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The purpose of the study was to investigate the world of the high school music classroom. Motivation to join music ensembles and to remain, perception of the musical groups by their members and by the school community as a whole, the meaning and value that music ensembles engender for their participants, and the social climate of the music classroom were explored. Structured interviews were conducted with 60 students—20 each from band, choir, and orchestra. Students joined ensembles for musical, social, academic, and family reasons. Insider views highlighted the importance of labels and identifiers and changing perceptions throughout one's school career, whereas outsider views included the opinion that musicians are talented, intelligent, and underappreciated. Ensemble participation yielded musical, academic, psychological, and social benefits. The social climate emerged as a pervasive element in the study as students noted the importance of relationships for their well-being and growth.

Cecil Adderley, Mary Kennedy, and William Berz
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

"A Home away from Home": The World of the High School Music Classroom

The fact that adolescents form subcultures in their schools and in society is well-documented in the literature (Cotterell, 1996; Cusick, 1973; Head, 1997; Kinney, 1999; Moffatt, 1989). In his ethnographic study of the high school student's world, Cusiak (1973) identified the "music-drama" clique as one of several closely knit circles in the institution he studied (p. 144). Important characteristics of the clique were that several of the members were among the highest achievers in the school, that most had known each other since elementary school, and that, unlike some other groups in the school, the music-drama clique members did not seem to associate with one another outside of school.

Cecil Adderley is an assistant professor of music, Mary Kennedy is an assistant professor of music, and William Berz is a professor of music at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 81 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1441. Their e-mail addresses are cadderle@rci.rutgers.edu, makenn@rci.rutgers.edu, and wberz@rci.rutgers.edu, respectively. Copyright © 2003 by MENC: The National Association for Music Education.

Morrison (2001) supports Cusiak's finding that music ensembles form close-knit circles and goes further to suggest that "school ensembles are not just classes or performance groups, but guardians of their own specific culture, a culture that informs and enriches the lives of their members" (p. 24). Morrison explores this "overlooked culture" through the themes of identity, transmission, social dimension, practical and personal boundaries, traditional song and performance practices, and diaspora. Lamont (2002) examines the development of young people's musical identity, asserting that both in-school and out-of-school contexts play a role.

The social "pecking order" of high school groups, from popular "preppies" and "jocks," deviant "burnouts" and "headbangers [a musician who performs hard rock]," to low-status "nerds" and "dweebs," is explored by Kinney (1999). Kinney found that the "trendies" (also referred to as "preppies," "populars," "jocks," or the "in-crowd") "had the highest participation in extracurricular activities (such as football, basketball, track, golf, cheerleading, gymnastics, student council, yearbook, and choir) relative to other groups" (p. 24). These students also "express higher degrees of self-esteem than do their peers who are members of less popular groups" (p. 21).

In light of the foregoing discussion, it seems clear that music students form subcultures of their own within the larger school setting and that these subcultures prove to be important vehicles for support and growth. In the present study, we investigated the music subculture of one high school to determine its fundamental nature and quality, its features and its significance, and to discover how closely this subculture resembles Morrison's "culture of our own."

Against the backdrop of Morrison's claim, three studies prove useful to our investigation. Hylton's (1981) study was concerned with identifying dimensions of meaning perceived by participants of senior high choral ensembles. Six dimensions were illuminated: achievement, spiritualistic, musical-artistic, communicative, psychological, and integrative. In a study of junior high school boys' experience of choral music as an elective, Kennedy (2002) explored four issues: motivation to join the choir and to remain, acquisition of musical skills, knowledge, and attitudes, repertoire considerations, and perception of the "choral experience"—both preferences and benefits. Evidence from the data supported five out of six dimensions of meaning as stated by Hylton (1981). Comments related to the spiritualistic dimension were missing, perhaps due to the age of the informants or perhaps due to the secular age in which we live. Conway and Borst (2001) investigated the "relationship between personal motivation and choral involvement at multiple levels of study" (p. 5). Specifically, they were interested in determining what personal factors motivated graduating middle school choral students to continue choral music electives in high school and what "other non-musical influences motivated the students to value their choir class experiences from one school to another and from one grade to another" (p. 5). Analysis of student interviews yielded seven cate-

gories of meaning: singing for learning's sake, singing for self-expression, singing for social and group reasons, singing for enjoyment, singing for performance, singing to be identified with the school program, and singing for the music itself (p. 6).

