I'm telling you—you saw the Raleigh article just the other day, I mean, we are like the best thing next to sliced bread! . . . I get calls and emails all the time because people need to see this, they need to know, because sometimes people, I'm saying people that don't know any better, they see these kids as just all bad and discarded and just won't listen—and they all got stories. I mean, they have circumstances that some of us never experienced. So when . . . you're not privy to information and you don't know that, and the best you can come up with is that they're hard headed and they're unruly, I'm like, “man, you're missing it”—people are just missing it . . . [But the program's] momentum is building success for these kids. (C. Dingle, personal communication, June 10, 2018)

The NC Juvenile Justice Communications Officer has been to many Chatham Strings concerts and written two articles about the program. He tells the youth, “I'm Chatham Strings' fan. Whenever you play, I'm here!” (personal communication, April 26, 2019). I recorded in my field notes that, after a concert, I thanked him for coming. He responded, “No, we thank you! This is one of the success stories of the system” (personal communication, April 26, 2019). The dedicated people who invest their lives in these youth feel the program's success as their own. Working with youth is challenging, and when the staff sees the youth doing something positive, they feel like they see the fruit of their efforts. When Chatham Strings was invited to play at the Central Office in Raleigh,

the director wrote to me, “Everyone is excited to see the string ensemble. This is a big deal for the department because it will showcase our youth doing something amazing!” (personal communication, December 18, 2018). Chatham Strings is a tangible result of the community of people engaged in restorative justice.

Another Perspective: My Journey at Chatham

Getting to Chatham

While many of the themes detailed above also emerged in my field notes, my perspective as I originated, planned, directed, and taught in the program often focused on aspects of which the staff and youth were completely unaware. My original plan was to start a string program for incarcerated adults, and I spent over a year trying to get a proposal read by the administration at the Raleigh Correctional Institution for Women. Because of understaffing, the proposal was never considered. However, during that time, I learned about music programs in the correctional system by talking with many prison music program directors across the nation. Eventually, the Greensboro Symphony’s Education Director introduced me to Charles Dingle, Chatham’s director, who welcomed the 10-week pilot run I suggested and then supported the continuation of the program.

Learning Chatham

Working at Chatham held many surprises for me. I expected a correctional facility to be rigid and predominantly orderly; instead, I found that communication was a challenge. As I was learning how the chain of communication worked at Chatham, there were some frustrations, such as hearing at the last minute that a group member could not perform with the group or the youth not being ready to come at their class time. Another

time it took several weeks for an internal email to be sent to supervisors clearing youth to join the string group. My early field notes often mention frustrations like that incident. It took me a while to realize that, while I needed to be flexible, it actually helped the staff when I communicated what I needed. I did not want to make the job of the staff harder, so initially was very careful about my requests. Eventually, I learned that, for instance, calling a unit to check if some violinists were on their way was helpful, not an insult. I learned to be straightforward with the administration about what we needed in terms of rehearsals, traveling, or concerts. Sometimes I was hesitant because I was not sure what information I was allowed to know, but I learned I could ask for the details I needed. For example, I needed to know approximate release dates so that I could plan concerts before a group of youth was released, or which youth were not allowed to leave Chatham to play off-campus concerts. The staff at Chatham were outstanding people and were supportive and helpful. They quickly became my allies, and whenever a staff member was letting me out of the secure building, I took the time to ask them questions to learn more about their job, the youth, and life at Chatham. In time, many of them became mentors to me, giving me advice, input, and encouragement.

Teaching

As I tried to determine what would make my teaching more effective, I repeatedly wrote about several practical teaching issues in my field notes. String classes were held every Saturday morning, and that was the only time when the youth could play their instruments. When the program first started, there was talk about incorporating a practice time into the weekly schedule, but because of complications, staffing challenges, and the

staff understandably feeling inadequate to direct a practice session, that never materialized. At first, I often wrote that this issue frustrated me. About two months in, I wrote, “I feel frustrated, but obviously this is just how it is going to be, and I have to accept it and work with it. Today I told the admittedly frustrated kids that all they can control is mental practice, and so that’s where they need to put their energy” (personal communication, October 13, 2018). The issue kept resurfacing: “They . . . really need to practice. I guess I should let this drop, but they need to. I am trying to figure out if I should re-propose this” (personal communication, January 12, 2019) and “I am wondering if the Advanced class has hit the frustration wall I was worried about—they can’t practice, so they just have one day a week, and yet I’m trying to give them more challenges” (personal communication, March 30, 2019). The youth themselves recognized that it would be helpful to play their instruments more than once a week and brought up the issue several times. I tried to figure out ways around it but eventually came to realize that unless I could go and practice with the youth, it was not going to happen. Because the youth only play once a week, progress is slow, and it can be a challenge to keep them interested as their abilities develop incrementally.

Another issue that kept reoccurring in my field notes was my struggle to teach classes with youth of varying learning speeds effectively. In our weekly class, my goal was to have the youth feel like they accomplished something, even if they struggled with a new concept. Over time, I have learned that four aspects could contribute to a good class day. They included pacing (how quickly I move on from one thing to the next), balancing old, familiar material with new, challenging concepts, my sensitivity to how

the youth were responding to one another and to what I was teaching, and the students' emotional stability coming into class. The youth are emotionally brittle, and, as the chaplain told me on my first day, "can go from 0 to 90 in a second." Anger, frustration, and fear can quickly erupt. I have learned that some of these aspects are my responsibility, and others are outside my control.

In the beginning, we had gender-segregated classes to prevent problems, and that setup highlighted that the boys tended to learn slower than the girls did. Over time, as students were released and new students joined, classes became separated by skill level and time in the program, which meant the classes were mixed. In general, the mixed-gender classes meant that progress was slower. There were no longer single classes that did significantly better than another class, such as when the boys and girls were separated.

