

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES IN
LOW SOCIOECONOMIC BEGINNING STRING PROGRAMS

Mallory A. Alekna

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Jacobs School of Music
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree
Master of Music Education
Indiana University
December 2016

Accepted by the faculty of the
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Music Education

Thesis Committee

Lauren Kapalka Richerme, Thesis Director

Peter Miksza

Katherine Strand

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want thank those who were invaluable to this project and who guided me throughout this research. Thank you to Dr. Kapalka Richerme for being the chair of my committee and for providing me such excellent mentoring. Your willingness to make time for me and your attention to detail has allowed me to grow immensely as a researcher and as a writer. Thank you to Dr. Strand and Dr. Miksza who, in addition to being members of my committee, have been enlightening and encouraging professors. I am so thankful to have been able to work with each of you. Please know that your expertise will continue to guide and influence me throughout my career. Thank you to my parents, my brothers, my partner, and my dear friends. Each of you has helped me along the way and I am so thankful for your support and friendship.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

ABSTRACT

Research has found that low socioeconomic status (SES) schools have less access to beginning string programs (Smith, 1997). Yet, student perceptions of recruitment and retention strategies in schools of low SES have been minimally investigated (Cook, 2013; Vasil, 2013). The purpose of this study was to understand students' perceptions of recruitment and retention strategies in above-average enrollment beginning group string programs within low SES communities. Two schools from a large, Midwestern city that qualified as having high orchestra enrollment and low SES were selected for the study. Sixth grade beginning string students ($N = 10$), five from each school, completed an individual interview lasting fifteen minutes. Classroom observations and informal teacher interviews were conducted at each school to confirm what was being heard in the interviews. Findings regarding students' perceptions of recruitment included the themes of verbal recruitment, orchestra as a means to self-growth, and orchestra as a low-pressure decision. Students perceived enjoyment of gaining skills, being with friends, receiving incentives, potential career and scholarship opportunities, and middle school class choices as impacting their decision to remain in a string program. Between the two schools, students considered their verbal interactions with their teachers differently. Additionally, students had a range of perceptions regarding their teachers with some seeing them as strict, encouraging, and discouraging. Teacher-facilitated recruitment events, such as elementary concerts and professional orchestra field trips, were the most prevalent ways that students were exposed to orchestra prior to joining a program.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
CHAPTER I	
Statement of the Problem	1
Rationale.....	1
Problem Statement.....	7
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Delimitations.....	8
Definitions of Terms.....	8
CHAPTER II	
Review of Literature	10
Orchestra Programs in the United States.....	10
Extra-musical Benefits of Music Instruction.....	15
Factors of Recruitment and Retention.....	21
Student Perceptions of Recruitment and Retention.....	33
Summary.....	38
CHAPTER III	
Methodology	40
Purpose.....	40
Participants.....	40
Data Collection and Analysis.....	45

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Procedures.....	49
CHAPTER IV	
Results.....	50
Research Question 1.....	50
Research Question 2.....	55
Research Question 3.....	63
Research Question 4.....	76
CHAPTER V	
Discussion.....	86
Research Question 1.....	87
Research Question 2.....	90
Research Question 3.....	94
Research Question 4.....	97
Limitations of the Current Study.....	102
Implications for Teaching Practice.....	103
Implications for Further Research.....	105
Conclusion.....	107
REFERENCES.....	109
Appendix A.....	113

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

CHAPTER I: Statement of the Problem

Rationale

All students deserve the opportunity to participate in high quality music instruction, however, many students do not have access to music programs (Elpus & Abril, 2011; Schmidt, Baker, Hayes, & Kwan, 2006; Smith, 1997). Low socioeconomic status (SES) schools have significantly less access to music instruction than middle and high SES communities (Smith, 1997). If music training has any beneficial outcomes for students (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Kraus et al., 2014; Rickard et al., 2012; Shields, 2001), then students of all backgrounds, regardless of SES and ethnicity, should have equal opportunity for music instruction and participation in related research. Further research is needed to identify effective strategies that support the recruitment and retention of all types of students in music programs. Researchers have examined who has access to string instruction in the United States (Elpus & Abril, 2011; Schmidt, Baker, Hayes, & Kwan, 2006; Smith, 1997). According to Smith (1997), string music education is offered at 16% of the nation's districts. Of this sample, only 4% ($N = 100$) of districts that offer string instruction are considered low SES, indicating that access to string instruction is limited for impoverished communities. Similarly, Elpus and Abril (2011) found that in 2004 only 17% of senior high school students in the United States who chose to participate in music ensembles were from the lowest SES quartile. Race/ethnicity was also found to be significantly associated with music participation ($p < .001$). The study identified Hispanic students as being underrepresented in music programs while students whose race/ethnicity was White (65.7%) were overrepresented. Additionally, Elpus & Abril (2011) determined students whose primary native language was not English were underrepresented in music classrooms (9.6%).

Also looking at access, but at the state level, Schmidt et al. (2006) found that Indiana

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

reflects national averages with 16% of the states' districts offering string instruction. Schmidt et al. (2006) determined that string programs were typically in larger districts, however, rural schools were also present in the findings, with the smallest school that offered strings having a total K-12 enrollment of 1,507. Schmidt et al. (2006) reports, "While string programs are relatively few in number in the state, some very strong programs exist" (p. 35). Despite these findings, Schmidt et al. (2006) found that string programs in Indiana have median student participation rates of 6%, which is low when compared to the enrollments in band (17%) and choir (24%). Understanding the factors resulting in lower participation rates in orchestra classrooms could allow teachers to address any barriers that hinder students from joining and participating in their programs.

Previous research has investigated the cognitive (Habibi et al., 2014; Kraus et al., 2014) and emotional (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Rickard et al., 2012; Shields, 2001) benefits that instrumental music instruction provides to students. When examining the Harmony project, a free music program for low SES students, Kraus et al. (2014) found that students ($N = 19$) who received the regular music curriculum plus hands-on instrumental training showed "faster and more robust brainstem responses to speech" (p. 4) relative to those who only received music appreciation instruction. These findings are even more compelling when seen in conjunction with a study conducted by Habibi et al. (2014) that investigated the same Harmony music program. Habibi et al. (2014) found no differences in students who self-selected into music instruction, sports training, or no instruction, suggesting that students who choose to participate in music are similar to those who choose other extracurricular activities, like sports. Fitzpatrick (2006) also examined students who had actively participated in music and determined that music ensemble participants ($N = 915$) outperformed their similar SES, non-music peers on

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

standardized tests ($p < .05$). However, low SES music students outperformed their non-music high SES peers (Fitzpatrick, 2006). While correlation does not equal causation, such research suggests that music instruction may benefit low SES students.

Looking at emotional benefits, Costa-Giomi (2004) conducted an experiment that interacted directly with students ($N = 63$) and identified that those who received private piano lessons for 30 minutes every week showed improved self-esteem over three years as measured by the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. The author acknowledges that results might be attributed to outside factors, however, she also asserts that positive interactions with adults, receiving incentives, and learning new skills are valuable to all students, especially those of urban communities or of low SES. Similarly, using treatment and control groups of third grade students ($N = 149$), Rickard et al.'s (2012) study indicated that school-based string instruction for 60 minutes per week prevented a decline in self-esteem.

Practicing educators have identified factors that contribute to building strong programs in low socioeconomic communities (Mixon, 2005; Sandene, 1994), however, there is little systematic research that has been done investigating the efficacy or prevalence of these methods in the field at large. Strategies practicing educators have found effective in the retention of students, particularly those of low SES, include maintaining strong teacher-student relationships and providing a family-like environment (Mixon, 2005; Sandene, 1994). These relationships can be developed in many ways, including communicating with families regularly regarding student progress, working to ensure that students have adequate instruments, and caring about students as individuals outside of the classroom (Mixon, 2005).

In order to build a music program, students need to feel successful and be encouraged to work through obstacles as they master their instrument. Sandene (1994) suggests that retaining

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

more students may occur if students are made aware that becoming frustrated or working through difficulties will be a normal part of their experience. Concerts and other performances can give students something to look forward to and should be scheduled early on to promote student excitement and perception of achievement (Sandene, 1994). Mixon (2005) asserts that acts of celebration, such as tangible awards and publicizing student achievements, give students, especially those of low SES, a sense of pride in their work.

When trying to build a program that facilitates student participation, teachers need to establish positive connections with those who can make programs run more smoothly, including fellow faculty, administrators, counselors, and custodians (Mixon, 2005; Sandene, 1994). These people can assist in finding a practice space, in adjusting schedules, and as volunteers or chaperones for events or contests. Developing individual relationships with students, making students feel successful, and getting to know all members of the school community are practical ways to begin developing retention in the music classroom.

Previous research on how to recruit and retain music students has often been cast from the “adult” perspective. Albert’s (2005) interviews with teachers ($N = 3$), administrators ($N = 2$), and parents ($N = 4$) of band students revealed that many factors contribute to recruitment and retention. In addition to having effective classroom management and knowing how to manage a budget, Albert (2005) states, “Teachers in low SES districts need to understand the needs of their particular community, be aware of cultural issues, and be free of negative stereotypes that may affect their teaching” (p. 77). The author found two factors that school principals considered to be the most important aspects of recruitment and retention: music ensembles performing throughout the community and teachers working closely with counselors. Additional themes found in Albert’s (2005) study that may contribute to developing an instrumental program in low

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

SES communities were teachers taking initiative, being culturally relevant, and developing an atmosphere of student ownership. Fitzpatrick (2011) identified what practicing educators believed was crucial to their success in working within urban communities. Interview results indicated that being aware of the school community, having a vast amount of knowledge regarding their students, and working through obstacles to ensure success of the program as ways the teacher's navigated through their urban music programs (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

Other studies have identified a variety of factors that may influence the recruitment and retention of instrumental students such as starting grade (Hartley & Porter, 2009), SES (Klinedinst, 1991), teacher mentoring (Shields, 2001), culturally relevant pedagogy (Abril, 2009), and professional orchestra partnerships with schools (Abeles, 2004). After analyzing survey results completed by teachers ($N = 166$), Hartley and Porter (2009) determined that later starting grade levels and more frequent classes might have resulted in better retention of string students in 7th grade. Klinedinst (1991) examined predictors for retention of beginning band programs and found that retention was predicted with 97% accuracy by five factors: SES, self-concept in music, reading and math achievement, and scholastic ability.

Alternatively, some research has been done specifically with students of low SES backgrounds. Shields (2001) monitored sixth grade students ($N = 40$) who were considered at-risk and who had self-selected to participate in either creative percussion class or choir. Students in the study were identified as at-risk and received both musical and non-musical mentoring from their instructor over a 16-week intervention period. After the intervention period, students were asked to describe what teachers should be aware of when working with their students. Responses indicated that teachers should get to know students individually on many levels, including personal background, academic achievement, and teaching strategies geared towards individual

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

needs (Shields, 2001). Shields (2001) reports students and parents saw money as a hindrance to the “amount, type, and quality of musical participation available” (p. 282). Removing barriers that impede student participation in music, such as monetary constraints, seem to assist in encouraging all students to be recruited and retained into music programs.

The teacher in Abril’s (2009) study implemented culturally relevant pedagogy as an attempt to recruit and retain a group of students more representative of her school’s population so that the program would grow rather than decline. Abril (2009) reports that the teacher implemented a mariachi program after noticing that her school’s Hispanic demographic grew from 10.2% of the school’s population to 33.7% over the course of seven years. To avoid having the band program cut due to lack of interest and participation the teacher noted that it was important to make the program relevant to the school community and interests of the students (Abril, 2009). Culturally relevant pedagogy could potentially be an avenue for retaining music students.

Partnerships with professional orchestras can also contribute to student participation in instrumental music ensembles (Abeles, 2004). Exposing students to programs outside of the traditional classroom have been shown to improve student’s awareness of music ensembles in general. For example, Abeles (2004) found that elementary students ($N = 453$) who participated in professional orchestra partnership activities in three different cities across the United States were more likely to select ‘musician’ as a career choice. This study shows the benefits of introducing students to music through collaborative efforts among institutions, which could be a potential avenue for the recruitment of students into future school music programs.

To understand how to encourage student recruitment and retention it is important to hear from students who decided to leave their music programs. Cook (2013) did this by surveying

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

students ($N = 43$) who quit orchestra when transitioning from elementary to middle school. Results indicated that the majority of students reported wanting to take another class as their primary reason for leaving orchestra (Cook, 2013). This underscores the importance of findings from other research that working well with counselors and making sure school scheduling allows for student participation can aid in the retention of instrumental students (Albert, 2005; Mixon, 2005).

Student retention has also been investigated within low socioeconomic communities. Vasil (2013) interviewed beginning band students ($N = 6$) to learn about their motivations for participating in music instruction. Responses indicated that students had prior experience with music, either personally or through family members, enjoyed spending time with their friends in class, and generally enjoyed their overall music class experience. This study supports the idea that a student participation in music is determined by many factors. However, hearing from a larger sample of students from multiple schools could assist educators in their ability to recruit and retain students in music classrooms. Music educators would benefit from future research being conducted with string ensembles within low SES districts to determine what factors allow those programs to exist, and what strategies, if any, support the recruitment of students within those non-affluent areas.