The foregoing three studies confined their investigations to students in choral ensembles. The present study adopts a wider lens to incorporate participants enrolled in the three major high school ensembles—band, choir, and orchestra. Our purpose was to investigate the world of the high school music classroom. We looked at four main issues: motivation to join music ensembles and to remain, perception of the musical groups by their members and by the school community as a whole, the meaning and value that music ensembles engender for their participants, and the social climate of the music classroom.

METHOD

The study took place in a large American high school in a northeastern city in a predominantly upper-middle-class socioeconomic area. The 40-year-old suburban school is considered by peer academic institutions to be academically upwardly mobile and staff members pride themselves on the fact that a significant proportion of seniors go on to higher education, including a number who attend Ivy League colleges. (The orchestra teacher gave us the unofficial percentage of college-bound students as 90%!) The ethnic makeup of the student body is two-thirds White, one-quarter Asian, with small numbers of Black, Hispanic, and other groups. During the time of the study, the school was in the final stages of a major renovation that would allow more space for the music department (among other things).

The music facilities and equipment in evidence gave a picture of a healthy department, well-supplied and valued. There were separate rooms for each of the three ensembles. Only the choral room was shared by the occasional nonmusic class. The three music teachers shared an office that was often inhabited by students during lunch hour, study periods, and before and after school. The orchestral teacher, affectionately dubbed "Mr. T." by the students, was in his 21st year of teaching at the high school. The choral teacher, "Miss Shine," and the band teacher, "Mr. K.," were both in their fifth year at the school. All three had had additional teaching experience prior to arriving at the high school. Out of approximately 2,000 students attending the school in grades 10–12, 330 were enrolled in band, choir, and orchestra classes. (During this study, there were 120 students enrolled in band, 118 in orchestra, and 92 in choir.) In both orchestra and choir, girls outnumbered boys two to one. Band membership was almost evenly divided between the sexes.

To investigate the subculture of the music classroom, we conducted structured interviews (as suggested by Fontana & Frey, 1994) with 60 students—20 each from band, choir, and orchestra. Interviews were held during regular class hours in adjoining practice rooms and

the music office by three investigators. The one-on-one strategy and the fact that the interviews were recorded added informal communication (Creswell, 1998, p. 124) and voice tones to the data, features that would not have been present had a written survey been used. Each investigator interviewed approximately 20 students. By coincidence, each investigator had either observed one or more of the ensembles as a university student-teaching supervisor or had adjudicated and/or given clinics to at least one of the ensembles prior to the study. Because the interviewers had each had some previous interaction with one or more of the ensembles, all were assigned students whom they did not know. Teachers were asked to select a balance of girls and boys and also a balance of students from grades 10, 11, and 12 for interviewing.

Accessibility rather than randomness was the major determinant in choosing the participants. Each student who was selected was given the opportunity to either accept or decline by the interviewer. In all, 16 sophomores (8 girls, 8 boys), 19 juniors (12 girls, 7 boys) and 25 seniors (11 girls, 14 boys) were interviewed. A few students were members of more than one ensemble, and several were enrolled in music theory in addition to their performing ensemble(s).

The interview questions were designed to address the four focus issues already mentioned: motivation to join music ensembles and to remain, perception of the musical groups by their members and by the school community as a whole, the meaning and value that music ensembles engender for their participants, and the social climate of the music classroom. Care was taken with the ordering of the questions so that rapport with the participant would be established at the outset, questions would flow naturally from one topic to another, and opportunity would be given for participants to offer additional comments at the conclusion of the interview (Spradley, 1979) (see Figure 1).