The first class was heterogeneous in terms of instruments. There were three violinists, one violist, and two cellists. Because the instruments used by Chatham Strings students are donated to the program, the mixture of instruments in each subsequent class was dependent on available instruments rather than a choice of ideal instrumentation or class effectiveness. When I taught my first violin-only class, I wrote, "They all asked if they could play the cello instead. That was funny, but it *is* actually easier to only have one instrument to teach in this class!" (personal communication, February 9, 2019). As the pool of donated instruments increased, I stopped using the viola in order only to teach two instruments. If more violas are donated, I would be willing to start teaching the viola

again. Because the cello's resonance significantly adds to the sound of the group, I try to keep the program's cellos in use at all times.

When I first started teaching at Chatham, I approached teaching as if I were starting an outside private student, with careful attention to position and setup. I generally retained that approach, but the program's goals eventually reshaped some of my teaching focus. For some students, this was their first experience with a musical instrument, but for those who had played before, they had only used band instruments. Many said they never even heard string instruments until they came to Chatham and heard the concerts or started playing in the ensemble. Not only were string instruments a foreign world to them, but classical music was an utterly unfamiliar genre. Recognizing this background helped me see how vital it was to ensure that they had a good experience in this new world. Practically speaking, helping them feel successful meant choosing music they can quickly and easily master, being willing to play very simple music in early concerts, and building skills incrementally. Doing, not perfect technique, was of paramount importance, mainly because, while some youth, like K'eon, Jimar, Jardana, Kelli, and Darrisha, were in the group over a year, some youth only played with us for a few months before their release. I did not want them to leave on week six of the perfect bow hold, but rather, knowing "I played in a concert. All I did was pizzicato open strings with the other parts, but it sounded good, and I felt like I did a good job and contributed." Thus, while I kept teaching good position and technique, it fell second to the priority of doing. I had extended conversations with my cello mentor about pedagogy and how standard it needed to be in this setting. The first class took so long to learn *arco*, and the major impediment

was bow holds. My mentor reminded me that I would not ruin anyone's career by trying unorthodox things (personal communication, February 16, 2019). After 6 months of teaching at Chatham, I started a new class using a simplified Suzuki bow hold, helping them focus on making sound and playing immediately instead of being derailed by bow holds. When that class progressed much more quickly and were more fearless about using their bows than earlier classes, that approach became standard procedure.

I found over time that the staff and administration considered learning to read music a significant skill and a measurement of the program's success. Just learning to play a string instrument was overwhelming at first, so I used iconographic notation with beginning classes. Once they were displaying some measure of comfort with their instrument or starting to ask me about writing music, we moved into Music Reading/Writing assignments. These assignments were based on what they already knew about their instrument and what they already knew how to do, so that they learned how something familiar looks on paper. I based learning to read on having them write out the notes, so they are using more than one sense, starting with drawing their clefs and open strings to D string notes, doing exercises in which they add fingers to a line of D string notes, and so on. After three or four weeks of the Music Reading/Writing assignments, I gave the youth short compositional assignments within parameters, such as "Write a piece using only D string notes. Write in fingerings so you or a classmate can perform it next week." The students were interested to see notation turn back into physical sound when we played their compositions in class. The experience reminded them why we learn to read music in the first place. Kelli and Jardana were especially fascinated by the

compositional aspect and spent extra time on their composition assignments. I described Kelli's journey with this new experience in my field notes:

She's written a title ("Motherly Love") and told me emphatically that she wanted me to play it. She'd also written "RIP Mama" besides the title. She has only ever talked about her dad visiting so it should have occurred to me that something may have happened to her mom, but it didn't since their families all seem so torn up and incomplete. I wasn't sure if I should mention the title to the other kids since it seemed very personal, so just played it as musically as I possibly could. Later I asked her if she would like us to include it in the next concert. She seemed excited about it and talked about "finishing it." (personal communication, March 16, 2019)

When the youth finished and titled their melodies, I helped them with some revisions and added simple accompanying parts for the ensemble. We performed the pieces as part of a concert cycle. The students felt excited to have so much ownership of a piece, and the group members were also excited to play their classmates' pieces. Their peers and staff were enthusiastic when they heard the student compositions. That experiment has caused other classes to start to ask when they can write their own music, and two current students jointly wrote a piece for the October 2019 concert cycle.

Understanding Chatham's Youth

From the beginning, I tried to learn as much about the youth and life at Chatham as I could. I sensed that the program's effectiveness would be linked to how much I understood the youth and their backgrounds. I did not know what offenses the youth in Chatham Strings have committed, and I did not want to know. At the same time, being aware of the complexities of the seemingly normal teenagers I taught is important. A staff member told me about the backgrounds of the youth in general terms:

We don't have little stuff here. It's not runaways and petty theft. Most of the kids here are murderers and sexual offenders. When a kid can kill his mom or sister, you know something's really messed up. And the sexual offenders are both boys and girls. Of course I can't tell you what you're dealing with in your class, but you would be shocked . . . You have to be really careful. We have everything here that the adult prisons have, only they're juveniles. (personal communication, November 2, 2018)

After that conversation, I wrote in my field notes, "It was sobering, but good. I am not afraid, but I do know that the more I know about the system and what's really going on, the more effective I can eventually be. I have so much to learn" (personal communication, November 2, 2019). One of the veteran staff members reminded me that maintaining perspective about the youth was crucial and that the tension between the wrongdoer and the wronged in them was complex:

Some kids you wanna love, some kids you don't like so much, but that "like so much" doesn't determine not doing my job. Because at the end of the day, they're still kids. If you have a love for kids, you just do. Because the ones here, they've been abused, so bad. If you can always have empathy, you can say, "You know what? They're like that for a reason." We got little kids—we got girls who have been trafficked. Could you—I can't imagine the stuff they gotta go through day to day to not focus on that. As a child? Come on. Grown folks can't handle it, and we got kids who've been trafficked. We have boys who got to be the daddy at ten, eleven—that pressure is crazy; I couldn't do it. So I just like, "she messed up for a reason. I'm gonna help them." (D. Mclean, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Recognizing that tough days were normal was pivotal. I learned pretty quickly that if I wanted to have any type of longevity in this field, I could not take bad days or negative reactions from students personally. I also learned that there was no magic teaching method that worked every time: "Teaching here is crazy. You find something that works great—like last week—but it never seems to work beyond one week and you

have to find something else again” (personal communication, March 23, 2019). A month later, I noted:

Today was one of the tough ones. Not awful, but not great. But that’s expected. [My mentor] said yesterday that I’m learning that there’s no tool that works every time. What I’m developing, he said, is the feedback loop of my response to what is going on, my adjustments, the kids’ responses, my response [to theirs] and so on. (personal communication, August 24, 2019)

Teaching multiple classes in succession helped give me some objectivity and perspective: “Today was tough [with the Intermediate Class] . . . I thought it was me until the Beginner Class came, and they were great and we had a profitable time” (personal communication, September 29, 2019). In November, I described a day when K’eon spiraled out of control:

Darrisha and K’eon really got into it several times. Darrisha was criticizing K’eon, and he was getting belligerent . . . [Another student] tried to calm K’eon down, but K’eon was past listening to anyone; I couldn’t get his attention, and I know he likes me and usually will work with me ([while] Darrisha is always brittle and a wild card). [A supervisor] took K’eon out for the rest of class. Darrisha instantly calmed down and was receptive and happy the rest of the time; it was like another person. I felt a little bewildered, but was glad we left on good terms as she and I have the most rocky relationship of all of the kids . . . Sometimes it’s really hard to tell if I’m doing something wrong, am not prepared enough, haven’t planned interesting enough things or balanced appropriately easy and appropriately challenging pieces—or if they’re just having a bad day. After a good day, I assume that we’ve reached a new level, and will stay there. But the kids aren’t like that. [Our violist] seems quite stable, but he’s the only one. The others are quite brittle emotionally and can spiral out of control really quickly. (personal communication, November 2, 2019)

Incidents like that one made me realize that quickly recognizing when the youth were frustrated or angry was vital because they spiraled out of control so quickly. I noted

that I especially had to catch Darrisha before she got too frustrated and shut down (personal communication, April 6, 2019); others did not shut down but instead reacted verbally or physically. During one particularly volatile class, two students “really flew off the handle: screaming, cursing, aggressive. The staff took them out. [The supervisor] got on kids about dating—the issue behind the outbursts” (personal communication, October 6, 2019). That particular class day left me shaken and questioning

[I wonder] if the program’s doing enough good to justify the issues I left behind me for the staff to deal with. [My mentor] reminded me that it just falls in a “bad day” category even though maybe it was the worst day yet, and not to let a low nullify all the highs and positive I have seen. He also said, “what do you want to do, keep them in a position that they’re never stirred up, and then release them back into society? This is part of learning.” (personal communication, October 6, 2019)

Even during that incident, though, I was amazed at how careful the youth were with their instruments, even when they were angry at one another. The cellist gently laid her cello on the floor before standing up and yelling that she was leaving before she hurt someone. And the violinist put her instrument away before she started screaming.

Although every day with the youth is different, getting to know them better helped me know when they were close to their limit and that I should end class (personal communication, March 30, 2019) or when I should focus on the big picture to avoid issues. One day I arrived to hear that there had been turmoil in the units and many youth were in trouble. Because of the incidents, the youth were already upset when they arrived at class:

Today was tough . . . I met with Jimar, Jardana, and K'eon first, and they were all really wound up because of everything, their disciplinary status, etc. . . . I didn't let the class go too long, and kept them playing to keep talking to a minimum so that nothing happened since it was very clear that they could spiral out of control in a second . . . Everyone was so off that I wasn't too picky about [details] . . . I was trying to be careful to avoid any flares or triggering any behavioral issues. (personal communication, December 1, 2018)

Not all class days were hard, of course. One particular class, I remember watching K'eon's attitude change during class.

K'eon arrived in a bad mood. He said something happened on the unit but didn't say what. As class progressed, though, he became happy—he so clearly loves music and loves working on the cello. I loved seeing how getting his mind off whatever was going on and onto music changed his attitude. (personal communication, May 11, 2019)

Another part of understanding the youth is recognizing that innocent occurrences often trigger traumatized youth. While there is no way to know what all the triggers may be when a student has a sudden and unexplainable reaction, it is important to realize that the issue at stake is probably deeper than can be imagined. The psychologists, mental health clinicians, and social workers on the youths' treatment teams are the ones who go deeper into that trauma and its manifestations. In those situations, I learned not to take it personally but to try to mitigate the effects. A vivid example of this was when I was starting a new class and assigning instruments to the new youth. I asked a girl if she wanted to play the cello, and she was agreeable until I started showing her how to hold the instrument. Her body suddenly became tense, and she told me that she did not want to play the cello. Her reaction was so intense that I realized she probably had experienced

some type of sexual trauma, and immediately took the cello, and handed her a violin. She relaxed and started enjoying class again (personal communication, July 20, 2019).

Concerts

The concerts were integral to the program. They provided motivation for the youth, an impetus to the learning experience, a tangible demonstration of what the youth were learning, new opportunities, and positive exposure and recognition for the youth involved. While the flagship prison strings program in the nation, the Hiland Women's Prison Orchestra in Alaska (Warfield, 2010), has members whose lengthy sentences allow them to work up one substantial program every year, the transient nature of the Chatham Strings members caused me to decide to agree to every opportunity we were given, and just perform whatever we were currently practicing. As a result, the group performed many concerts at Chatham, a concert at the Juvenile Justice Central Office in Raleigh, two concerts at The University of North Carolina Greensboro, a concert at Bennett College, and a concert at the NC Juvenile Justice "Raise the Age" conference during the first 16 months of the program's existence. Playing in the center for the staff and their peers gave them status and recognition among people they respect. Performing outside the center gave them new experiences, not only to see new places, but to meet different audience members and supporters, get positive feedback, and feel proud that they have accomplished something positive that even people on the outside recognize and admire.