Problem Statement

Prior research has documented the adult perspective on recruitment and retention strategies (Abril, 2009; Albert, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2011). However, the voice of the students, especially from low SES backgrounds, has been minimally documented (Cook, 2013; Shields, 2001; Vasil, 2013). All instrumental areas, including orchestra, would benefit from further investigation of strategies that encourage the recruitment and retention of students with low SES.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Understanding what strategies specifically work with students of low SES can aid teachers in building larger programs and providing a classroom environment that is responsive to the needs of diverse students.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to understand students' perceptions of recruitment and retention strategies in above-average enrollment beginning group string programs within low socioeconomic communities. The study will address the following questions:

1. What recruitment strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to join a string program?
2. What retention strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to stay in a string program?
3. What perceptions do beginning string students of low socioeconomic status have of their instructor?
4. What role do community members, including teachers, parents, administration, and professional musicians, play in the recruitment and retention of beginning string students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

Delimitations

The sample will be limited to two schools with beginning string programs in a large, Midwestern city that are considered low SES and have above average enrollment in orchestra.

Definition of terms

Beginning group string programs: For this study, schools that provide students initial orchestra instruction in large, heterogeneous-instrument classrooms will be considered.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Community engagement: Any actions or activities that involve more than the students, teacher, and school administration will be considered community engagement. This could include, but is not limited to, parent contacts, concerts, contests, trips, volunteer opportunities, parades or town festivals, and interactions with other schools within or outside of the school's district.

Recruitment: The authors of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2015) define recruitment as “the process of adding new individuals to a population.” In this study, recruitment refers to the strategies intended to bring new students into beginning string programs.

Retention: As stated by the authors of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2015), retention is “the act of keeping someone or something.” For my purposes, retention will refer to any practices that have the effect of keeping current students in school orchestra programs.

Low socioeconomic status: Bornstein and Bradley's (2003) definition states that socioeconomic status is “the relative position of individuals, families, or groups in stratified social systems where some societal values (e.g. occupational prestige, education) are not uniformly distributed” (p. 2). For this study, schools will be considered low SES if they have at least 50% of students receiving free or reduced lunch rates (Albert, 2005), as identified by the National School Lunch Program (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015).

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

CHAPTER II: Review of Literature

The following literature represents a collection of articles related to the recruitment and retention of students within low socioeconomic beginning instrumental-string music programs. The research presented includes information gained from the “adult” perspective, which has been investigated for the last several decades, and the research focused on understanding the student perspective, which still requires further exploration. By identifying the ways in which researchers, teachers, administrators, and parents have attempted to facilitate student participation in music ensembles, the way has been paved for future research to explore the students’ perspective of their own recruitment and retention within string programs. The literature will be presented by topic: status of orchestra programs in the United States, benefits of music instruction, factors affecting recruitment and retention, and student perspectives on recruitment and retention.

Orchestra Programs in the United States

To provide a context for studying student perceptions of recruitment and retention strategies, the status of orchestra programs needs to be identified. National descriptive data indicates that string instruction is less accessible in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools regardless of size or location (Smith, 1997). Current demographics indicate that students of low SES are underrepresented in high school music ensembles (Elpus & Abril, 2011). At the state level, research suggests that successful programs in Indiana can exist in a variety of settings (Schmidt, Baker, Hayes, & Kwan, 2006). It is necessary to determine the status of music programs so that critical issues related to student representation can be highlighted. Information of this nature can assist researchers in focusing their efforts on the most pertinent problems related to recruitment and retention.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Smith (1997) contacted various government agencies, individual districts, and state music associations to compare string programs in the United States based on their size, location, and SES. SES and size for each school was retrieved from *Market Data Retrieval School Directories, 1994-1995*. Government agencies and the MENC conference divisions were used to define classifications of size (rural, urban, metropolitan) and geographic region (Eastern, North Central, etc.).

Because of the large amount of available data, Smith (1997) was able to analyze results for every school district in the United States ($N = 14,183$). Results were compiled using chi-square comparisons, Pearson Product-Moment correlations, and multiple-regression analysis. For the 1994-1995 year, analysis of the data showed that 2,268 (16%) of the school districts had string instruction as a class. The majority of districts that offered strings were urban (64%, $N = 1,447$), followed by metropolitan (26%, $N = 585$), and then rural (10%, $N = 236$). Almost half of the districts with string instruction were medium-sized (48%, $N = 1,082$), about a third of the districts were small (30%, $N = 683$), and approximately a quarter were considered large (22%, $N = 503$). Most districts were considered average (32%, $N = 1,439$) or high (32%, $N = 729$) SES. Only 4% of schools that offered string instruction were considered low SES ($N = 100$). Smith (1997) states, "Socioeconomic level was identified as the most important predictor variable at the elementary school level, whereas size and socioeconomic level were found to be the most important predictor variables at the middle and high school levels" (p. 660). These findings indicate that string instruction in schools is much less accessible to low SES communities.

Also looking at the national level, Elpus and Abril (2011) investigated American high school students' participation in music ensembles. They obtained information from the National

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which had been conducting a longitudinal study on the transition of students from beginning high school into their college education or chosen careers (Elpus & Abril, 2011). Data was obtained at three points: in 2002 when the participants were in 10th grade, in 2004 when the participants were seniors, and in 2006 after the participants were out of high school. The data collected by the NCES utilized a nationally representative sample of public and private school students ($N = 16,400$) and a complex cluster sampling design. For this design, schools were randomly sampled, and of the 1,200 schools contacted, 750 agreed to participate in the study. A non-random, probabilistic sampling procedure was used to select 25 students from each 10th grade roster. Hispanic and Asian students were purposely oversampled to make sure they were adequately represented in the study. After contacting the students, 15,630 agreed to participate resulting in a good response rate of 87.3%. The variables of gender, SES, racial/ethnic makeup, and academic achievement were chosen from the original data to be examined based on their relatedness to the research questions.

Elpus and Abril (2011) found that 21% ($n = 621,895$) of high school seniors in the United States participated in band, choir, and/or orchestra during the 2003-2004 school year. Although having a fifth of American students in music ensembles seems positive, the authors compared their findings to those of a similar study from 1982 and found a 10% decline in student participation over those almost 30 years. The authors determined that most music students attended suburban schools (51.2%), followed by urban (27.6%) and then rural (21.3%) (p. 134). Like Smith (1997), this shows a disproportionate amount of music participation occurring in suburban schools. Elpus and Abril (2011) found that most students were female (61%), and the most represented race/ethnicity was White (65.7%). Almost all of the students spoke English as a primary language (90.4%). Like previous authors (Schmidt et al., 2006; Smith, 1997), Elpus and

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Abril found that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were underrepresented, with 17% being from the lowest SES quartile, 23% being from the second lowest SES quartile, 27.8% being from the third quartile, and 32.3% being from the highest quartile (2011, p. 135).

The authors used the second-order Rao-Scott adjusted χ^2 statistic to determine if any of the variables were related to the music program participation of the high school students (Elpus & Abril, 2011). Gender and music participation were significantly related ($F(1,390) = 112.38$, $p < .001$). Males were underrepresented in music classes since they made up 50% of the total number of students in high school, while 61.1% of music students were female. The authors were unable to determine if this was due to a lack of male participation in choir or a reflection of all music programs. Race/ethnicity was also significantly associated with music participation ($F(5, 2030) = 9.024$, $p < .001$). Hispanic students were underrepresented in music programs as well as students in the lowest quartile of socioeconomic status. These findings support previous research (Smith, 1997; Schmidt et al., 2006) that has found music programs to lack diversity of race and SES.

Taking a more focused look, Schmidt, Baker, Hayes, and Kwan (2006) examined the status of current public school music programs in Indiana. Schools were identified using the Indiana Directory of Music Educators. Additional information was obtained from the Indiana State Department of Education and the Indiana State School Music Association (ISSMA). School districts ($N = 98$) were randomly selected (*sampling rate* = 33%), and the sampling frame had 619 teachers. Follow-up contacts were made to arrive at a response rate of 63% ($N = 391$). Notably, at least one teacher from every district participated in the survey. Teacher participants completed a survey regarding music curricular offerings by area and grade, teaching load, instructional contact time, class enrollments, and performance activities. In addition, Schmidt et

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

al. (2006) had teachers complete a survey designed for their primary teaching area. Thirty of the 391 participants identified themselves as being string teachers.

Schmidt et al.'s (2006) results indicated that string programs were offered at 16% of the sampled schools, which is aligned with national data (Smith, 1997). On average, student participation in orchestra at the secondary level was 6% of the total school enrollment. Schmidt et al. found that on average, schools with string programs typically had larger enrollments ($M = 10,019$; $SD = 9,739.95$) than those that did not offer strings ($M = 2,653.63$; $SD = 2,801.00$). However, the authors reported that programs also existed in rural settings with small enrollments. Notably, Schmidt et al. (2006) found that school enrollment and string participation rate were negatively correlated ($r = -.61$, $p < .001$). In other words, smaller schools typically had a greater percentage of students enrolled in orchestra than larger schools. Schmidt et al. (2006) assert, "These findings suggest that, while string programs are relatively few in number in the state, some very strong programs exist" (p. 35).

The sample of string teachers was relatively experienced, with a mean of 16 years ($SD = 11.21$). Almost all string teachers (93%) reported that they earned an Indiana music-teaching license. As described by Schmidt et al. (2006), the number of students in string programs who received free or reduced lunches resulted in a mean percentage of 22% ($SD = 11.21\%$), while the students in band programs had a mean percentage of 18% ($SD = 12.53$). On average, the number of orchestra students who were Caucasian resulted in a mean percentage of 83% ($SD = 18.58$). In contrast, the number of band students who were Caucasian had a mean percentage of 92% ($SD = 9.53$). These findings suggest that in Indiana, orchestra programs, like band programs, are not very diverse, and that low SES students are not well represented. Identifying recruitment and retention strategies specifically for communities of

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

low SES could assist in bringing more low SES students into orchestra in all settings.

In sum, orchestra programs make up a small portion of the music classes offered in the United States. These classrooms appear to lack diversity of race and level of SES. Access to string instruction appears to be limited for students of low SES and could be due to string programs not being offered at low SES schools or for reasons yet to be determined. School size does not seem to hinder the likelihood of having a string program, and secondary program participation is less frequent than participation in the younger grades. Developing recruitment and retention strategies for beginning students is necessary if educators want to develop programs at the higher levels and to help students experience the long-term benefits of music instruction. Additionally, in order to provide high quality string instruction to all students, researchers must further investigate the barriers to or aides in developing these programs in schools of varying demographics and socioeconomic statuses.

Extra-musical Benefits of Music Instruction

Research has investigated the various emotional (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Rickard et al., 2012), cognitive (Fitzpatrick, 2006), and neurological (Kraus et al., 2014) benefits of music instruction for students. If music training provides any benefits to students, then all students deserve the opportunity to participate in high quality music programs. Effective recruitment and retention strategies could aid in ensuring that all students receive the possible benefits that music training may provide.

Prior to undertaking a long-term study on the effects of music instruction, Habibi et al. (2014) wanted to identify if any differences existed between students who chose to participate in music rather than other non-musical extra-curricular activities. To do this the authors conducted a study prior to students receiving any formal training. For the study, Habibi et al. (2014)

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

identified students ($N = 45$) ages six to seven from the greater Los Angeles area who were already a part of a lottery to join the program of their choice: community music class or a soccer program. Students from both groups and an identified control group underwent MR imaging, EEG tests, and other assessments including behavior and basic skills. In addition, parents provided information pertaining to the socioeconomic and educational background for both the student and themselves. All tests were completed in five hours over two to three weeks (Habibi et al., 2014). Habibi et al. (2014) determined that there were no significant differences between any of the students prior to training. By determining that students are equivalent prior to the long-term study, Habibi et al. (2014) will be able to attribute effects seen over time to the music or other extracurricular instruction received more definitively.

When investigating the effects of piano lessons on young students' academic achievement and self-esteem, Costa-Giomi (2004) chose to work specifically with participants who were of low socioeconomic status (SES). Fourth-grade students ($n = 63$) from Montreal, Canada who had never had formal music instruction and were considered low SES underwent testing. Testing occurred prior to and throughout the experiment and included areas of self-esteem, IQ, musical abilities, and motor skills (Costa-Giomi, 2004). Student report cards were also analyzed. To facilitate the study, students were given a piano to keep at home and private lessons at no cost. Private lessons occurred weekly for 30 minutes during the first two years and 45 minutes during final year and were taught by one of nine instructors. A comparison control group ($n = 54$) did not receive any instruction, however, they completed the same battery of tests. The experimental and control groups had no significant differences throughout the course of the study in terms of demographics, formal music training, or family income.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Costa-Giomi's (2004) results in a Group X Year interaction effect that nearly reached significance ($p < .08$), so the decision was made to complete a further analysis of simple effects. These results demonstrate that over the course of the study, the experimental group showed significantly improved self-esteem ($p < .01$), while the control group did not. Although student standardized test scores were used as a measurement of academic achievement, no significant effects were found for this measure (Costa-Giomi, 2004).