Analysis consisted of studying the complete interview transcripts and of systematically organizing them into groups by music ensemble (band, choir, or orchestra) and by sex (girl or boy). Secondly, questions pertaining to each focus issue were grouped together and their resulting answers synthesized. From this vantage point, clear patterns began to emerge. In addition to patterns within each focus area, there was also crossing of boundaries between the four focus areas. For instance, the social impact of friends appeared not only in the questions related to friends and the social climate, but also in the other three focus areas. Thus, mention will be made of this social impact in each area in an effort to not only reflect the data accurately but also to highlight its important role in the musical world of these young people.

INTERPRETATION

Motivation to Join

"Why did you join the band/choir/orchestra in the first place?" This question elicited a wide range of responses, many of which con-

1. What grade are you in? What is your voice part/instrument(s)?
 2. How long have you been a member of the band/choir/orchestra in this school? In previous schools? Are you a member of more than one ensemble? If so, which ones?
 3. I'm interested in understanding your participation in band/choir/orchestra from your viewpoint. Can you tell me the reasons why you chose to be a member of the b/c/o in the first place?
 4. What are the things you really like most about being a member of the band/choir/orchestra?
 5. As a member of your high school band/choir/orchestra, you are a person who plays/sings because this experience means something to you. I am trying to find out what it is about this experience that is meaningful. From your point of view, what would that be?
 6. Now I'd like to ask a different type of question. Do you spend time with your fellow musicians outside of rehearsal? If so, what kinds of things do you do?
 7. Are you a member of other groups in the school such as athletic teams or clubs? If so, which ones?
 8. I'd like to know something about your friends, the group you hang out with in band/choir/orchestra or otherwise. Can you tell me in general about their interests?
 9. Moving back to the band/choir/orchestra. What's your perception of the social climate of this ensemble?
 - (a) Do you know everyone's name? Is everyone friendly with everyone else in the group?
 - (b) Are there people within the ensemble who seem to stick together?
 - (c) Are there people who don't seem to have any friends?
 10. Are the music groups in the school popular? If so, why do you think that is?
 11. How do you think the other students who are not involved with the music program perceive you and your classmates who are involved?
 12. After you graduate, what do you think you will take away with you from being a member of the band/choir/orchestra?
 13. This is a rather different question. If you had an unexpected free period, where would you go and what would you do?
 14. How would you describe your participation as a member of the band/choir/orchestra? Is it like being part of a regular class? Or like a team situation? Is it like a club? Or like a "home away from home"? Or is it like something else?
 15. Now that we have talked for a little while and you have better idea as to what we are discussing, could you please talk again about why band/choir/orchestra is valuable to you?
- Thank you so much for talking to me. You have really helped me to understand how you view your participation in the band/choir/orchestra and what this experience means to you.

Figure 1. Interview Questions.

firm and affirm results of earlier research. First was the influence of family. Parents alternatively encouraged or pressured students to join music ensembles. An orchestral student explained: "Like, my parents told me mostly to do it because when they were young they didn't play, so they wanted me to just learn more how to play an instrument." Sometimes the parental influence seemed more benign, as in the following comment: "I wanted to become a musician, and my mom had been a musician." In addition, many students referred to the importance of a sibling in helping them make the decision to be in a school ensemble.

A second area of influence was the whole domain of things "musical." First was an acknowledgment of students' liking for the subject. Simple statements such as "I like music" appeared frequently in the transcripts, along with more focused comments like "[it] kind of influenced me to the classical part of music." A second musical dimension was earlier exposure to music in a variety of ways. This proved to be quite significant for some. Comments such as "I started in 5th grade," "Compulsory choir in 4th grade was the catalyst," "Earlier piano training paved the way," and "Music programs on VH1 when I was little" are evidence of this component. Playing and the appeal of instrumental timbres was a third musical dimension. Students enjoyed playing and said that "the band was something you wanted to be in." Students also mentioned individual instruments and their connection with them. The following comments serve to emphasize this connection. "The clarinet ... I liked the sound of it, then switched to bassoon," "I thought the violin had a cool sound," and "My mom brought home a trumpet [from a garage sale] and I liked the way it sounded" underline the affinity that one can have for a certain instrumental color. Finally, students referred to the whole area of musical development. Some "wanted a music career," while others cited the "good program at the school" as the reason they became involved. Some spoke of the "opportunity to learn musical skills" while others referred to the "opportunity for solos."