Classical music and string playing were so new to the youth involved in Chatham Strings that I knew that they did not know what great classical performances were like, or

the virtuosic potential of string instruments. They were not going to stay interested very long if the other class, who had been playing four months longer, was their standard of excellence. I invited guest musicians to participate in nearly every performance to give them wider exposure to great string playing and classical music. Professors and students from The University of North Carolina Greensboro, as well as other local professional musicians, graciously gave their time to play for Chatham Strings' performances. Most of the time the invited guest would join Chatham Strings for the entire concert, playing their music alongside the youth, and then play a chamber work with me at some point in the concert. The guest would also spend some time with the youth during the final rehearsal right before the concert, often answering questions and helping with a technical or position problem. After Chatham Strings' first concert, Jimar said that our guest "taught me some things," and K'eon exclaimed with uncharacteristic warmth that "I really loved it when you and [the guest] played! I was really into that" (personal communication, August 11, 2018). Another student remarked after a guest string quartet played a virtuosic piece during a concert that he did not know that string could do things like that (personal communication, October 19, 2019). After Chatham Strings played at The University of North Carolina Greensboro as part of my doctoral recital, they were mesmerized by the rest of the program and had many questions about different string effects. K'eon asked to start learning vibrato after that concert. Some of the youth also attended a UNCG symphony orchestra concert. I was concerned that the length of the pieces on the program was going to bore them, but they were entranced by all the new things they saw and

enthusiastic about the experience. Jimar actually announced in the next class that he did not want to play short pieces anymore “because *they* played for like 30 minutes!”

Sometimes the youth were less enthusiastic about guest musicians. Darrisha was upset when I told the group that a guest was coming to their next concert, and said she felt like having a guest there “steals our shine” (personal communication, November 2, 2019). There was a similar reaction from some of the youth after another concert with guest musicians. Most of the time the youth truly enjoyed the guests, and the exposure to good performers was so important to their development that it was not negotiable. I have learned that when the guests play in the group and interact with the youth before the concert, the youth accept and admire them more easily. To prevent complaints or misconceptions, I also learned to communicate with the youth why I invite guests and what I want them to learn from the experience.

Traveling to play off-campus concerts is a privilege, and the youth look forward to those opportunities. Some of the youth, however, are not allowed to leave Chatham because of a court order. In several instances, we were able to get special permission for the youth to travel because playing in Chatham Strings is considered educational and positive. However, usually at least one member has restrictions in place barring travel. K’eon has never been allowed to leave Chatham to play concerts, and that is disappointing to him. One class, after the rest of the group had performed off-campus, the youth were talking about the concert, and “K’eon seemed to feel a little left out, understandably, and I told him I had missed him.” I was touched when Darrisha noticed and tried to help him deal with the disappointment he was feeling: “Darrisha said she

[missed him] too (shocking after how they get at each other), and he softened and stayed engaged” (personal communication, January 26, 2019).

Release

A little over two months into the program, I noted in my field notes “It was [a student’s] last class; she leaves on Friday. I’m happy for her, sad for me . . . It’s my first taste that this type of work involves losing people regularly, and that’s hard to take” (personal communication, August 11, 2018). Since that time, about 10 youth have been part of Chatham Strings and then released. A few I only taught for a few months. Several were in the group for over a year. My reaction to their release is always mixed—predominantly happy and hopeful for them, but there is always that corner of sadness.

When another student was about to be released, I commented,

Today was [a student’s] last day in class. She leaves on Friday. I felt so sad—like when [the first student] left—but she was glowing. I am happy for her, but sad because I get a tiny slice of her life—all of their lives—and then start loving them, and then they’re gone. I am realizing more and more how many goodbyes are in this teaching, though. And it’s “have a good life” goodbyes—I will probably never see them again. (personal communication, January 12, 2019)

For many of the youth, they have been waiting to be released for a long time, even years. But as the date approached, they often started to feel vulnerable and nervous about all the uncertainties that are involved in freedom. When Jardana’s court date was approaching, which would determine her placement, she became very anxious. Observing her experience made me realize how nerve-wracking release can be for the youth. As Darrisha’s release date approached, I wrote,

I'm proud of Darrisha for continuing to come to practice even though she is leaving the day before the concert. Today I asked her how she's feeling about leaving. After watching [the supervisor] and Jardana talk about her release . . . I realized nerves are a big part of being released. Monica said she's feeling nervous; she doesn't want to mess up again. "What am I going to do without violin group?" she said, which was both surprising and heartwarming (personal communication, June 8, 2019).

Maria echoed Darrisha's sentiment; as her release date approached she told me,

She's just afraid to get into trouble again, but plans to isolate herself for a bit until she can figure stuff out and find good friends. She will be going to a new high school, and is glad it's a fresh start but a little apprehensive since it's mostly a White school (she's Hispanic). (personal communication, August 3, 2019)

When the rest of the original six Chatham Strings members were about to be released, K'eon knew he was about to be left behind. During one of the last classes with the original group, Jimar, Jardana, and Kelli were excitedly talking about being released soon and

K'eon was upset. He started talking about how he wants to leave, too, but how he's seen people leave and come back and go—and he's still here. Jardana said "I've been locked up since I was 14 and I'm 17 so you just need to suck it up and do your time." K'eon said he's been locked up since he was 13 or 14. He mumbled something about being afraid he'll be locked up until he's 21. (personal communication, June 29, 2019)

K'eon has seen his peers leave in the time he has been at Chatham, and he has also watched some of them return. Chatham Strings has been at Chatham for about one and one-half years now, and during that time, two of the 20 students who have participated in the program have come back to Chatham. That is a 10% recidivism rate, with the marker event being re-confinement. A student released in January was back by the end of May

and rejoined Chatham Strings soon afterward. If my emotions are mixed when I see the youth leave, they are even more conflicted when I see them again. Though I am glad to see them, meeting them again at Chatham means that the cycle has not been broken. The dedicated staff, intensive treatment plans, and even the small part Chatham Strings plays in the youths' experience at Chatham are only tools; ultimately, the youth have to decide whether to respond to or reject the help they are offered.