The author noted that the improvement in student self-esteem might be attributed to several factors in addition to or outside of the piano instruction (Costa-Giomi, 2004). Interacting positively with an adult could be valuable to young students of low SES and, in turn, benefit their self-esteem. Students were also given the luxury of an expensive piano to keep, which also may have benefitted their self-esteem. As a part of the lessons students had performance opportunities at recitals, which may have provided students an outlet for developing self-esteem in front of their parents and peers. Students from low SES may benefit in the long-term from improved self-esteem and perhaps choose to stay in school longer or participate in academics more fully because of their belief in their abilities (Costa-Giomi, 2004).

Like Costa-Giomi (2004), Rickard et al. (2012) found changes in student self-esteem when examining Australian students from first ($n = 210$) and third ($n = 149$) grades who experienced either a music condition or a control condition. However, participants were not randomly assigned to conditions in this study. The authors acknowledged that school participation was also based on whether or not schools could contribute to the purchase of experiment supplies including, but not limited to, musical instruments (Rickard et al., 2012). Those in the control group continued to receive their regular curriculum. In the music group, the first grade students received Kodály music instruction, and the third grade students participated

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

in strings-based music training taught by two qualified teachers: a leader and an assistant. The first grade students participated in three 30-minute lessons per week while the third graders received one 60-minute lesson each week on either violin, viola, or the cello.

Prior to instruction, Rickard et al. (2012) administered surveys to the participants and their teachers. The surveys contained questions pertaining to general demographics and previous music training. Additionally, Rickard et al. administered the Culture-Free Self Esteem Inventory and social skills rating system to determine scores. Both measures utilize culturally fair evaluation procedures. The students completed the surveys with teacher assistance or the teacher provided information depending on student age and ability to complete the survey (Rickard et al., 2012).

Rickard et al.'s (2012) results showed that the first grade music group increased self-esteem between the initial and second tests while the control group showed a significant decrease; however, this interaction was determined to be non-significant ($p = .087$). The third grade control group had a decline in self-esteem during year one, but increased in the following year meeting the music group at similar self-esteem levels. The authors report that the music training prevented a decline in self-esteem for both experimental groups, but that no other effects were found (Rickard et al., 2012).

By using previously collected descriptive data, Fitzpatrick (2006) documented the cognitive benefits of active music participation. The data reflected test scores for all Columbus Public School students in 9th through 12th grades during the 2003-2004 term ($N = 15,431$). Students ($N = 915$) were identified as being enrolled in instrumental music if they were taking band, jazz ensemble, or orchestra with multiple enrollments only being counted once. Scores from the Ohio Proficiency Test were compared from 4th, 9th, and 12th grades and, using free and

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

reduced lunch as an indicator of low SES, students were broken into 4 groups: high SES, high SES and music, low SES, and low SES and music (Fitzpatrick, 2006).

Fitzpatrick (2006) determined that instrumental students outperformed non-instrumental students of the same SES at every subject and grade level. All differences were significant ($p < .05$) except for math between low SES students and low SES and music students in sixth grade. Instrumental students performed higher overall starting with the first test in 4th grade. For this reason the author posits that the high scores resulted from factors unrelated to the music instruction the students received. However, students who had low SES and had music instruction surpassed higher SES non-instrumental classmates by the ninth grade in all subjects (Fitzpatrick, 2006). Further research could examine this trend more closely and allow educators to determine how participation in music could most benefit students of low SES.

Kraus et al. (2014) investigated an established Los Angeles program called the Harmony Project to identify neurological changes that may occur within at-risk students who participated in music instruction. The researchers provided all participants with some form of passive or active music instruction. Students ($N = 19$) who participated in the study underwent audiological, cognitive, and neurophysiological testing prior to receiving instruction. These tests were repeated after students completed their second year of enrollment in the program. Students were ages 7.9 to 10 years old with a mean age of 9.1 (Kraus et al., 2014). Mother's education was used to determine SES. The authors noted that due to program restraints and classroom assignments already in place the students were not randomly assigned to groups; however, the researchers were blind to these designations (Kraus et al., 2014). The first group ($n = 10$) received music appreciation instruction (Mus) twice a week for one hour. During this class students learned to play recorder while following the usual curriculum. The second group took the same music

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

appreciation class, but then switched to instrumental string lessons (Mus+In). These students received 2 hours of lessons per week. In contrast to the Mus group, the Mus+In students received between 28-39 hours of hands-on experience with string instruments during lessons plus practice time at home (Kraus et al., 2014).

Researchers analyzed the two groups for preexisting differences since random assignment was not possible (Kraus et al., 2014). Results of a multivariate analysis showed no differences between the groups for age, hearing thresholds, or speech-evoked responses prior to instruction. After completing a year of music instruction the Mus+In students had “faster and more robust brainstem responses to speech” (Kraus et al., 2014, 4). Between groups there was no difference in reading fluency, however, students who received instruction with instruments had much stronger responses to sounds and more consistent neurological responses to sound trial-to-trial. Kraus et al. (2014) assert that the instrumental group also had more consistent and stronger responses to the harmonics of the fundamentals presented. Kraus et al. (2014) state, “This provides new evidence as to the efficacy of community music programs to instill changes in neural processing and highlights the importance of active engagement with sound in driving experience-dependent neuroplasticity” (p. 8).

Overall, understanding how active music instruction might help students of low SES develop cognitively, emotionally, or neurologically can allow teachers to better educate students holistically. If music training might have a positive impact on students, then it is imperative to ensure that students at all levels of SES have access to music education and to remove any barriers that promote attrition in music programs. If students enter music classrooms equal to their non-music participating peers, then improvements seen in cognition or behavior could be more accurately linked to music instruction, and one could argue that more, if not all, students

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

should receive the opportunity for high quality music instruction. If any benefits occur from hands-on music participation, then students of all backgrounds need to be recruited and retained in music programs.

Factors of Recruitment and Retention

In order to recruit and retain students, the factors that promote student participation in music need to be identified. Researchers have attempted to identify predictors of retention (Klinedinst, 1991) and have interviewed adults to gain perspective on what keeps students in music programs (Albert, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2011). Specific aspects of recruitment and retention have been examined including the following: collaborating with organizations outside of schools (Abeles, 2004), culturally responsive pedagogy (Abril, 2009), initial year of instruction (Hartley & Porter, 2009), and the use of different teaching strategies (Shields, 2001).

Klinedinst (1991) investigated what factors might predict retention as well as performance ability of fifth grade beginning instrumental students ($N = 205$). These participants were from seven schools within a Pennsylvania school district. Twelve assessments were used to identify traits that might predict which students would be successful in music and continue opting to participate in instruction. Klinedinst (1991) used the Gordon Intermediate Measures for Music Audiation to measure student music aptitude. Students completed the test prior to instruction. Two standardized tests were already built into the district's curriculum and were used to determine scholastic ability. The music teachers ($N = 4$) rated the student's potential aptitude for music using rating scale created by the researcher. Music attitude, self-concept in music, and musical background were each measured using individual assessments. The Asmus Achievement Motivation assessment was used to identify student motivation for music. Students' socioeconomic status (SES) was calculated based on their parents' occupation and

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

education. Additionally, the author designed a measure to appraise student physical characteristics related to playing certain instruments. After seven months of instruction each student performed three etudes designed by the author and three judges rated the performances. Klinedinst (1991) administered a final survey to the teachers, who rated student musical achievement and progress. Retention data were also collected from the schools.

Results from Klinedinst's (1991) study indicated that participants in this study were from mid-to-upper class income households and primarily white (96%). Although differences between teacher ratings were found, a series of statistical procedures were conducted and determined that any differences between the schools would have little to no effect on the results. Scholastic ability and reading and math achievement were each strongly related to both judges' and teachers' ratings of student performance achievement. Klinedinst (1991) determined that retention could be predicted with 97% accuracy by five variables: SES, self-concept in music, reading and math achievement, and scholastic ability. These results suggest that SES is a significant factor of student retention in music programs.

Albert (2005) conducted interviews with teachers, principals, and parents of orchestra students to investigate the strategies that instrumental music teachers were using to recruit and retain students from low SES communities. Albert (2005) identified a need for this research because SES had been shown to be a possible factor when trying to get students to join and stay in a music program. A phenomenological framework was used to conduct interviews, analyze data, and synthesize the results (Albert, 2005).

To determine participants, Albert (2005) used three criteria. First, school districts needed to qualify as being low SES by having at least 50% of their students enrolled in the Federal Free and Reduced National School Lunch Program. Second, school districts must have had above

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

national average enrollment rates for music with at least 25% of the total student population taking an instrumental music course. Finally, due to time and monetary restraints, school districts had to be within 50 miles of the author's residence in Michigan. Schools that met these criteria were contacted and middle school instrumental teachers ($N = 3$) from urban areas responded. These teachers recommended principals ($N = 2$) and parents ($N = 5$) who would be willing to participate in the study. It should be noted that only two of the three schools were able to provide administrator and parent responses in addition to teacher responses.

Albert (2005) created formal interview questions and asked open-ended questions based on responses of the participants. Teachers completed initial phone interviews followed by a second interview and teaching observation onsite. The parents and administrators completed one interview onsite. Additionally, teachers completed a 30-minute follow-up interview to address questions that arose from interviews with the other participants. The formal interview questions were tailored for each type of participant, but overall addressed school demographics, teaching conditions and procedures, perceptions of participation in and success of the music programs, and the presence, if any, of financial, parental, or administrative support.

Results of the interviews indicated that recruitment was influenced by exposure, student perceptions of the band program, and instrument availability (Albert, 2005). Exposure, such as performing for elementary schools, was believed to have increased student and community awareness of the music programs. The bands were seen as a contribution to the school environment by providing something that parents desired for their children to be a part of, as well as being one of the few opportunities at school for students of different levels of SES to work together. Another factor that played a role in exposure included cultural relevancy. When doing recruitment concerts at elementary schools the teachers reported that presenting music that

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

was meaningful to the community's culture aided in recruitment. Teachers also stressed that responsibility with the program budget aided in having enough instruments for students, which affected student participation.

Albert's (2005) results indicated that teacher personality and creating a family-like program supported the retention of students in a low socioeconomic setting. Teachers believed that owning their identity, rather than "trying to be a person of the culture," allowed them to make genuine connections with students (Albert, 2005, p. 39). Additionally, teachers found that being "real" with the students and earning their trust was essential to building a program. Since teacher attrition is common in low socioeconomic schools, students were more likely to continue in a program if felt that their teacher continued to teach in their school, was someone on whom they could rely, and was someone who strived to build positive relationships with individual students (Albert, 2005). The parents also identified the creation of a family dynamic within the music program as a reason for student's choosing to continue in music (Albert, 2005). Many students of low SES come from less than ideal living situations and the support of a family-like classroom can provide stability for these students (Albert, 2005, p. 62). Albert (2005) concludes, "Teachers in low socioeconomic status districts need to understand the needs of their particular community, be aware of cultural issues, and be free of negative stereotypes that may affect their teaching" (p. 77).

Specifically in urban settings, practicing educators have been consulted on the knowledge and attitudes they possess, challenges they encounter, and strategies they use when maintaining music programs (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Using a mixed methods design, Fitzpatrick (2011) aimed to better understand how instrumental music teachers were able to maintain successful classrooms in urban schools despite barriers to student participation, such as student SES and differences in

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

cultural background. Fitzpatrick (2011) began the study with data collection from an initial focus group ($N = 7$). This data was coded, analyzed, and interpreted to create a survey instrument. The survey, which was pilot tested and adjusted based on the results, was then administered to instrumental music teachers in Chicago Public Schools ($N = 90$). The survey consisted of 99 questions and took approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Ninety surveys were completed resulting in a response rate of 59% (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Finally, interviews were conducted with four teachers selected with stratified purposeful sampling. The teachers were selected using a four-way matrix based on whether they were inexperienced (five or fewer years of teaching) or experienced (more than five years of teaching) and whether their program was considered to be thriving or struggling based on student participation, community support, and contest/festival attendance (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Teachers were interviewed and observed individually. The resulting quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed separately and then compared to identify emerging themes.

Findings indicated that the teachers possessed in-depth knowledge about the students and communities they served and believed specialized skills were needed to maintain a music program in an urban setting (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Like Albert (2005), understanding each student as an individual and recognizing the specific needs of a community were identified as being especially crucial to programs within urban areas. Fitzpatrick determined, “Urban instrumental teachers ‘think outside the box’ to provide the best possible musical experience for their students despite what can sometimes be a hostile system.” Additionally, the results indicated that teachers believed that they held their students to high expectations and that they had more support from administration and fellow staff members than from parents. Fitzpatrick (2011) determined that the instrumental music teachers in urban schools were focused on student achievement more so

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

than the success of the program or their own personal or professional success. Teachers in this study demonstrated that they adjusted to student and community needs in order to maintain the program and ensure students success as a means to further student participation. For instance, several of the teachers reported making special arrangements for students who could not fit band class into their schedules, such as allowing students to learn their music outside of class and still being allowed to perform at the concerts (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Like other authors (Abril, 2009; Albert, 2005; Shields, 2001), Fitzpatrick (2011) study suggests having an awareness of the school's cultural community and eliminating barriers to participation as ways to encourage student involvement in instrumental music programs.