A third reason for joining musical ensembles was the perception of the balance they provided in the school curriculum. Students welcomed the chance to "get away from schoolwork" and said that they believed that they were more "well-rounded" people for having participated in a music group. One student referred to his two music periods (music theory and choir) this way: "I have bookends first and eighth period, so something to look forward to."

The social benefit of being in a group was a fourth area of influence. Students welcomed the opportunity to "feel part of something" and "to make friends." Playing/singing with a group was another draw for participation. One student expressed his musical and social reasons for joining the choir this way:

I'm drawn to, like, to singing and music in general, and then there's the social aspect, which is real fun because, like, walking into the chorus room breaks down like social barriers, and you get to know people a lot better than you would outside of the music room.

The sentiments of these high school students confirm Morrison's (2001) view and echo those of the informants in Kennedy's (2002) study, for whom "love of singing, influence of the teacher and the company of friends" (p. 27) were instrumental in persuading them to join the choir in the first place.

Perception of the Musical Groups by their Members and the School Community

Many of the students interviewed for this study had strong views on how other people in the school who were not enrolled in music classes viewed them and the performing groups. A majority seemed to take considerable pride in their ensembles and the quality of the resulting performances. Many students remarked that the ensembles performed at a high level and that their concerts were reasonably well-attended. This seemed to shape their opinions of how their non-musical peers judged them and if participation was viewed to be positive and a popular thing to do. A tenor saxophone player provided a summary that was quite typical. "They think that we're good, but we're not the center of attention."

Comments indicated that many students viewed themselves as part of the larger school population, while others saw themselves as separate, part of an experience that was totally unique from all others in their school (see Morrison, 2001). It is this blend of the two opposing views that seems to be the overall theme of how students were viewed by their nonmusical peers. There was not a single view, however, as to how they were judged by others in the school. Students often used athletics as a benchmark to measure whether participation in music was viewed as popular. In a similar vein to the results reported by Kinney (1999), the implication was that the organized sports programs were the most well-regarded activities in the school—at the top of the school's "pecking order." A soprano summarized her comparison of music and athletics. "I guess that it's not as big as some athletics, but it's pretty big."

A considerable number of students said that they believed that those in the music groups were perceived to be talented, partly because of the overall feeling that the larger school community judged the ensembles to be of high quality. A chorister remarked: "There's an element of respect. There's an element of, 'well, she's really good at music.'"

Many music students also said that they are viewed as being intelligent. A violinist's comments point to this, as well as to how he viewed himself and his musical peers. "There [are] a lot of people that are smart that are in the orchestra. I think they might see us as that because a lot of people are." Several orchestra members mentioned that students in music generally earned high grades in other classes. Notwithstanding the fact that the general population of the school is academically oriented, these student comments affirm Cusiak's (1973) findings and fuel the already heated discussion over

the connection between musical engagement and general cognitive development (see Hodges, 2000).

Students generally said that they put considerable effort into music, but that their work was underappreciated. A chorus member commented: "I don't think that they really have an understanding of how hard we work, but I think there's a certain respect that we have." A tuba and string bass player also noticed this blend of respect and underappreciation. "A lot of people do notice that it's an outstanding program in this school and they realize we work hard. People don't understand the depth of effort that goes into something like marching band. How much time we put in, how much energy we put in—blood we lose."