Summary

Teaching and working with the youth in Chatham Strings helped me see the needs and challenges documented about youth of this demographic in a new light. Learning to know and care about each one of the youth set these emerging themes against a helpful background as I observed these issues and discoveries play out in their lives in unique and personal ways. Because each person was different, with varying backgrounds, personalities, and experiences, the unanimity of the common themes seemed even more significant than if they had been encountered in a vacuum.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Exposure and New Experiences, Pride and Recognition, and Personal and Interpersonal Development were themes emphasized by Kelli, Evangelia, Maria, Darrisha, Jardana, K'eon, Stephen, and Jimar. Chatham's staff also addressed the theme of Chatham Strings as a part of the larger effort to rehabilitate youth. This chapter will discuss and connect these themes, and the findings of this study, with prior research involving music and people in the correctional system.

This qualitative bonded case study asked the question: What benefits, if any, do students gain from playing in the string ensemble? The themes that emerged from interviews with staff and youth participants, as well as my own personal journey as reflected in my field notes, seem to suggest that participation in Chatham Strings played a part in rehabilitation goals. Chatham Strings is just one small piece of a much larger network of help and support in the lives of these youth, a network comprised of dedicated professionals who invest deeply in them, but its role is unique.

Connecting Study Results to Prior Research

The theme of Exposure and New Experiences contained several subthemes, including being discouraged from learning new things, being allowed to learn something new, enjoying new experiences, transferring openness to new things into other domains,

and being given another chance to engage differently with life. Many of the student participants in this study came from backgrounds of trauma and abuse. In addition to these adverse effects on attitudes towards learning and trying new experiences, Maria and Evangelia shared with me that significant people in their lives did not believe in them and told them that they could not succeed in new things. In her study of music's effects on traumatized children, Foran (2009) demonstrated that the cognitive rigidity that results from trauma makes youth less absorptive and receptive, which in turn discourages attempts to learn (Foran 2009), a finding that corroborates with Maria's and Evangelia's experiences. Evangelia shared that her success with learning the violin—a new experience—made her realize that she could try other new things, and two staff members and Chatham's director also noted that they encouraged exposure to new things to broaden the horizons of the youth. Both Anderson and Overy (2010) and Marcum (2014) wrote about success in one area transferring to another domain, even if the realms are unrelated, as success breeds confidence and then more success. This theme of music participation as a new experience emerged significantly in the present study, partly because the participants' unfamiliarity with the instruments and genre challenged their assumptions about their abilities to be successful at new things. However, this theme is not overtly mentioned nor emphasized in the research literature I reviewed during this study.

Pride and Recognition was another common theme among participants in the present study. Subthemes from the category of Pride included: acquiring a skill that could be shared with others, collaborating with peers in a positive endeavor, taking satisfaction

in success, overcoming the pressures of performance, and realizing the potential to do good things in life. In the category of Recognition, subthemes included receiving positive reinforcement, making people they love proud, and getting attention for something positive, not negative. K'eon and Maria commented on the clear sense of accomplishment they felt when they realized they were playing their instruments and were contributing in concerts. Attempting a new skill and then succeeding in demonstrable ways (e.g., learning to play an instrument or participating in a successful concert) corroborates with Anderson and Overy's (2010) findings that music provides a more definite sense of achievement than, for instance, being in a math class. Marcum (2014) also remarked on the power of succeeding for the first time in an artistic endeavor and the pride and potentially recognized through producing something of artistic significance. Evangelia, Darrisha, and K'eon shared how they felt when they received affirmation from those they loved, which relates to Cohen's (2012) extensive documentation of the impact of positive reinforcement on incarcerated musicians. Evangelia expressed her pleasure when she received positive, instead of negative, attention after concerts, and Jardana shared how she felt collaborating with her peers on something entirely positive, and how the experience changed her perception of them. Marcum (2014), Hoffer (2017), and Anderson and Overy (2010) also found that positive musical collaboration resulted in participants feeling proud of their accomplishments. Cohen (2012), Cohen and Palidofsky (2003), and Harbert (2013) found that interaction between musicians in correctional settings and people outside changed the perceptions of both groups towards the other. The youth experienced pride after guest musicians

performed with them and complimented them and felt credibility with guest musicians because the youth saw themselves as fellow musicians. The feedback I received from visitors and guest musicians also reflected that their view of the youth shifted after a personal encounter.

Another common theme in this study was Personal and Interpersonal Development. The subthemes under Personal Development included releasing emotions, regulating behavior, dealing with frustrations and persevering, and using time more productively. The subthemes included in Interpersonal Development included improving communication skills, improving patience and emotional impulse control, accepting feedback, recognizing the interdependence of ensemble playing, helping peers, and kindness. The findings in the present study contained elements that were similar to results from numerous prior studies in the research literature.

The emotional release Evangelia and Kelli experienced through music-making has also been noted in Harbert's (2013) and Marcum's (2014) studies with musicians in the correctional system. Maria valued her participation in the strings program; as a result, Maria regulated her behavior, and Chatham's director also noted that the program served as a tool to encourage good choices. Marcum (2014), Williams (2008), and McCarthy et al. (2004) also found that when participants enjoy and value music participation, they regulated their behavior. Darrisha, K'eon, Stephen, and Jardana discussed music's impact on increasing their tolerance with frustrations, and two staff participants also mentioned the students' developing perseverance through their participation in the string program, a

result that is consistent with the findings of Hodges (2013), Marcum (2014), and Williams (2008). Marcum (2014) noted about his guitar students that

the students learn to take objective criticism about their guitar playing without becoming frustrated or angry. Because the performance evaluation is unemotional and immediately followed by an experience of success, they gain a positive association between performance critique and achievement. (p. 5)

Most of the youth participants (K'eon, Stephen, Jamir, Evangelia, and Maria) said that being a part of the program made their time go by more quickly because it gave them something to do, as well as an event they eagerly anticipated each week. Harbert (2013) and Anderson and Overy (2010) also wrote that the passage of time is more tolerable by participation in meaningful activities and that being excited about those activities gave purpose.