More specifically, culturally responsive pedagogy has been investigated as a potential factor of retention in music classes. Abril (2009) conducted a case study with a teacher who was working to become more culturally responsive in an attempt to boost band participation and retention in her program. The participating teacher and author met in a graduate level multicultural music education course that the author instructed. The teacher developed a Mariachi curriculum and implemented it in a middle school located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago the following year. The teacher saw a need to reach out to Hispanic students when enrollment numbers in her school jumped from 10% Hispanic population in 2002 to 34% in 2007 (Abril, 2009). Despite this growth, the band population remained primarily white, non-Hispanic. Without reaching a broader group of students, the teacher considered the music program in danger of being cut from the school community. Abril (2009) noted that with administrative support the Mariachi band was initiated as an extracurricular activity.

Abril (2009) completed 10 hours of observations over the first four months of this program's existence. Informal dialogue was held before and after each observation and the

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

participating teacher kept a journal of her experience. In addition, the author maintained field notes and collected lesson plans along with other materials used for the class. Formal interviews were conducted at the first and final observations. Broad questions were asked during the initial interview, but as the study progressed more specified questions based on the observation experience were used. The author notes that this format was used since it is a common way to investigate how instrumental teachers incorporate culture into their curriculum.

Students ($N = 13$) who chose to participate in the program were ages 11 to 13 and most were Hispanic ($n = 11$) (Abril, 2009). The two non-Hispanic students were white and were already involved in the music program. All of the students except for one were previously involved with the music program. The teacher aimed to use a new, non-rehearsal approach. Abril (2009) notes that this was a change from the teacher's typical rehearsal or music lesson style of teaching.

During this new teaching style students were encouraged to have discussions (Abril, 2009). The author explained that tensions would arise regarding the ethnic implications of certain song selections, including "La Raspa." Both the teacher and author thought that these student-led conversations were important and beneficial to the classroom. To develop this type of teaching for new educators the author suggested that pre-service teachers could be required to study or teach abroad to experience being a minority in a new place (Abril, 2009). Interviews with the teacher suggested that it is imperative that new and veteran teachers learn to be aware of what their school needs and how to respond appropriately. This experience suggests that from the teacher's perspective, student retention could be supported by responding to the needs of the community and its' students.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Looking at a specific factor of recruitment, Abeles (2004) conducted a study to investigate the effects of collaborations between schools and professional orchestras. The author acknowledged that most students are exposed to popular musicians on television and through other media, but rarely receive the opportunity to witness professional musicians and orchestras performing on a routine basis. Abeles (2004) hypothesized that students who are more familiar with the ensembles and instruments would be more likely to be interested in participating in music in the future.

Abeles (2004) identified three established orchestra and school partnerships within the United States to be included in the study. Students at these schools completed the Vocational Choice Scale (VCS). This measure has each student circle pictures of future career interests indicating their top three choices. The survey originally contained 18 icons presented randomly; however, the survey was modified to have an additional three icons representing the musical options of violin, guitar, and tuba. Abeles (2004) noted that the surveys were administered during May and June after one year of experience within the programs.

The first partnership by Abeles (2004) was in a Northeastern city that had four schools involved with the orchestra. This program provided second grade students ($N = 62$) with modified Suzuki violin instruction and exposure to the city orchestra. Instruments were provided by the school. Weekly group lessons occurred with their Suzuki-trained general music teachers and biweekly lessons were conducted by the orchestra's string players. Chamber groups from the orchestra performed for the school throughout the year, and students were invited to attend several performances at the orchestra's performance center. In addition, Abeles (2004) reported that students performed concerts at school and participated in a combined district end-of-the-year concert that took place at the professional orchestra's hall.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

A second program that had a professional orchestra partnership was identified in a second Northeastern city (Abeles, 2004). The goal of this program was to educate third and fourth grade students ($N = 44$) and spark their interest in learning to play an instrument. Students attended large in-school concerts performed by the professional orchestra, and chamber concerts for two classrooms at a time. Classroom teachers attended a workshop to incorporate music lessons into their classrooms. Students also received free tickets and transportation to children's concerts held at the professional orchestra's venue. Abeles (2004) noted that a sub-group of students ($N = 61$) who only attended the free out-of-school concert opportunities were identified at this partnership.

A third partnership was found in a large Midwest district that had both suburban and urban schools (Abeles, 2004). Abeles (2004) determined that the primary goal of this partnership was to help classroom teachers incorporate music into the curriculum as a way to aid in learning the other subjects. Additionally, the program aimed to encourage students to participate in learning to play an instrument and provide them with a basic knowledge of the orchestra instruments, professional members, and standard repertoire. At the time of the study, the student participants had been involved in this partnership for five years: from kindergarten to fifth grade.

Abeles (2004) selected a comparison group for each of the three partnerships ($N = 72, 67, 61$). Fourth grade students at each of the schools participated in the same VCS survey after one year of routine instruction. To be selected, these comparison schools had to be similar to the partnership schools and located in the same city; however, they could not be receiving any orchestra partnership opportunities.

The author tested the VCS survey for short-term stability and reliability (Abeles, 2004). Results indicate that 82% of trial students answered the same on two administrations of the test. The career choices the students made varied significantly from group to group (Pearson Chi-

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Square = 60.88, $df = 4$, $p < .000$). The highest selected careers were parent, teacher, and basketball player. Looking at the music icons alone, guitar was chosen most often, followed by tuba, then violin. There was a significant difference between the partnership and comparison schools, with partnership students more likely to have chosen music more frequently. Since each partnership offered different opportunities and had different goals, the odds ratio of how likely a student would be to pick a music icon was examined. Students from partnership 1 had an odds ratio of 8.87. This means that those students were almost nine times as likely to choose a music icon than those not in the orchestra partnership. For partnership 3, students were twice as likely to select music than their non-partnership comparison group (Odds Ratio = 2.28). No odds ratio was reported for the second partnership; however, an additional survey was completed by students ($N = 37$) from that school who were later in middle school. Abeles (2004) determined that 60% of the middle school students believed that their participation in the partnership influenced their decision to play an instrument.

Starting instruction year has also been examined through surveying teachers to determine the influence, if any, on student enrollment and retention rates (Hartley & Porter, 2009). The survey questions and format were pilot tested and then sent to all Ohio orchestra teachers ($N = 556$) at the elementary, middle, and junior high school levels. The survey asked teachers to report the starting grade of instruction, schedule of instruction, how the school building was organized, school location demographics, and initial enrollment and retention numbers. Harley and Porter (2009) determined that 166 out of 172 returned surveys were usable resulting in a final response rate of 30%.

Results from Hartley and Porter's (2009) survey indicated that most Ohio teachers started students in orchestra in fourth grade (55%), followed by fifth (33%), sixth (10%), and third (2%).

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Data collected in this survey showed that band most frequently began in fifth grade (72%) followed by sixth (19%). Hartley and Porter (2009) found that over half of the teachers (66%) reported that their beginning classes met twice per week. The first research question aimed to identify whether beginning year of instruction affected initial enrollment. Hartley and Porter (2009) state, "There were no statistically significant differences . . . among the percentages of eligible students who enrolled and the grade levels of beginning instruction" (p. 376). The second research question addressed whether starting year had an effect on the retention of students. To monitor this, teachers were asked to estimate enrollment at the end of the first year and the start of seventh grade. Retention rates at the beginning of seventh grade for both data points showed that later starting grades had better student participation. The relationship between retention at the end of the first year and starting grade level was significant, $\chi^2(12, N = 165)$, $p = .001$. Teachers (88%) with students starting in sixth grade reported the highest retention rates (80% or better). Chi-square analysis supported these data by showing a higher retention rate in seventh grade for students who started orchestra in later grades, $\chi^2(12, N = 156)$, $p = .001$. Most importantly, chi-square analysis results revealed more class meetings per week and retention at the end of the first year were related significantly, $\chi^2(12, N = 164)$, $p = .003$ (Hartley & Porter, 2004). This study suggests that increased frequency of class periods and starting instruction during later years likely aids in the retention of students.

Teachers ultimately play a role in student retention due the daily tasks of designing lesson plans, interacting with students, and facilitating classroom learning. Shields (2001) conducted a study to examine how receiving music instruction that included a teacher-as-mentor approach affected at-risk students and retention rates. A large urban arts school in a Midwestern town in the United States was selected for the study. Student participants ($N = 40$) were in sixth grade

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

and were taking their second semester of general music and choir, creative percussion, or a combination of these. The students were recommended to participate in the study by their homeroom teacher, counselor, or principal because they were perceived as being at-risk students. The teacher, counselor, and principal then individually completed a referral form for each recommended student. The form consisted of questions regarding home and family life, academic success, school setting, social skills and behavior aspects, and physical and mental health. Students with two or more at-risk characteristics were included in the study if they chose to be in choir or creative percussion class. Shields (2001) determined the most frequent characteristics of being at-risk were low academics ($n = 139$) and poor social skills and behavior ($n = 120$). The majority of students in the study were also black (58%) and male (58%).

At both pre- and post-intervention, Shields (2001) had the student participants complete the Self-Perception Profile for Children, the Importance Rating scale, and the Social Support Scale for Children. The students completed 16 weeks of instruction in the music classes along with their non-at-risk peers (Shields, 2001). The teacher emphasized being a mentor for the students and showed concern and assisted the students in both music and non-music challenges they faced. Making purposeful personal connections with the students was carried out in conjunction with providing the students multiple performance opportunities during the semester. Parents ($N = 32$) and students also completed interviews that consisted of 17 questions over the course of the semester.

Shields (2001) asserted that although the results from the Self-Perception Profile for Children showed no significant changes, the subscale for self-perception of musical competency showed significant improvement ($M=3.12$, $SD = .64$ pretest; $M = 3.30$, $SD = .57$ posttest; $t(33) = -2.291$, $p < .03$). Additionally, a moderate positive correlation on the pretest between self-

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

perceptions of musical competence and global self-worth was identified ($r = .38$). Shields (2001) found that students considered music to have more importance after completing the intervention (pretest = 76%, posttest = 82%).

Student interview results revealed several ideas for developing mentor relationships with teachers (Shields, 2001). Students identified that it was important for the music teacher to get to know each student as an individual. Students wanted this concern to occur in music class and other academics as well as applied to learning their personal background. Interviews with the students also revealed that the teacher should figure out how to best instruct each student. Both students and parents identified money as a being a barrier to fully participating in music class opportunities (Shields, 2001). Multiple factors seem to play a role in whether or not students choose to or are able to participate in music instruction.

Research indicates that many factors contribute to the recruitment and retention of students in music programs (Abeles, 2004; Abril, 2009; Albert, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2011, Hartley & Porter, 2009; Klinedinst, 1991; Shields, 2001). Further research could investigate strategies that encourage the recruitment and retention of low socioeconomic students to promote the inclusion of all students in music instruction. To do this, it would be advantageous to hear from students and use their perspective as a guide for further study.

Student Perceptions of Recruitment and Retention

In addition to determining what changes teachers can make to recruit and retain more students, it is imperative that students be asked what factors they perceive as affecting their participation in music. Cook (2013) wanted to hear what students thought kept them in or out of music classes. Sixth grade students ($N = 43$) who quit orchestra upon entering middle school participated in the study. Each student had completed three years of orchestra while attending

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

one of 11 New England schools included in the study. With parental consent, students were asked to complete an online survey, which resulted in a response rate of 47% ($N = 20$). Students completed a 42-item questionnaire that addressed parental support, motivation, perception of their own and their elementary orchestras' playing abilities, perception of the orchestra and teacher at their middle school, and peer influence (Cook, 2013).

After completing the survey, the author had permission to retrieve demographic data for each participant from the schools (Cook, 2013). In this study, 15% of students were considered of low socioeconomic status (SES) based on receiving free or reduced lunch. The majority of students were white (85%), with the remaining students being of Asian (10%) or Hispanic (5%) background. Results indicated that prior to quitting, students played violin (14), cello (4), and viola (2). Attrition rates for the year the study took place were also collected. Cook (2013) reported that the highest dropout was for orchestra (46%), then choir (34%), followed by band (25%).

Students' perceptions of their elementary orchestra program were generally positive, despite each of the participants having chosen to quit orchestra upon entering middle school. Cook's (2013) results indicated that students agreed that the orchestras sounded good at the concerts (80%) and that they liked their elementary orchestra teacher (75%). These responses suggest that students felt positively about their elementary string program.