The use of labels provided insights into how students regard themselves and how they fit into the larger school environment. The student musicians seemed to use several "derogatory" labels for themselves. Of these terms, the most frequently used were "choir geeks" and "band dorks." There did not seem to be such wide-scale use of such labels for the orchestra members. The labels were viewed with both humor—maybe even some pride—as well as with considerable negativity. The students seemed to imply that it was okay to use these labels for one another, but not so from those outside of the program. Several students tried to provide explanations of the terms and why they were used. A violinist commented: "They might think we're dorky. That comes up often because we practice hard and we don't fool around, and most of the people who participate are high-strung people." A chorister put the labels into some perspective: "There [are] always some people who have stereotypical impressions [such as] 'that person's a "band dork" or a "choir geek," or whatever,' but predominantly, I'd say most people just view it as a really nice activity."

The marching band seemed to be viewed somewhat differently from the other ensembles for a number of reasons. A few students noted that "marching band was for 'dorks' and that the concert band was just another class." One band member said, "Marching band has its own persona, and a lot of baggage comes with it."

Although not unique to the marching band, identifiers seemed to be at the root of some of these perceptions. Not only were students using "music as a badge" (Frith, 1981), but they were also using clothing, instrument cases, and other symbols to signify their participation. These things identified musicians as members of the school's ensembles and set them apart at least to some degree. The most controversial was wearing marching band jackets. A number of choir members remarked on this and thought that this contributed to the image of marching band members being perceived as "band nerds." A number of students seemed to think that the view of their participation in music changed rather significantly during their school career. A male chorister said:

In eighth and ninth grade, it's not the coolest thing for a guy to do, and you get looked at kind of funny. In eleventh and twelfth grade, you become more serious about music and more serious about your dedication to it then. People stop judging you by it and just admire you.

An 11th-grade violinist expressed similar feelings. "Back in sixth grade they'd say, 'you're a dork; you play violin.' Now they say, 'Wow, you're in the orchestra.' It changes when you get older."

Although not to a large degree, the view of the arts in the larger social context had an influence on how the students perceived their participation in music. A violinist remarked: "The popular kids don't think that it's cool to be in it. Because to them it's kind of geeky, just like classical music is not popular." Conversely, a couple of students did say that they thought that, in general, the arts were valued in their community and school. Another violinist added: "Our school appreciates art, so if we have an orchestra concert, our friends come and watch and we have a chorus concert they come, and we also have theater so our friends all come and watch that." A third violinist had a somewhat different take. "I'm in orchestra and I wouldn't say that I'm popular because of it. I'm popular because I play bass in a garage band."

Meaning and Value

What meaning and value did performance ensembles engender for their participants? Student responses were naturally varied, yet distinct themes arose. They can be most easily discussed under musical and nonmusical benefits, with the nonmusical benefits being further divided into academic, psychological, and social subcategories.

Making music and performing emerged as important in the "meaning and value" responses. Comments such as "I like playing" and "the knowledge of playing" are sprinkled throughout student interviews. Some students saw their performing as more than a recreative act. "I've been able to create a lot," offered one person. Other students appreciated the fact that they had opportunities to perform in a variety of groupings from the complete ensemble to sectionals to chamber groups and even as a soloist. Students named their exposure to a variety of music as being something they valued. A chorister expressed it this way:

Just the different types of music that you can be shown and be like experienced to because this past spring ... we had like a guy's group that does barbershop quartets and I really like it 'cause it's fun and we pick up the music nicely too ... from, like, spirituals to requiems.

Another area of value concerned students' learning. Acquisition of musical skills and knowledge was suggested by many. An orchestra member explained: "It's a really good experience to learn music and learn how to read music and understand it." Students' love of music and their understanding of its power was acknowledged by several. As a young woman in band put it: "And you know how music, ... it's kind of weird, that you can, just by blowing through something, ... make someone cry or get excited or get depressed or whatever. It's cool."

Some benefits straddled dual areas. Students mentioned interaction with the audience as a significant feature of their participation

in and enjoyment of music ensembles. While this is certainly connected to the musical act of performing, it also aligns well with the notion of an emotional outlet, one of several psychological benefits. Similarly, working toward a goal and the sense of accomplishment, named here by students in a musical context, could apply equally to other subject areas and thus be not a purely musical benefit or value. In response to my question about the meaning of his school musical involvement, an orchestra member replied:

It's just like being part of a group and accomplishing something, like when we went to Chicago to play at the Midwest Clinic, that feeling of accomplishment after we walked off the stage was just incredible!