Kelli, Jardana, Maria, Stephen, and Darrisha noted that their communication skills had developed through their participation in the string program, and results from Williams's (2008) study corroborated that being part of a music ensemble encourages the exercise of communication skills. Most of the youth participants (Stephen, Maria, Kelli, Evangelia, and Darrisha) also said that they had to learn patience with one another as they worked as a group. Ezell and Levy (2003) also wrote about ensemble participation encouraging the development of patience and tolerance. K'eon, Stephen, Darrisha, Jardana, and Maria talked about their discovery of teamwork, awareness of one another, and the interconnectedness of the group through their experience of making music together. Ensemble participation encouraging teamwork has been documented in many

studies, including those by McCarthy et al. (2004), Welchburg (1963), Silverman (1986), Ferguson (1964), and Anderson and Overy (2010).

Possible Benefits of Chatham Strings

The members of the string ensemble grew in some positive ways during this study. While it is difficult to claim definitely that Chatham Strings was solely responsible for this growth, participants in this study believed that it benefited them positively. The themes, which were drawn from the data and expanded upon in Chapter V, indicate that the youth experienced a new opportunity, a feeling of accomplishment, positive reinforcement, a sense of potentiality and worth, personal growth, and development of interpersonal skills through their involvement with the program. As previously mentioned, the strings program exists as one tool among many that Chatham is utilizing to help these youth. But that these particular skills and experiences were encouraged and reached unique potentiality through their involvement is less controversial to claim. Music-making is an experience with tangible results. Students personally engage in playing their instruments and struggle to acquire new skills and master more familiar skills. There is an innate immediacy in the feedback loop when playing music with others—an instantaneous awareness of whether things are working, the person knows how to execute their part, and the group is playing together. Performance is an even more heightened experience than rehearsal; now not only is the group aware of their work and its effects, but the audience is also responding and giving feedback. The public nature of music-making means there is innate pressure but also the potential for achievement and accomplishment. Because participating in group music-making is not easy, the struggle

involved makes success all the more valued when it is achieved. The frustrations and interconnectedness of working with others heighten and intensify the personal development that may be taking place as well. This, I believe, is part of the uniqueness that music programs can bring alongside the other needful and necessary work of those who serve incarcerated people.

Conclusion

The gym was full of young people dressed in khakis and polo shirts. Staff members, youth counselors, administrative personnel, and school teachers sat among them. Three people, clearly from the “outside,” expectantly sat in the front row, eyes bright with anticipation. “That’s my dad, step-mom, and grandma,” Kelli told me. Kelli had composed a melody about 3 months before this day as part of the program’s music reading component. Titled *Motherly Love* in memory of her mother, Kelli said that writing the piece was part of the process of coming to peace with that loss. I added accompanying parts, and the ensemble had performed it once before. Today, though, was special because Kelli’s family was able to be at the concert.

However, before getting to *Motherly Love*, there was a special addition to our program. While the beginning group was playing, Kelli disappeared briefly and then reemerged in a graduation gown and hat. Chatham Strings played Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance* as Kelli walked down the aisle. Graduating from high school is a significant accomplishment in this setting, and Kelli’s achievement was a moving moment for everyone involved. A colleague of mine was playing with us, and she later told me, “I nearly cried, and I don’t even know these kids!”

Two original compositions by Chatham Strings students ended the concert, including Kelli's *Motherly Love*. After the concert, Kelli was brimming with joy at the graduation party Chatham's staff had prepared. The following day Chatham Strings traveled to UNCG and performed the same program in Tew Recital Hall, giving *Motherly Love* its third public performance. Kelli relished the positive feedback she got from audience members and ensemble colleagues alike. NC's Juvenile Justice communication officer wrote an article on Kelli's piece, which she treasured, as well as the recording he made of *Motherly Love*. Kelli told me that she had never expected to write music, and being able to perform a piece she wrote, one that dealt with a painful part of her past, and share that with her family, was crossing a new frontier. In the words of a staff member, for Kelli and the others, Chatham Strings "opened a whole new avenue . . . If you keep a kid in the corner, they know the corner. You give them an instrument . . . [and] took so many kids somewhere that they never thought they would go, could go" (D. McLean, personal communication, June 10, 2019). For Kelli, Chatham Strings was a part of learning that there is more to life than the corner she knew.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Recruitment Script (oral)

You already know me, so you know my name is Bethany Uhler. You may not know that I'm in UNCG's music program, working on a doctorate degree. As part of my degree, I would like to write about the string program here at Chatham YDC. The purpose of this study is to research if there are any benefits to you because you participate in Chatham Strings. And you're the people I'm asking to be in this study because you're in this program and that makes you eligible. The way I'd like to collect information is by asking you questions about your experience in the string group. If you choose to be in the study, besides being in class for string ensemble, there will be a personal interview and a focus group interview. At the beginning of the study, you will meet with me and I will ask you to answer a few questions about your experience with being in the string program. Then everyone participating in the study will meet as a group with me and talk about playing in Chatham Strings. Interviews will take about 30 minutes. There will be no compensation for being in this study. It's completely up to you if you want to be in this study. Whether or not you decide to be in the study, you will still be in Chatham Strings; the study doesn't affect your participation at all. The study will be held here at Chatham YDC. You can ask me any questions you have about the study, or ask Mr. Dingle.

Interview Questions for Administration/Staff Interviews

1. What were your initial thoughts about this program? What are your thoughts now?
2. What reactions to this program have you observed among the students—both those in and outside the program?
3. What benefits, if any, do you think the students have gained from participating in this program?
4. What was your reaction to the concerts?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the program? Additional benefits, or any negative outcomes?

Interview Questions for Focus Groups

1. Being in Chatham Strings is like being on a team, in a way. What do you enjoy about that aspect, or what do you find challenging about working as a group?
2. What have you learned you have to do to work well as a teammate with the other students? So this is a more personal question—what have you figured out you need to do?
3. Do you feel like the group dynamic, or ability to work together, has changed in the time you've been in the group?
4. What do you think would help everyone work together?