The results regarding student's perceptions of the middle school orchestra were more varied. Cook (2013) reports that although 95% reported having not met the middle school teacher, 50% chose to describe the teacher as nice. Seventy percent of students agreed that middle school orchestra sounded fun, while 45% agreed that middle school orchestra would be a

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

lot of work. Students were split 50/50 in their responses to whether or not they agreed with a statement that described middle school orchestra as being “NOT cool” (Cook, 2013, p. 31).

Cook (2013) identified middle school scheduling choices as a factor in leaving the orchestra. The majority of students (75%) reported wanting to take another elective as reason for leaving orchestra and almost half (45%) reported having a sports conflict. Parental support for orchestra was relatively high despite students leaving orchestra. Forty-five percent of students indicated that their parents wanted them to be in orchestra, and 80% agreed that parents were proud of what they did in orchestra. Only 45% reported that parents tried to get them to stay in orchestra. Participants reported that his or her parents allowed them to practice at home, but 60% said that they did not enjoy practicing. Students’ peers seemed to have no influence on student enrollment choice, with 70% disagreeing that friends had encouraged them to drop orchestra. Most intriguing in these findings is that 80% of students said they left orchestra to join band or choir. Further research is needed to better understand how band, choir, and orchestra programs differ from and resemble one another to better ascertain how to retain students who start in one program and opt to switch or drop out.

Using a qualitative methodology, Vasil (2013) conducted student interviews to investigate extrinsic motivation as a factor in the recruitment of young instrumental students. A charter school in an urban, low SES city located in the northeastern United States was identified for the study. The band program had been in place for two years prior to the study, and six out of nine first-year band students chose to participate in the study. The fourth grade beginning band students played either trumpet ($n = 5$) or clarinet ($n = 1$). Students were either of mixed ethnicity or African American backgrounds and were ages 9-11 (Vasil, 2013).

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Vasil (2013) completed a single 30-minute interview with each student participant at the end of their first year of instruction. Interview questions were based on themes related to the extrinsic motivators, musical backgrounds, and current musical activities of the students. The author then transcribed and coded the responses.

Several extrinsic motivators were identified by the students. Vasil (2013) reported that every participant identified strong family participation with music prior to instruction. Many students had siblings or parents that were or had been involved in music. Musical experiences such as parades also had an influence on the students' desire to join band. Most students (83%) noted that instrument tryout day was a factor in their decision to play an instrument. In addition to family influences, social factors such as peers playing instruments or getting to spend time with friends at music lessons were expressed by the students as reasons they wanted to participate in music. Financial stress was expressed as both a positive and negative factor in participating in music. Vasil (2013) explains that some students were encouraged to play well because they knew that this opportunity was expensive, while other students were limited in their participation by having to choose to play less expensive instruments.

Results indicated that student musical backgrounds varied greatly (Vasil, 2013). Students had a lot of musical experience and covered a range of activities including school recorder, dance, cheerleading, dancing with friends, interacting with video games, church singing, and daily singing, and one student had taken private djembe lessons. Students also enjoyed listening to popular music from common devices and had previous musical experiences at public performances. Vasil (2013) noted that these experiences took place at football games, performances of the Nutcracker, festivals, and parades with marching band.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Students also described their current music activities. Vasil (2013) reported that students identified the structure of their instrumental class as being warm-up, review, new material, practice time, and discussion. Activities they completed in class consisted of reading and playing rhythms, reading melodies, and using good tone. Students identified that being exposed to new music helped to expand the type of music they prefer. Students enjoyed class and looked forward to going to lessons. Vasil (2013) found that the few negative comments made by the students expressed their desire for wanting more time to practice and feeling nervous about upcoming concerts. Overall, Vasil (2013) found that students only had good things to say about their music program.

Vasil (2013) discussed that open coding revealed themes of family influences on practice, practice on home routine, and expanded listening skills and preference. Several intrinsic motivators were present in the responses, including personal feelings of competence and the feeling of being in a safe environment. Vasil (2013) suggested that more research is needed to determine if these factors developed over the course of the year or were present prior to the students enrolling in music class.

Several authors have used different study models when looking at the issue of getting kids and keeping kids enrolled in music (Cook, 2013; Vasil, 2013). In addition to the recruitment and retention strategies used currently, other factors such as student perceptions of teacher and of their programs recruitment and retention strategies could identify how to best get students involved in music programs. Interviews have been conducted with band students (Vasil, 2013), however, hearing from beginning and continuing orchestra students would benefit string educators' ability to recruit and retain students in string programs.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Summary

The review of literature presented here is organized into categories based on information related to recruitment and retention strategies for beginning string programs in low socioeconomic status (SES) settings. Students of low SES are not well represented in orchestra programs across the nation (Schmidt et al., 2006; Smith, 1997). Music instruction has been shown to benefit students cognitively (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Kraus et al., 2014) and emotionally (Rickard et al., 2012; Shields, 2001). Understanding what influences the decisions of students with low SES to participate in music programs could ensure that all students receive the benefits that music education provides. Improving recruitment and retention of low SES students is necessary to make certain that these students receive music instruction and develop skills that can impact their future.

Many factors seem to play a role in recruiting and retaining students of low SES in music programs. Partnerships with professional orchestras have been shown to increase student awareness of music careers (Abeles, 2004). The teacher's role in recruitment and retention has been investigated (Abril, 2009; Albert, 2005; Cook, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Shields, 2001) as well as the role parents' play on student participation in music (Albert, 2005; Vasil, 2013). Being responsive to individual student backgrounds may aid in encouraging student retention (Abril, 2009; Albert, 2005; Cook, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2011, Shields, 2001; Vasil, 2013). Altering beginning instruction year and increasing class frequency could promote recruitment and retention in music programs (Hartley & Porter, 2009). Future research could examine the extent to which each of these factors influences the recruitment and retention of students of low SES and, consequently, assist teachers in providing effective music instruction to these settings.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Within low SES communities, it is important that researchers identify what students perceive as influencing their recruitment and retention. This research will assist music teachers by providing more reliable and consistent strategies for building up music programs within impoverished communities. If we believe that as teachers it is our responsibility to provide high quality, personalized, and meaningful music education to all students, then it is our duty to identify how to recruit and retain all students, including those of low SES to participate and grow within our music classrooms.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

CHAPTER III: Methodology

Purpose

By conducting a qualitative case study, I aim to shed light on what students consider to have influenced their decision to join and stay in a beginning string program. A qualitative case study allows researchers to get rich, detailed information about individual's experiences and allows the participants to be fully active in the creation of data (Creswell, 2007). It is important that this study be qualitative in nature to capture the context that surrounds this issue and to hear the students from within the setting that has shaped their experience. Conducting interviews allows factors that may not have been considered by the author to be revealed through discussion with the participants (Creswell, 2007). Utilizing information gathered from observations and interviews also allows the researcher to confirm what is being seen in the data (Maxwell, 2005). The purpose of this study is to interview and observe students in order to identify the role and importance of recruitment and retention strategies in beginning group string programs within low socioeconomic communities.

Participants

The sample for this study was selected from a large, Midwestern city in the United States. To be included in the study, schools must have met the following requirements: (1) be considered low socioeconomic status (SES) based on having over 50% of students receiving either free or reduced lunch rates, (2) have a beginning-heterogeneous string class, and (3) have an orchestra enrollment rate of at least 10% of the total school population. Research has shown that a 6% mean of orchestra participation existed in Indiana in 2006 (Schmidt et al., 2006). Therefore, schools that had at least 10% of their total population enrolled in orchestra were considered as having above average enrollment. This information, including free and reduced

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

lunch rates, ethnic make-up, and orchestra course offerings was determined using the State Department of Education website and individual school websites. Research approval was obtained from both Indiana University's Institutional Review Board as well as the participating school district's Research Approval Committee. Administrators were contacted to receive their approval and teachers were contacted to determine enrollment rates as well as to inquire about their willingness to have one beginning string class participate in the study.

Two schools that met the above criteria were selected, and five students at each school were selected with recommendation from their teacher to take part in the interview process. Schools that had the largest ratio between orchestra enrollment and low SES were contacted first to participate in the study. Interview participants were selected by the teacher using heterogeneous sampling to ensure that a diversity of ethnicities, genders, and primary string instrument types were represented in the data as well as students with particularly challenging contextual issues or potential barriers to participating in the orchestra programs. If schools had multiple beginning class sections, students were selected from one classroom determined by the researcher and cooperating teacher. The district, schools, teachers, and students were all assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

The first school, which will be referred to as Colby Learning Center (CLC), is a kindergarten through twelfth grade magnet school that focuses on developing student leadership. Students are exposed to string instruments through their general music classes, but can formally enroll in orchestra class in sixth grade. The second school, which be called by the pseudonym Elliot Elementary Spanish Immersion Magnet School (EES), is unique in that students have all of their classes taught in English during the morning and in Spanish during the afternoon. The magnet school hopes to provide students with a place to use both the languages they find at home

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

and within their greater community. The orchestra program at EES begins in fifth grade and students may continue in sixth grade before moving over to the middle school.

The orchestra teacher at CLC, who I will refer to by the name Carol Glaw, has taught for four years, three of which were at her current school. She grew up in a small town in Indiana before attending a small, private liberal arts college. Ms. Glaw is a string player and has only taught orchestra courses. The second teacher, who I will refer to as Joyce Brook, has directed a variety of music programs for over fifteen years and has taught at EES for nine of those years. Growing up in Indiana, Ms. Brook originally played trumpet and pursued her Bachelor of Music in Music Education degree from a private university. It was not until 2008 when EES received a grant to include string instruction that Ms. Brook began playing string instruments and researching string teaching techniques.

At CLC, 22.4% of the eligible student body school is enrolled in Ms. Glaw's program with 32 of the 143 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders choosing to play a string instrument. The students identify as either Black (67.1%), Hispanic (16.4%), White (14.4%), or Multiracial (2.1%). Of the total school population, 78% qualify for free and reduced lunch and only 18% are considered passing on the yearly state-mandated standardized test. At EES, of the 54 students who have the option, 34 choose to participate in the string program resulting in an enrollment rate of 63%. The students at EES are primarily Hispanic (67.8%), followed by Black (19.9%), White (8.3%), and Multiracial (4%). This school performs above the district average with 56.2% of the student body passing their yearly, standardized test and 72.1% of students receive free or reduced lunch rates. It should be noted because this is an elementary school, this statistic should not be directly compared to the test scores of CLC.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Between classes, the carpeted halls at CLC are silent. Passing period reveals the vibrant community and students found at this school. Ms. Glaw's classroom is clean, colorful, and inviting. Plenty of professionally installed orchestra lockers line the classroom walls and are each full of instruments ready to be played. Her dry erase board is full of daily, weekly, and long-term goals. The students enter her room telling stories of the day's hardships and gossips and call out and joke with one another as they find their instrument and meander to their seats. One student playfully chases another student saying, "Why you staring at me and then act like I didn't notice? I was directly looking back at you every time." Ms. Glaw welcomes each student and addresses each concern that students bring to her before class. One student asks a question about getting permission to miss class to attend an event and Ms. Glaw responded, "I checked with Mr. Davidson and you shouldn't have any problems." Eventually, class is ready to begin and the hallways again become silent.

The hallways at EES are vividly decorated with flags, projects, and banners celebrating the diverse heritage of the student body and both Spanish and English can be heard as teachers converse between classes. The music room is equally as brilliant with a wide array of music displays and instruments throughout the space. One poster describes the instruments of Africa with both Spanish and English labels. In the back closet, organized lockers hold the string instruments, which were granted to the school by the VH1 "Save the Music" Campaign. The front board displays the results of the Solo & Ensemble achievements earned by the students. Displays through the room indicate that each of the grade levels is in concentrated preparation for the annual Multicultural night, which features an evening of world music performed by the students.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Student participants had similarities in that they were all in sixth grade orchestra and attended schools that were considered low SES; however, they represented a range of personalities and backgrounds. At EES there were three females, Alison, Corina, and Heather, and two males, Bryan and Michael. Alison was a violist whose interview responses were animated and included descriptions akin to those of an experienced storyteller. Like all of the EES students, Alison wore the mandatory school uniform, which includes khakis and a polo shirt. She wore glasses and had her dark hair slicked back into a short, simple ponytail. She was self-confident and used trendy lingo, such as “You do you”, when answering the interview questions. Also on viola, Heather was assertive, articulate, and provided a great amount of detail regarding her and her peers’ perceptions of recruitment and retention. Heather’s thick-rimmed glasses and wildly curly dark hair matched her bold, sassy personality. Bryan and Michael played violin. Bryan’s slow and purposeful responses made me consider him a wordsmith and, at times, a poet. He had short dark hair and a kind smile. During the interviews, he sat up tall with his hands folded neatly on the table. Michael took his time describing his experience with orchestra and also placed special emphasis on interactions he had with his family. Although he seemed willing to share his experience, Michael mostly looked at the ground while speaking and slowly swayed back and forth in his chair. He wore a blue Adidas windbreaker jacket and had a coordinating 90’s flattop haircut. The fearless cellist, Corina, gave deliberate, straightforward responses regarding her vivid perceptions of orchestra. She was a twig of a girl with long, dark hair and was so excited during the interview that she could hardly sit still.