Career preparation for musicians, offered as another factor in the valuing of performance ensembles, can be viewed as both a musical and academic by-product of membership in high school music courses. Finally, making music in community, while certainly belonging in the musical arena, can apply also to social aspects of membership in ensembles, in particular, a benefit of playing with a group.

In addition, students talked about certain academic benefits. High standards, honors credit, a bonus on a resume that might help them gain entrance to college and in career preparation were mentioned. Students also said that they learned a lot. Time management was one of these skills. And once again, a currently popular music education slogan cropped up in responses. "I think it makes you smarter," said one student. A second offered: "I think the people in orchestra are actually smarter."

Moving to psychological benefits, student responses grouped nicely into four areas: personal qualities, personal growth, emotional outlet, and atmosphere. Students expressed their belief that the qualities of responsibility, commitment, perseverance, self-discipline, and humor had been fostered through their association with their performing groups. In agreement with the findings of Kinney (1999), Lamont (2002) and Morrison (2001), the present study revealed that these students also felt that they had grown in self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-knowledge. Statements such as "Learning to take criticism," "Builds character," "Helped me as a person," and "Keep up with something for 8-9 years and see myself improve" are evidence of this. Students also referred to the emotional outlet provided by their musical connection. "Expressing yourself through the music," "Playing and feeling the music," and "An emotional experience where you can find new feelings within yourself that you haven't felt before" are statements that reflect this particular value. Many comments were made concerning the atmosphere in the music classroom. Respondents found their performance classes supportive, relaxing, and fun. They valued the positive reinforcement they received and enjoyed the somewhat freer climate in these courses.

Turning to social benefits, friendship and benefits of being in a group were the most often mentioned. The teacher and group trips

and outings were also important. Statements about friends were sprinkled throughout the interviews. Some were concerned with making friends—"I get a lot of friends," "You get to meet a lot of people"—while others referred to spending time with friends—"To see all my friends," "A tight group of friends." Still others looked ahead to life after graduation and the impact on their friendships, stating, for example: "I'm going to miss the people a lot." Benefits of being in a group included the sense of community engendered in the ensembles, the diversity that was apparent in the membership, the opportunity to participate in something musical as a group, and the chance to improve social skills. "Working collaboratively," "the camaraderie that forms," and "the cliques type of things" are all testimony to the presence of community in the performing groups.

The ethnic diversity of the membership, in particular, the fact that many of the orchestra members were Asian, was referred to in the following comment: "Being with others who are my own age and ethnicity. It's because a lot of kids in the orchestra are Chinese" I noted that the school Asian club meets in the orchestra room after school on Thursdays. "Making music with other people," "Getting to work with people to make a whole thing," and "The group experience" are all statements that point to the importance and value of participation in musical groups. With respect to improving one's social skills, one student remarked that "it gives [you] more practice and experience with other people." A second echoed this sentiment, stating that "it helps people socially." Several students mentioned the quality of the teacher as playing a role in their valuing of their high school musical experience. "You learn a lot from your chorus teachers," "the relationship that I share with my conductor," and "I really think the conductor is really good" are typical of comments in this area. Observing student/teacher interactions in the hallways and the music office certainly confirmed these student references to teacher respect and friendship. A fourth social benefit was that music groups go on outings. Students named contests, clinics, band camp, and extended trips, for instance the orchestra trip to Chicago, as being keystone experiences for them.

In similar fashion to subjects in studies by Conway and Borst (2001), Hylton (1981), Kennedy (2002), and Morrison (2001), student musicians in the present study found meaning and value in both musical and nonmusical ways. As occurred in the Kennedy study, student responses in the present study supported Hylton's achievement, musical-artistic, communicative, psychological, and integrative dimensions. Furthermore, evidence from the data supported all seven of Conway and Borst's categories.

Social Climate of the Music Classroom

As stated earlier, the high school music classroom is an environment that provides a favorable combination of circumstances for friendships to develop. One could even venture to say that the social

climate of these surroundings contributes to the solidification of these unions.