Interview Questions for Individual Interviews

1. What is your previous musical experience (what instruments played/musical ensembles)?
2. What type of music do you typically listen to?
3. Why do you want to be part of the string program?
4. What do you expect to get out of or learn from being in this program?
5. What did you learn?
6. What surprised or challenged you about being in the string ensemble?
7. How did you feel about being a part in the string program?
8. What role do you see music playing in your life in the future?
9. What pro-social skills did you find yourself using in the string ensemble?
10. What was your reaction to playing in the concerts?

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY
 2718 Beverly Cooper Moore and Irene Mitchell Moore
 Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.
 PO Box 26170
 Greensboro, NC 27402-6170
 336.256.0253
 Web site: www.uncg.edu/orc
 Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Bethany Uhler
 Music
 Music Performance

From: UNCG IRB

Authorized signature on behalf of IRB

Approval Date: 12/11/2018
Expiration Date of Approval: 10/23/2019

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Full Board Review
Submission Type: Initial
Study #: 18-0229
Study Title: Introducing Strings and Chamber Music at a Youth Development Center to At-Risk Youth

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated.

Study Description:

This descriptive study will involve teaching at-risk youth at the Chatham Youth Development Center how to play the violin, viola, and cello in group classes. This study is descriptive, with minimal risk to the participants, and will pose the question: what benefits, if any, do students experience by participating in learning an instrument and playing music together in groups? The PI will act as a narrative inquirer and participant observer in this study. This is a currently existing program, and this research will study the effects of the program on the participants.

Study Regulatory and other findings:

- **Parental Consent:** This research meets criteria for a waiver of consent entirely according to 45 CFR 46.116(d).
- In accordance with 45 CFR 46.304, the convened IRB committee included a board member who is a prisoner representative. This research, which involves prisoners, meets criteria set forth in section 45 CFR 46.305(a)(1-7) and is permitted according to 45 CFR 46.306

Investigator's Responsibilities

Annual renewal of full board studies is required. Please be sure to submit your application for renewal prior to the study expiration date.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification application available at <http://integrity.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB using the "Unanticipated Problem-Adverse Event Form" at the same website.

Signed letters, along with stamped copies of consent forms and other recruitment materials will be scanned to you in a separate email. **Stamped consent forms must be used unless the IRB has given you approval to waive this requirement.** Please notify the ORI office immediately if you have an issue with the stamped consents forms.

Please be aware that valid human subjects training and signed statements of confidentiality for all members of research team need to be kept on file with the lead investigator. Please note that you will also need to remain in compliance with the university "Access To and Retention of Research Data" Policy which can be found at http://policy.uncg.edu/university-policies/research_data/.

APPENDIX C

CHATHAM YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER DIRECTOR LETTER

**North Carolina Department of Public Safety**
Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

Roy Cooper, Governor
Erik A. Hooks, Secretary

Reuben F. Young, Interim Chief Deputy Secretary
William L. Lassiter, Deputy Secretary

MEMORANDUM

To: University of North Carolina Greensboro Internal Review Board

From: Charles Dingle, Facility Director

RE: Letter of Support

Date: October 11, 2018

On behalf of Chatham Youth Development Center, please allow this notification to confirm our support for the string ensemble program created by Bethany Uhler for at risk youth. The program has been very successful and has created an opportunity for the students not only to learn how to play a musical instrument but also read sheet music. Because of this, Ms. Uhler has unlocked the door for success and the students are confident and proud of being able to accomplish something that they normally would not have had an opportunity to do in the community.

I am in full support of the proposed research by which Ms. Uhler would be recruiting and collecting data. In addition, I am aware that the IRB from the University of North Carolina Greensboro will need to approve the request and I am confident, if approved, that Ms. Uhler will represent the university and the facility in an astute manner.

MAILING ADDRESS:
4201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh NC 27699-4201

www.ncdps.gov



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Fax: (919) 715-8477

APPENDIX D

“ON THE SCENE” DIGEST ARTICLE 1

Chatham YDC String Ensemble

by Matt Jenkins, communications officer

Chatham YDC Director Charles Dingle is always looking for unique and innovative outlets to help the students under his care to flourish, and his relationship with Peter Zlotnick, education director with the Greensboro Symphony got him thinking. “Years ago, he [Peter] used to bring ensembles to the Guilford Juvenile Detention Center,” said Dingle. “When I became the Director here [Chatham YDC] I immediately called him and said, hey man, I want to get the same ensembles coming here.”