At CLC there were four females, Jessica, Sophia, Maria, and Rose, and one male, Josiah. Jessica was a cellist who gave courteous responses and, while she played, her thin figure was almost completely hidden by her cello. Her bubbly behavior before and after class matched the

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

enthusiasm she showed during the interview. Sophia was a quirky viola student who was excited to participate and reflected this enthusiasm through her speech. Her long blonde hair was neatly tied up in a ponytail and she greeted everyone, including me, with a smile. The violinist Josiah, who although he was shy, lit up when sharing aspects of the program he considered meaningful. Josiah's confidence was most visible through his choice of outfit: a bright red polo and matching high top sneakers. Also a violinist, Maria wore a simple outfit of khakis and a gray hoodie. She was hardly noticeable during class because she sat quietly, followed instructions, and rarely asked questions. Maria was confident that she would become a music teacher in the future. Rose, another violinist, 'told it like it was' throughout the interview process. She marched to the beat of her own drum; slowly entering class, taking her time retrieving her instrument, and casually setting up to play. Although all participated in an orchestra, the students in this study represented a wide variety of personalities and personal backgrounds.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data by conducting interviews with the students, observing orchestra classes, holding informal interviews with the teachers, and keeping a researcher journal. Using multiple data sources reduces the possibility of bias in my findings, allows a broad sense of the issues involved to come forward, and confirms the accuracy of my results (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Maxwell, 2005).

I conducted one-on-one interviews with students to gather rich, detailed information regarding their perceptions of joining and staying in a beginning string orchestra program. Interviews were conducted with five students at each school for a total of ten students. In order to get the most and best data possible, it was imperative that I put the students at ease (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). To do this, I reviewed the purpose and details of the study with each student,

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

began the conversation with open-ended questions, and listened intently to demonstrate that I valued what they were sharing with me. I requested a total interview time commitment for up to 15 minutes per participant; however, students were reminded that there was no penalty for stopping an interview at any time. I used a semi-structured interview approach so that data could be compared between participants at different schools while still allowing for exploration of unique or unexpected material presented by the participants (Maxwell, 2005).

During the interviews, I was looking for information related to the activities or aspects of the orchestra program that encouraged the students to join the class. A list of the interview questions is located in Appendix A. I audio recorded the interviews and then transcribed them as they were completed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

Conducting observations in addition to the interviews provided a context for the interview data, provided an alternative perspective, and allowed me to confirm what I heard in the interviews (Maxwell, 2005). I conducted two observations of beginning orchestra classes during the research period based on researcher and instructor availability. I observed for the duration of one class period and video recorded each class so that pertinent information could be analyzed at a later time. I took field notes as I sat in the classroom to ensure that I captured an accurate representation of the experience being observed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

During each observation I paid attention to happenings related to the research questions, including the way teachers interacted with their students, the atmosphere and routine of daily class, and in-class discussions related to the recruitment and retention strategies identified in the interviews. For the observations, I acted as what Merriam (1998) describes as an *observer as participant*. I was able to witness and gather a wide variety of data, however, the orchestra students and teachers, who were made aware of my presence, were in control of how much

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

information they shared (Merriam, 1998). I sat at the back of the room to minimize my presence as an observer. After each observation I reviewed the videotape to create a transcription. As an observer, I did not stop observation and field note collection to engage in conversation unless the students or teacher initiated the exchange. The transcriptions contain dialogue and pertinent gestures that clarify the intent of each speaker (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

After all of the interviews were complete, an informal conversation with the teachers took place to clarify and to confirm themes brought up by the students. Having a brief conversation with the teachers allowed them to hear about developments in the study as well as the opportunity to clarify information about any unclear topics that were described by their students. Teachers were able to provide additional information about the recruitment or retention strategies that were discussed by their students. I took field notes after my conversations in order to document each teacher's feedback.

Throughout the study I maintained a researcher journal. I completed researcher journal notes after each set of interviews was complete. This allowed me to capture any reflections or feelings I had and allowed me to document my role in the process as I worked to improve my interviewing techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). I also took researcher journal notes immediately after each classroom observation to ensure that any ideas or reflections brought up by the observations were documented (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). This allowed me to assemble subjective perceptions that I had during the data collection period and assisted me in tracing my developing analysis throughout the duration of the study.

Additionally, I asked the teachers if they would share any artifacts relevant to the research questions with me. Any available artifacts, including handbooks, parent communications, and recruitment flyers, were collected and analyzed for connections to the data

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

gathered from the interviews and observations. The artifacts allowed me to provide a more detailed picture of the recruitment and retention strategies utilized in each classroom.

I analyzed all of the data collected through emergent category coding (Merriam, 1998). I began the process by creating a word list with a word or short phrase for each sentence of data collected. This reduced the data set. I extracted the word list to a new file and then separated the words into categories that reflected different emergent topics that related to my research questions. I then went back to the data for a detailed analysis of the text in each category to discover the themes that explained the characteristics and definitions for that category.

I first analyzed the data within each case to gather a complete picture of the individual school's recruitment, enrollment, and the students' perceptions about their continued participation. Then, I compared data between the two different schools to discover any common themes.

Member checking is providing the interview participants the opportunity to review the findings to ensure that the author collected accurate data and interpreted the data adequately (Creswell, 2007). I conducted member checking after data analysis by reviewing the findings with the students. During a five-minute meeting with the interviewees, I used age-appropriate language to verify that the findings are indicative of the students' perceptions. I also had a five-minute meeting to member check with each of the teachers. During member checking, participants were able to confirm, clarify, or dispute the findings and, if desired, make corrections or additions during that time. Responses received were used to inform the analyst's final narrative.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Procedures

In December of 2015 I applied and received IRB approval from Indiana University in addition to receiving research approval from the participating school district in April 2016. Then, in April of 2016, the two classroom teachers were contacted via email to complete a consent form. After receiving their consent, the teachers and I set dates for the timeline of the study. I went to each classroom to explain the study and sent an introductory letter and consent form home with all current orchestra students asking parents for passive consent or to opt their child out of the study. Parents and students had two weeks to opt out of the study. Then, the teachers assisted in selecting five eligible students from their school to be interviewed for a total of ten students. In April 2016, the ten selected interviewees were asked to complete a children's assent form prior to participating in one 15-minute interview containing semi-structured questions. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed on a later date. I completed interviews and observations during a total of five days scheduled with the instructor over the course of two weeks. Immediately after each observation and set of interviews I took researcher journal notes. After the interviews at both schools were completed, I transcribed and coded the data. The video observations were transcribed so that video analysis could be completed. Once analysis and write-up of the findings was complete, member checking occurred at each school by meeting with the interviewed students for five minutes.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

CHAPTER IV: Results

Student perceptions revealed several themes regarding recruitment and retention and, at times, distinctly varied between the two schools. The interviews and observations were coded and then organized according to the original research questions:

1. What recruitment strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to join a string program?
2. What retention strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to stay in a string program?
3. What perceptions do beginning string students of low socioeconomic status have of their instructor?
4. What role do community members, including teachers, parents, administration, and professional musicians, play in the recruitment and retention of beginning string students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

An overview of the themes related to each question will be presented below and will address each question individually.

Research Question 1: What recruitment strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to join a string program?

Participants perceived verbal recruitment as the most effective recruitment strategy used in their orchestra programs, were interested in orchestra because they enjoyed music as a means to their self-growth, and perceived signing up for orchestra as a low-pressure decision. Three students, two from EES, perceived verbal recruitment from their teacher as what encouraged them to join the string program. When asked when she learned what an orchestra was, Alison from EES stated, “In fourth grade, when Ms. Brook introduced us to it. Because we would be

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

starting, if we wanted to, the next year. So she started talking to us about it.” Bryan, also from EES, explained how his teacher verbally recruited him into the program during his general music class, stating:

The number one person who changed my mind to join orchestra was Ms. Brook...She inspired us to try to join. She told us about the things we would be able to do like play in Evening with the Arts, which would be at night, and then we would play Multicultural Day.

For students at EES, this recruitment occurred in their general music class and made them aware that orchestra was an opportunity that would allow them to perform in front of their school community. Two students, one from each school, perceived that their recruitment was also influenced by having conversations with older orchestra students. When asked who encouraged her to join orchestra, Rose from CLC stated, “The students and Ms. Glaw.” Similarly, Corina from EES said, “All the other students from years past. They come and tell us about it.” Corina’s suggestions for recruitment strategies paralleled her own recruitment experience. When asked how she would get more students to join, Corina stated:

I would probably put on more performances. Make people interested in it by telling them what we do and other things that would help you learn this instrument. And [tell them] you could play it throughout your years in high school and middle school to get better at it. And you could become an orchestra later on and make performances.

It is possible that these benefits are similar to what Corina learned when first talking with older orchestra students during her own recruitment. For two of these students, talking with current orchestra members helped build their rationale for joining their schools’ string program.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In contrast, Maria from CLC perceived that she was her own biggest motivator in joining the orchestra. When asked who or what encouraged her to sign up, Maria stated:

My self actually because I like music a lot and I didn't know there was a band until... when I came to this school and we were checking out all the stuff to see if we could open our lockers and stuff, I saw [the orchestra room].

Maria had played in band at her elementary school prior to transferring to CLC for sixth grade. If she had been allowed, Maria said she would have taken both band and orchestra, but when asked if she felt like she got to pick the class she wanted or if she was stuck in orchestra, Maria stated boldly, "I picked which one I wanted." When asked to further explain the night she signed up, Maria gave the following details:

Ok. It was a few days before school started. We have to come here [to school] and check... we had to see where all the classrooms were on our schedules and stuff for the new people and then we had to try opening our lockers, to learn, so that we didn't look really weird trying to open our lockers and be really late [on the first day] ...And I was like, "Oh my gosh. There's an orchestra here. I want to sign up." So I just went in here and [Ms. Glaw] said, "What grade are you in?" And I said, "Sixth" and she said, "Really? I need some sixth graders in my orchestra." And so I just said, "I'll sign up."

Although Maria considers herself her own motivator for joining orchestra, her teacher met her curiosity with a verbal affirmation of belonging. This may have reinforced Maria's decision to join the school string program.

In addition to verbal recruitment, students indicated that they joined orchestra because they enjoyed music and the skills that were developed while learning to play an instrument.

Bryan from EES stated coolly, "I decided to join orchestra because I kind of like music." When

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

asked why he would try to inspire other students to join, Bryan said, “So they can see how they can learn to play the instrument and how the instrument's tone and, what's it called, pitch, and if its loud or soft, how smooth it can be.” Bryan felt that if he could show other students what these instruments could do then those students would also want to learn how to use the instruments. Similarly, Michael from EES brought up letting students try out instruments as a recruitment strategy. It is interesting that Michael thought of this idea since he was the only student who shared that he had experienced an instrument petting zoo prior to joining his school’s orchestra. When asked how he would recruit more students, Michael stated simply, “Probably first let them sample the instruments and see how they like it and ask them if they want to sign up and do orchestra, and go from there.” When asked what he would tell students, Michael added, “Well, probably some of the challenges, but I would probably try to make it in a fun way.”

Even if the instrument demonstrations contained advanced skills, one student indicated that she was intrigued when she saw that the violin could be a challenge. When asked why she wanted to learn to play the violin, Maria from EES, stated, with excitement, “It looked difficult to learn. I like challenging my self. And so that's why I wanted to play to violin.” Likewise, Sophia from CLC suggested that in order to recruit students teachers should “See if [the potential members] could watch us in class or something... Because then they could see what they will eventually learn.” Sophia also identified that new students should get to watch an orchestra class from every grade level. Her rationale: “You get to see the orchestra from what we are starting at and then what we are coming to now.” These students positively viewed joining orchestra because they liked that orchestra was a place where you could grow your skills over time. Each of these students recognized instrument demonstrations and showing the development of skills as ways that would meaningfully entice students to join orchestra.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Also regarding their recruitment, several students' responses indicated that they perceived joining orchestra as a low-pressure decision, which ultimately encouraged them to join the program. When asked what the benefits of orchestra were, Heather from EES started describing a mix of reasons to join, but eventually suggested that signing up for orchestra was a carefree commitment, stating:

The benefits of orchestra are you are learning a new instrument, so you are getting a new talent. You can give up if you want to. You do not have to stay there forever. You can meet people. You can create friends while there. You can go into music class early in the morning to practice, but then I also have to tell them the bad sides. If you don't get the instrument you will probably feel behind. Because if you think of it, there's not that many bad things because you can drop out so easily. All you have to do is say, "Ms. Brook, I'm don't think this going to work out. I'm going to drop out." And she will let you. She will not have a problem.... And it's fun. It's a fun way to let loose, skip like two minutes of class on Thursdays, and not have a problem.

Heather's inflection seemed to suggest that she perceives students as being indifferent to joining orchestra because if you they did not like it, they could easily quit. Although she suggested that learning a new skill and meeting friends were positive benefits of joining, she seemed resolute that the biggest advantage of joining was that you did not have to commit to orchestra long term.