Many of these students manage to spend a great deal of time with other young musicians. A few of these associations are developed in the music classrooms, others through various community activities. According to these student performers, most of them spend time with other musicians because they have similar interests and personalities. One band member responded: "Most of my friends actually have studied music in some way ... they think that's one of the main factors why we get along so well" A student who plays clarinet and piano stated: "The band has a dating thing going on ... we spend so much time together ... so romances form and all that stuff." Many of these students believed that it was natural for them to want to spend time with one another outside the classroom due to their common interest in music.

The musical connection is not the only association many of these teenagers share. In addition to their music classes, many participate in traditional teenage activities, including "hanging out" with their friends, eating lunch, sleeping, studying, or participating in other extra-curricular activities. In this way, these student musicians differed from the music-drama clique in Cusiak's (1973) study. A talented member of the wind ensemble, orchestra, and marching band, who plays both string bass and tuba, explained: "Oh, we go out to dinner sometimes ... to the movies ... to each other's houses ... try and do homework. [We] get horribly sidetracked and play games. Occasionally, we'll practice." Being a teenager is a challenge, yet many of these teens appear to enjoy the company of their classmates and are friendly toward each other whether they are eating together, participating in organized sports, shopping, attending a movie, or riding a bike.

Sports and other club activities provided by the school district are also popular choices for many of these student musicians. Many of those interviewed attempt to participate in several school-sponsored activities each year. A member of the band who plays both tuba and trombone stated: "Wrestling. I've been doing that as long as I've been playing tuba. Lacrosse this year." Even though these activities are time-consuming, they are popular choices for these active young adults. According to an orchestra member, "I do yearbook. I'm the senior editor, and I'm also in the model UN, and I learned to do debates. I mean our school is known for its orchestra program and its UN. I'm also in NHS [the National Honor Society]—that's just based on grades (whether you get in or not), and, yeah, my time is pretty well partitioned." It seems that many of these students divide their time among a cross-section of student organizations that provide each participant with unique opportunities only available to the members of the group.

When asked about the interests of their friends, many of the students found that their peers enrolled in the same music classes generally had similar outside interests, while those not enrolled in music classes had other interests yet supported their choice to participate

in a music ensemble. In other words, many had two groups of friends. One band member stated:

I have many different friends, people that are in the band, people who play sports, people who don't do anything—just like to hang around. My band friends usually hang out all summer since I'm with them and we get to know each other a lot better. But, during the school year, when there's no band or anything, I just hang out with the athletic people and people who are on the football or soccer team ...

A member of the wind ensemble, orchestra, and marching band responded: "A lot of the same things ... hang out, relax, movies, games, talk about music." Yet a violinist from the orchestra stressed: "Basically, the same as mine ... women, cars ... cars and women, typical teenage things." It is apparent that these students are forming unions or partnerships that appeal to them on many different levels.

When asked about their perception of the social climate of the ensemble in which they are enrolled, some of the students had rather interesting statements concerning their views of members of these organizations. An upperclassman believed that he knew the names of all of the students enrolled in the smaller ensembles, but could only remember a few of the names of students enrolled in the larger ensembles. This seemed to be the case for many of the student musicians enrolled in the larger classes. In smaller ensembles, it was easier to interact and, thus, to learn names. Responses to the question that asked whether some students have a tendency to separate themselves from others or "stick together" provided insight into how some teens think and socialize. Many said that they tended to form groups according to their school classification: seniors with senior class members and juniors with junior class members. This did not seem to vary much from grade level to grade level. Even though it was never stated by any of the students or their ensemble directors to only associate or form close friendships with those who are members of the same class, it tended to occur. Another grouping of students developed among the various sections of an ensemble. Some students commented on the fact that certain sections, like the percussionists, were more likely to associate with each other rather than with nonpercussion students.