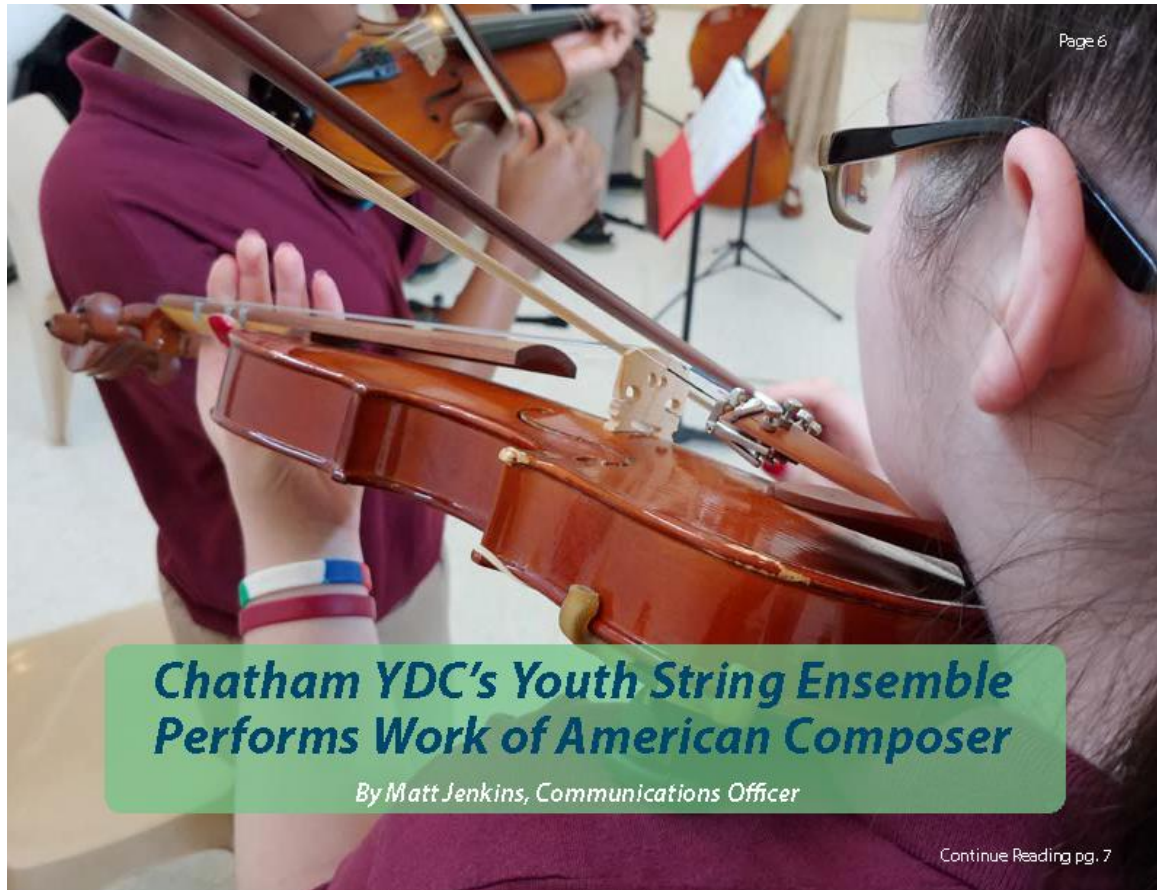
The idea of conducting this pilot program at Chatham was realized under the guidance of Bethany Uhler, a Greensboro-based cellist and a doctoral student in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's music program.

She selected several students who now gather on Saturdays to learn how to play string instruments and read sheet music. Everyone involved in this pilot program believes it's important to have kids who can appreciate the opportunity to learn something new and work as a group. “Because of the setting, kids have to come in, stay focused and be dedicated to what they signed up for,” Jada stated. “Before this, nobody would have come out and said I like classical music, but now others have seen it's cool and want to try it.” It seems putting classical music into a language they can understand has earned it a newfound appreciation with this crowd. Uhler's strong desire and motivation to be involved in a program like this comes from having a family member in prison; however, it was a struggle logistically to make that happen within the adult system. When she connected with Dingle and others at Chatham YDC, she said, “from the onset, everyone was so supportive and open, which was really exciting.”

“I believe in exposure,” Dingle said. “I try to open doors to a lot of different experiences for these kids.” Jada confirms she has benefitted from the experience and this is something she would like to continue learning and sharing in the future. “I feel like this is a great program and people should be honored to be a part of this.” Uhler, Dingle and the youth string ensemble of Chatham YDC are breaking new ground by going back to the classics.

APPENDIX E

“ON THE SCENE” DIGEST ARTICLE 2



Page 6

**Chatham YDC's Youth String Ensemble
Performs Work of American Composer**

By Matt Jenkins, Communications Officer

Continue Reading pg. 7

Competition for teenage eardrums today includes contemporary performers such as Lady Gaga, Cardi B, Kendrick Lamar, or Lil' Wayne. So, to entice a group of teenagers to spend a weekend day tuning in to (and practicing) the likes of Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Copeland or Vivaldi is a success in every way. This is exactly what Charles Dingle and his team at Chatham Youth Development Center hoped for when they launched a youth string ensemble program little more than a year ago: expose kids to classical music and provide them an opportunity to learn and participate in a social group. What Chatham YDC staff may not have expected was that this experience would also lead these youth to create original compositions, suitable for sharing publicly.

Under the guidance of University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) Ph.D. candidate Bethany Uhler, the coed mix of students spend time on Saturdays learning and rehearsing together. To showcase their talents, they have played several performances both at Chatham YDC and outside public venues like the UNC-G Music Conservatory stage. "The youth who participate must demonstrate they're ready for the responsibility and commitment – and there is now a waiting list to join the group," Dingle said.

Last year, I introduced readers to a young lady who gravitated to playing a violin very quickly and easily. Watching her perform nearly a year later, I saw that she has continued to grow her playing ability and is an obvious leader among the members. The music is becoming more advanced for the experienced members while still incorporating easier parts for newcomers. This team combines their varying skill sets to perform an array of pieces.

As the group made its way through its spring recital program recently – comprised of traditional North Carolina mountain tunes, and adaptations of works by Russian, German and other European composers – Uhler paused as she turned to the audience to introduce the closing number. "Our final arrangement this afternoon is by an American composer," she explained. "The tune is entitled, 'Mother's Love,' and it was written by (one of) our very own."

This is another young lady who has grown from the experience of performing with this group. Quiet and reserved in earlier shows, she wore a smile of confidence and enjoyment as she drew a bow across the strings.

She told me as part of their development in the ensemble, students were assigned to write a song, and the group selected hers as the closing piece. "I wrote the song to make peace, to show that I have let everything go," she said. "Everyone loved the way it turned out." Happy that so many people have gained something from her song, she said she plans to have it played when she graduates in the near future, allowing her father and other family members to hear what she has created.

"Spending time with Ms. Uhler and the others is something I look forward to every week," she said. "Whatever I carry with me, the music is a stress reliever and it helps to take my mind off other distractions which occur through the week. I can come in here and it puts a smile on my face."

Providing pathways to new experiences such as these helps young people find themselves and what they can offer to our communities as adults. These young people have now opened a door into a world of music that they did not know existed before their involvement with the string ensemble.

Listen to the song, 'Mother's Love' [here](#).