Similarly, when asked if deciding to join orchestra was a difficult decision, Alison from EES casually brushed off the question, stating, "The hard part was picking what instrument." Alison was also aware of her peer's indifference to joining orchestra. When asked how her friends ended up in orchestra she stated, "Some of my friends felt like, 'Hey, cool, instrument, let's play, or whatever.' And, like, they don't really care." Even students who indicated that they

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

enjoyed orchestra perceived the decision to join orchestra as a casual one. When describing how he made his decision, Bryan stated, “Yeah, and so I was like, ‘I guess I'm gonna join.’” In combination, these students’ statements seem to suggest that students, at least those from EES, do not see their decision to join orchestra as important or tense; rather, they perceive that there are few reasons not to join.

Students’ perceptions of how effortless it was to leave orchestra may have been impacted by the context surrounding each program. At EES, Ms. Brook explained that orchestra overlaps with weekly library visits. It is possible that dropping out of orchestra is easier for students at this school since they already have another class to attend. CLC students register for orchestra as a course so it is possible that scheduling policies or drop course periods could prevent students from easily switching out of orchestra. This may explain why CLC students did not share the perception that joining orchestra was an easy decision.

Overall, participants indicated that verbal recruitment was the most prevalent recruitment strategy used at their schools, with both teachers and older students participating in those discussions. Some of the students enjoyed orchestra because they perceived that they would develop new skills. Several of the students in this study perceived joining orchestra as a low-pressure decision and that being able to quit orchestra at any time made signing up an easier decision.

Research Question 2: What retention strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to stay in a string program?

Students identified that they stayed in orchestra because they enjoyed many aspects of the program including learning to play an instrument, spending time with their friends, being in orchestra, and earning awards and incentives. In addition, students perceived orchestra as a

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

career or scholarship opportunity that encouraged their peers to remain in orchestra. Finally, students communicated that middle school class choices would influence whether or not they decided to continue in orchestra. For some of the students, this was in part because they desired to pursue new course options in the search of variety.

Seven students, four from EES, said that they stayed in orchestra because they enjoyed learning how to play an instrument. Alison from EES summarized why she still wants to be in orchestra stating, “It’s still pretty fun and it’s always fun spending time working on notes.” When asked how she would convince a friend to stay in orchestra with her, Alison gave this animated exchange:

Alison: “Hey! I’m staying in orchestra and you should stay with me so we can learn together!”

Researcher: Yeah, to learn together? What kinds of things would you learn?

Alison: Well, we would learn notes and how to do the things. And then we would be like the only two people. “Hey! We stayed in strings and now we know all this and y’all [non-orchestra students] don’t.”

Alison liked the idea of having skills that set her and her fellow orchestra peers apart from the rest of the student body. When asked why she wanted to stay in orchestra, Maria from CLC said, “Might become a little more advanced on the violin.” Similarly, Sophia from CLC stated, “I think I want to learn more about – I want to play harder stuff. And it really interests me.” When asked how she would convince a friend to stay, Sophia echoed the rationale that she used for her own retention, stating, “We still get to learn more and it would be fun to play more.” In the same vein, Heather from EES told how she had convinced a friend to stay in orchestra by highlighting

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

that they would be able to learn more advanced skills with the help of their upcoming middle school teacher. Heather stated:

Actually one of my friends does plan on continuing and I had to convince her because I was like, "Yeah, I already know. I'm very ahead of myself. I try to learn, but we will have a teacher to guide us next year. We could learn vibrato and all that other stuff that we can't learn this year. Probably learn how to write our own music. Probably learn how to pick up more instruments. And I think that teacher can give us some more open opportunities since Ms. Brook – she did what she could. Now that teacher can do what she can't."

Like some of the other students, Heather was aware that there were more advanced skills to learn and felt that was a good reason to utilize when trying to convince a friend to stay in orchestra.

In addition to gaining skills, four students, three from EES, perceived having friends in class as a benefit to staying in orchestra. When asked what his favorite thing about orchestra class was, Michael from EES stated, "My favorite thing is probably being able to play with my friends and talk with each other and make each other better. That's probably my favorite." In the same way, Rose from CLC answered, "My favorite thing in orchestra class is getting to be with my friends and doing our work and doing what we supposed to be doing to move on to the next grade." For these two students, being with friends in orchestra was not about goofing off, rather that they enjoyed working with their friends to improve their orchestra skills. Alison from EES indicated that orchestra class helps students to build friendships through learning to play an instrument. Alison stated:

When you are in the music room, you have to help other people with their notes and stuff. And then you have to share a lot. And you have to form bonds with people. Even if you

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

are not all buddy-buddy, or whatever, you will become buddy-buddy in the orchestra room.

Similarly, Heather from EES shared that friendship develops in the orchestra room. Heather stated the following regarding her orchestra peers:

We're pretty good friends. I got used to them, they got used to me. Most of the people I wasn't friends with are the people I share stands with and then since we are always next to each other, we still had to get along. Now we have fun. Also the class has become way looser with each other.

For some students in this study, having or making new friends in class was valuable and encouraged the students to stay and learn together. It should be noted that it is unclear if this was the case at both schools since only students from EES made comments of this nature.

Also looking at retention, four students, two from EES, indicated that they remained in their school orchestra simply because they enjoyed it. When asked why she is staying in orchestra, Jessica from EES confidently said, "Orchestra's fun and I've done it for this many years. And I've loved it the whole time." Similarly, Sophia from CLC enthusiastically stated, "I like [Ms. Glaw's] classroom a lot. I like playing the instruments here. I don't want to leave." Bryan from EES specifically enjoys orchestra because he believes everyone can benefit from music. Bryan explained how music has changed his life, stating:

I am the type of kid that sometimes gets mad easily. So, since music is kind of the only thing that calms me down... I play a certain instrument or sing a song and that will help me calm down. When I would get home I would do my homework and grab my phone and listen to music...Because music is like a pal, a buddy. It is like something you can express your feelings [with] and the music is kind of sympathizing with you. Each time

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

you listen to music and express your feelings by singing, that can get you less pushed and less angry, frustrated, or stressed.

Bryan was adamant that music had allowed him to gain control of his anger and wanted to advocate that others learn to use music as a way to handle their emotions. Bryan believed that if people could manage their own emotions through music, the world would be a better place.

Looking at extrinsic motivators, four students, three from EES were interested in staying in orchestra due to the perception that they would receive tangible incentives. Corina from EES sincerely described why she and other students continued in orchestra for the second year, stating:

Probably that they would like to do it next year and that it looks fun. Also, at the end of the year we get these big awards and we get a big, old Symphony [chocolate] bar for doing so well. So I think that is mostly why people are in it, again, for the second year – for the Symphony bar.

Corina spoke slowly and deliberately to reiterate that receiving special recognition and a candy bar at the final awards ceremony was valued so highly by her and her peers that she considered it a factor in their orchestra program retention. Maria from CLC had the following to say regarding her experience playing a solo: “When I went to solo and ensemble I got a gold badge and I felt good.” When asked what the gold badge represented, Maria said, “I went to the [state organized contest] and [the medal] means I am good at playing the violin and that I don't need that much help on it.” Bryan and Michael from EES additionally discussed how their teacher gave out prizes for reaching practice goals and awarded colorful ribbons when students passed optional playing tests. At both schools, students considered receiving a tangible award as a meaningful reason to continue in their school orchestra program.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Considering long-term participation, three students, two from CLC, brought up the idea of orchestra as a potential career or scholarship opportunity. When asked why he thinks some of his classmates would continue in orchestra, Josiah from CLC stated, “Maybe because they want to learn more about it. Maybe still have a career for it or something.” He reflected this same retention strategy when asked how he would convince a friend to continue in orchestra. Josiah said plainly, “Tell them that you can get a scholarship and tell them that it maybe could be your career.” Similarly, Bryan from EES suggested that some of his friends stay in orchestra “because they know they can become a very experienced player.” When asked how she would convince a friend to continue in orchestra, Maria from CLC stated, “Just keep telling them they are doing great and they just need to do this and this and this. And then they might even become a professional.” However, only one student indicated that she was considering music education as a career. Instead, the majority of students perceived staying in orchestra as a potential career or scholarship opportunity as something that only encouraged their peers to remain in orchestra.

Heather from EES recognized that there are multiple factors that have influenced her and her peers’ decision to stay in a beginning string program. Heather stated:

Because [another student] has said she enjoys it. A lot of people say they enjoy it. They may – they like the sound of their playing and the more they learn the more they will be able to make up their own music. And they can go somewhere with this. This can be an extra talent just for work in the future. Just a lot of things we all talk about. If we continue this up until high school, that will be a good talent to have. Who knows? You might continue in music in college. Or we might go our separate ways.

Heather’s response summarizes that although most of the students enjoy orchestra, a range of rationales regarding retention exist in these schools’ string programs.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In addition to sharing the positive reasons for staying in orchestra, six participants, four from EES, perceived the variety of middle school class choices as why they or their peers might quit their school orchestra programs. When asked why some students might not continue in the future, Josiah from CLC said, “Depending on what school they go to... Maybe they want to move on to something else.” Similarly, when asked if she would stay in orchestra, Corina from EES stated, “Maybe. Because next year I want to try different sports. Because I have played an instrument for two years, but I want to play the violin so I most likely might [stay in orchestra].” Likewise, when asked how he would decide between orchestra and sports, which he said was another one of his favorite hobbies, Michael from EES answered, “I don't know. If [I had to choose] between sports and orchestra, I would probably do sports, but if I had a chance to do both, I would do both – probably.” Alison from EES made it clear that choosing between new opportunities was a tough decision, stating, “I don’t know, because next year is complicated. I’m going over to [the middle school] and it’s either strings or robotics. And robotics is pretty awesome.” Heather from EES also recognized middle school class choices as a factor in her peers’ retention. Heather explained:

They might choose not to stay because there are so many opportunities at my [middle school]. It says some of the things you can do there are like yoga, softball, all those other sports that we don't get here.

For some students, participating in a new activity was considered more desirable than continuing in orchestra.

Two of the students who said they would consider staying in orchestra were primarily focused on playing a different instrument. When asked why she might continue in orchestra, Corina from EES stated, “I want to try all different instruments.” Almost identically, Rose from

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

CLC explained, “I want a different instrument because I wouldn't want to keep playing the violin because I would already know what to do with it.” Additionally, Rose and two other students paid particular attention to doing *new* things when they got to middle school. For instance, when asked to describe practice time, Corina from EES, explained what happens in orchestra class, stating, “We are all together and we just go over new music, new strategies, new notes, and mostly just practicing the songs for new concerts.” When asked why she liked doing new things, Rose from CLC explained, “Because in life people may say, ‘Do you know how to do this?’ or ‘Do you know how to play this?’ and I will be like, ‘Yeah, I played it when I was little.’” Rose also shared the following exchange regarding what types of people she thought pursued new opportunities:

Researcher: What kinds of people do new things?

Rose: People who have been through struggles or who have not been taught everything in life.

Researcher: And what kinds of people don't like to do new things?

Rose: People who think they can do everything and think they are better than everybody else.

Although these sentiments were not explored or communicated by the other participants, it seems that for some of the students in this study, doing new activities was desired and pursued either by taking a new class or switching to a new instrument. It should be noted that although Rose described why she and her peers stayed in orchestra, including their desire to do new things, her evidence was contradictory. At a different point in the interview, Rose answered, “I don't really know. I just know that I came here and they were all here because some of them were here last year so they just kept going to this orchestra class.”

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Students revealed that they did not consider a single feature of orchestra as determining their retention. Having to choose between multiple elective options was a potential deterrent to the students' long-term participation in orchestra. Students indicated that having the option to select a different class in lieu of orchestra was desirable since switching to a new class provided variety and a sense of newness that the students desired. The students in this study ultimately communicated that pursuing whatever option they perceived they would like the most was the best decision for them. Overall, participants perceived multiple factors, most related to enjoyable aspects of the orchestra program, as influencing their decision to remain in a string program.

Research Question 3: What perceptions do beginning string students of low socioeconomic status have of their instructor?

While participants perceived their teachers as having knowledge that would benefit their learning, they had contrasting perceptions of them, including as strict, encouraging, and discouraging. Also, the way in which the students interacted with their teacher, especially outside of class, seemed to vary considerably between the two schools.

During the interviews, eight students, five from CLC and three from EES, perceived that their teachers possessed skills or knowledge that assisted them and their peers in their learning. Seven students positively acknowledged that their teachers helped them to improve. Michael from EES stated, "Like in the morning, some of us come in and practice before school and she'll, if we have problems playing, then she will come over and help us with it." Similarly, Jessica from CLC was open to her teacher being able to help her. She gladly explained:

Ms. Glaw, she helps me a lot with playing my cello. Because sometimes my fingers are out of place or my cello is way down here and way up here <gestures posture> and she

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

just helps me put it in place. She's like, "Can you put it up here?" and she tells me where my fingers go.

Both Michael and Jessica spoke about their teacher with a positive tone. They seemed genuinely willing to accept that their teacher did things for them and that their teacher's actions assisted them in their learning.