As to the presence of ensemble members who seemed to have few or even no friends, a trumpet player stated: "You have a few kids who aren't ever going to be friendly in any situation ... they have problems with themselves and take it out on others. The friendships I see come from outside the class and move into the class." A violinist supported this statement with: "I think that there are some who are just into themselves." Another violinist believed that "those who are just loud and want to be heard ..." are generally the students who seem to not have any friends. Still another violinist believed that there were a certain number of orchestra members who were loners; this type of student was characterized as a student who was "sometimes the outcast ... the ones that just don't fit in." Some students seem to

isolate themselves from other members of a smaller segment of the school population. Even though the music ensembles are smaller subgroupings of the larger school population, some individuals are not included in special social groups, either by their own choice or because they were not invited by other members of the ensemble(s).

Socialization takes place in many environments and is stimulated by a number of activities. It was not a surprise to hear that many of these teenagers would choose to spend an unexpected free period eating lunch, but it was striking to learn that a number of them would prefer to congregate in an ensemble room to participate in various activities. A tenor saxophonist mentioned that: "I probably come down here and practice my jazz music ... the music is a lot of fun and ... I've done that before—come down here to practice." One student who is a member of the wind ensemble, orchestra, and marching band was much more emotional when replying to the question, stating: "I'd probably come here ... I live in here ... in this general music area. Music is such an overwhelming part of your life. I'd be fixing drums, polishing sousaphones, playing bass, and guitar ... writing out the drum cadences." As mentioned earlier, students would often assemble in the music offices or rehearsal rooms to eat, talk, practice, or help the directors with various odd jobs that needed to be completed.

According to many of these teenagers, the description of their participation in each select ensemble varied from being viewed as a class like any other classroom, a home away from home, a club, a family, or something unlike anything else they experienced at this particular school. The students' perception of these ensembles seemed to vary depending on what they would acquire from participation. The students who enjoyed the social settings of the school tended to see this as a home away from home where they had established much more personal relationships with members of the ensemble. These students viewed the group as a circle of close friends who happened to be enrolled in a graded course. Other students viewed these musical groups as a course similar to other courses, but one that was much more group-oriented than the traditional academic classes where individual effort does not affect the overall group in the manner that it affects an individual's performance. Their statements tended to support ideals of ensemble teamwork: one is a part of something much greater than what the individual could produce alone.

Despite the different viewpoints expressed, student statements epitomized a conception of a music group that was special, one bound together by a "common interest or ... set of shared values" (Swanwick, 1988, p. 3), thereby affirming Morrison's (2001) claim of music ensemble cultures.

CONCLUSION

Our purpose in this study was to investigate the world of the high school music classroom. Themes of the investigation included moti-

vation to join ensembles and to remain, perception of the musical groups by their members and by the school community as a whole, the meaning and value that music ensembles engender for their participants, and the social climate of the music classroom. Many of the findings support earlier research, providing a stronger case for the claim that students are intellectually, psychologically, emotionally, socially, and musically nurtured by membership in performing ensembles.

The information obtained from this study provides an insight into not only how music students view their school, musical groups, and others' perception of those who participate in these ensembles, but also how the social aspects of the music subculture operate in a school. A significant finding of the study is the degree of importance students place on the social aspects of their ensemble membership. References to the social domain are peppered throughout the interview transcripts and embedded within each of the four themes. Many of the students have formed smaller subgroups of friends within each ensemble and tend to associate with these select people inside and outside of the school setting. The social climate of these ensembles is important to each member, and provides many with an outlet that they might not have had to meet others from within the larger school setting, or to form relationships away from the home environment that assist them in negotiating the often turbulent high school years.

Although the world of the high school music classroom may seem to be "a home away from home" for some, these ensembles are apparently valuable to each and every participant. The culture thus depicted resembles Morrison's (2001) view in several ways, as his themes of identity, transmission, social dimension, and practical and personal boundaries are reflected in the views of the present study's participants. Researchers in future studies could investigate the theme of "the smarter kids take music" to discover whether in fact this is the case at this school. Since approximately 90% of the school's population go on to some form of higher education, one might be quite surprised by the results of such a study.

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