Students also perceived their teachers as being able to help their peers improve. Maria from CLC knew a lot about how her teacher helped her peers stating:

Well, for one person, sometimes she doesn't really... can't really do the slurs or the ties that much. So she like always does like that <demonstrates error>. And so Ms. Glaw stops us and then she tries to help her one-on-one. And then for another person he can't really shift that well and he always doesn't really know when to shift. So she helps him and shows him where he's supposed to put his fingers to shift and stuff.

Jessica from CLC had a similar perception and said, "[Ms. Glaw] would walk up to them or she would get her own violin and help them and she would help them with their fingers or how they went wrong." Students from EES also recognized that their teacher assisted their peers' learning. Corina stated, "She will like tell them the notes and tell them to play it over and over again. So you can memorize it and your fingers will memorize it and tell you strategies." Students at both schools perceived that their teacher was someone who could help them and their peers become better string players and that this relationship was favorable.

In contrast, Alison from EES was hesitant to allow her words to sound as if she had a friendly relationship with her teacher. Although she was polite and respectful throughout the interview, Alison's tone seemed to communicate that her interactions with her teacher were strictly professional and that she perceived her teacher as someone who led class rather than

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

someone who helped her to learn. When asked to describe something she recently learned and how her teacher taught it, she firmly replied, stating:

No. I don't know. I don't really pay attention to the way she teaches. I listen to what she teaches, not the way she does it. Like one thing is that she sings the notes, but like, we can't keep up with the notes because we don't know the songs that you gave us yesterday.

Alison's tone seemed to communicate that she did not want me to think that she had a personal understanding of her teacher. Like the other students, Alison could identify specific, visible actions that her teacher took, but did not allow her comments to come across in a way that would indicate that her teacher played a positive role in her learning.

Similarly, students expressed that they and their peers had a wide variety of perceptions regarding their teachers, with students' comments covering a range between understanding and critiquing their teachers' actions. When asked what other students would tell me about her teacher, Alison from EES responded candidly, saying:

It depends on who you ask... Well, it's like half and half. Like [these three kids], they would have been rude about it. Like [these other three kids], they would have been nice. "She's goes a little fast sometimes or whatever."

Similarly, when asked about what her peers would say regarding their teacher, Rose from CLC also felt that some students understood the teacher's actions and some took offense, stating:

Well, some people would probably say she's mean, but she's not mean she's just... I don't know what to say about her, but she's not mean. She just gets angry when students don't do what they are supposed to be doing when she asks them two times.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

For some students, their teacher could be perceived as both kind and insensitive and this perception was often varied between students and their peers.

Another student always perceived his teacher in a positive light. Bryan from EES spoke thoughtfully during the entire interview and seemed to accept his teacher as someone who treated students with kindness and who helped to build a positive classroom environment. Bryan spoke purposefully when expressing his perceptions of his teacher, stating:

She is a peaceful teacher. Some other music teachers would get mad because their students wouldn't listen. But sometimes my class would talk a lot and she would react in a nice way. So instead of just yelling or screaming she would get our attention using beats or using 'clap, snap, shh' <gestures>. And then we would copy the same thing and start getting quieter.

Other students also had positive perceptions, but seemed to be less involved when commenting about their teachers. For instance, when asked to tell me about her teacher, Maria from CLC simply stated, "She's pretty nice and she helps us all the time try to become better." Similarly, some students had positive perceptions of their teacher, however, indicated that they were more concerned with other aspects of their school experience. Corina from EES explained, stating the following:

Ms. Brook is, she is sometimes a fun music teacher, but mostly everyone doesn't like music as much. We all do just talking. So really... and we have to move around more. We like mostly the gym instead of music. Ms. Brook, she's fun to hang out with and she helps people on their instruments and other things.

This student's response seemed to communicate that she liked her teacher, but that what really mattered to her was getting to spend time with friends and getting to be active in gym class.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Through discussions with the teacher I learned that every morning before school all EES students gather in the gym. Orchestra students have the option to come into the music room to practice or stay in the gym where they can socialize and play games. Although students have positive perceptions of their teachers, other aspects of their school experience may take priority when determining if they will join and stay in music programs.

Four students, three from CLC, perceived their teachers as being strict, with some of the students seeing their teachers being strict as a means to their success. Heather from EES gave an example of how her teacher speaks to her class. Heather explained that the teacher tries to rationalize to the students that they need to focus and make good use of class time, stating:

And we're actually in groups right now... and she really gets mad, but there are so many bad kids in our class that everybody's friends with. She'll say, "You guys have to be quiet. We have to do this. We have to do that. Because, yeah, we may have two classes a week, but you guys have at least five days not in this class. And for you string players, you have three days, but you guys don't do this work because not everybody in your group is in there." And I don't blame her for being mad. They kind of annoy me too.

Heather's impersonation seemed to communicate that her teacher spoke seriously and emphasized the importance of utilizing class time. Students at EES only meet two or three days a week for 30 minutes at a time. In order to prepare for big events like the Multicultural day, the teacher may have felt that students needed to be on their best behavior and that progress needed to be made every day in order to put on a good concert. One student at CLC perceived her teacher as being strict since she and her classmates were asked to work all the way until the end of the class period. Jessica stated the following:

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

She's fun. She's cool. But you have to get... because after a song and it's almost time to go – and she doesn't tell us it's time to go – she's like, “Oh, no! It's not time to go yet!” And then she makes us play another round of the music until it's time to go.

Jessica's inflection communicated that her teacher pretends that it's not time to leave in order to get the students to work for a few more minutes. Maria from CLC shared her perspective on what her peers thought about her teacher. She stated the following: “I think they would say she's kinda strict about how to do stuff... They don't like her being strict because then they just start getting mad and start kinda lowering their self-esteem a bit.” However, unlike her peers, Maria seemed to understand why her teacher was strict. Maria explained:

Because when she is strict it actually helps us be better at it because... I don't know. If she wasn't so strict people wouldn't really be like... If she wasn't strict, they'll just be lousy in their music and it will be messy.

It is interesting that Maria, who thinks she will continue in orchestra at her middle school, seems to understand why her teacher does some of the things that other students are put off by. Students at these schools perceive their teachers as having qualities that they do not always favor, but they also acknowledged positive aspects of their teachers' demeanor.

When observing a rehearsal at EES, the teacher had students playing for most of the rehearsal and regularly gave students feedback regarding their playing; however, her actions and demeanor did not come across as strict to me. For instance, after giving the students about five minutes to set up their instruments, talk to each other, and begin warming up on their own, the teacher made a large, slow cut-off gesture and kindly stated:

Ok! Let's go ahead and warm up together. <some students continue playing on their own> Go ahead and take those instruments down. <students are quieter, but still some are

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

playing; eventually the students stop playing> Let's go ahead and warm up together. And thank you, again, to you guys for coming in and getting organized. Hopefully you have already got your music in order for today.

Even though the students seemed to take their time responding to her instructions, the teacher was able to get the students' attention without raising her voice and spoke in a friendly way as she worked to get them all playing music together. It is possible that the students perceived this dialogue as strict because during this same observation the students responded as if they did not want to do what their teacher was requesting. When they noticed that a certain piece was going to be rehearsed one student exclaimed in a challenging voice, "*Arco Blues?* Why are we going to play that?" When the students finally started playing the warm-up scale, some of the students remained in rest position and slowly moved their instruments and bodies into position. It is possible that the students feel that by having to follow any instructions given by the teacher that their teacher is strict. Also, it may be that the teacher was not displaying the strict mannerisms that the students perceived or my perception of the teacher was different than what the students experienced.

Similarly, the teacher at CLC engaged in a dialogue with the students that they might have perceived as strict. While tuning each student individually, the class had been practicing on their own or talking loudly with other students. When tuning was over, the teacher announced clearly and loudly, "Ok, everybody! Voices off. Instruments off. <shhhh> In your book we are going to get started with exercise 150." The students immediately stopped playing and flipped through their music. This may have been a time that the students would describe as strict. However, as a fellow teacher, I found Ms. Glaw's vocal timbre to be clear, but non-confrontational. Like EES, it is possible that they students perceive any directions given by their

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

teacher as strict. Additionally, it is possible that the teacher displays more strict mannerisms when she is not being observed.

In addition to perceiving their teacher as strict, five students, three from CLC, also perceived their teachers as being encouraging. When asked what she would write in a newspaper about her teacher, Jessica from CLC confidently replied, “She's really nice. She is one of the best of my teachers.” I asked Jessica to give an example of what makes her teacher nice or the best. Jessica stated the following:

Because she encourages you. She's like, “C'mon, c'mon. You can do it.” Because we are doing a really hard song right now. We have been through three or four [songs] that were easy for us. And then she helps us. Like with those four songs, we went zooming off of them because she helps us so much with the path and stuff.

Jessica's enthusiasm for her teacher coaching her through harder music was clear. Jessica, like other students, attributes her and her classmates' success to the ability of her teacher to guide them through the steps to learn new and more difficult pieces. Sophia from CLC also felt that her teacher was able to get students to do things that were challenging. When discussing how music interests the students, she stated:

When we were sitting in class today, none of them [classmates] wanted to play the music we were playing because it was so hard, but they would rather play the easy stuff. But Ms. Glaw said we should play the harder stuff so that we can get better... There's a kid in our class who just doesn't like playing sometimes and he will sit out. And she said today that he had to play because we're learning a new song and it's just easier for him to learn it while we are learning it and not be behind.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Sophia perceives her teacher as having multiple rationales for encouraging students to participate including working towards harder goals and reminding students that working together in class will ultimately be the easiest way for them to learn.

During the observations at CLC, I witnessed the teacher encouraging students in a way that confirmed the students' perceptions. After allowing several students to play an exercise as a solo, the teacher found ways to encourage the less confident students to play. The string bass student had been sitting down and playing on his phone until Ms. Glaw engaged him in the following dialogue:

Any other volunteers on this one? I want to hear a low string play. Tom, give it a try.
<teacher gestures with her hand to play> C'mon bud. <pauses as student stands up> Here we go, Tom. <student lays instrument down> Is everything okay? < teacher recognizes that student is adjusting their endpin; teacher waits and allows the student time to prepare> Okay, Tom, give it a try. <student plays the exercise>

At EES the teacher demonstrated being encouraging by motivating the students to work through the lesson plan of the day. After playing a short warm up scale, Ms. Brook enthusiastically and briskly announced:

Alright, good. Alright, so let's run through our festival songs and then most of the class today I'd really like to spend — we started doing some improvisation on *Arco Blues* so that's where I want to spend the bulk of our time. I loved the solos you guys played last week.

Ms. Brook emphasized the word *loved* and appeared to be speaking quickly to keep the students' attention. It seemed as though Ms. Brook spoke pleasantly in order to make the students excited

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

about the tasks for the day. Both at EES and CLC the teachers engaged in motivating dialogue that helped the students take on tasks that they were initially unwilling to attempt.

Three of the students discussed strategies that their teachers used to encourage them and to reduce any intimidating aspects of orchestra participation. When describing some of the challenges his teacher helps him to overcome, Michael from EES abruptly stated, “And that's another thing that she does. If we, like she will tell us that if we play a note wrong, just stop and think about what note we are on and then continue again.” Michael’s perception demonstrates that his teacher gives him strategies to work through challenges, which encourages him to continue. Similarly, Maria from CLC finds that her teacher encourages her to overcome obstacles and teaches strategies to show the students that they can master musical problems on their own. Maria responded, “She teaches us new things and every time we mess up on a measure she always keeps telling us to redo it and then, ‘You will get it right’ and stuff like that.” These students seem to think that their teachers have ways and words to help them work through the difficulties of playing a string instrument, like being overwhelmed by a new piece or getting stuck on a tricky measure. Rose from CLC was assigned to be in orchestra when she transferred schools and did not know she would be in orchestra until the week before school started. Her teacher, Ms. Glaw, encouraged her and made a positive impact on her orchestra experience. Rose explained her first moments in class, stating:

First, I came in here and I was kind of shocked because I didn't know nobody. So then I just came in and sat down and she gave me my instrument and I looked at it and was like, “What am I supposed to do with this?” And then that's when she taught me how to play. Rose was unsure if she would be a good string player, but her teacher’s actions encouraged her to learn the instrument. Rose also acknowledged that there were things her teacher did that

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

discouraged her and her peers. The way Rose spoke during this response made me think that she and her peers somehow understood the balance between being discouraged and recognizing her teacher's positive qualities. When asked to tell me about her teacher, Rose stated:

She's a good orchestra teacher. Sometimes she's nice, but I'm not going to say she's mean, but she can get you to a place where you don't want to do it any more. But, she helps you with what you need. You just got to raise your hand instead of calling out. She buys us music out of her own money. So we are thankful for that.

It seems that even when the students have issues with their teachers, students like Rose who plan to continue in orchestra, have found some balance between seeing their teacher as an encourager and accepting the things they dislike about their teacher.

Students also had varied interactions with their teachers outside of music class. For this portion of the interviews, students' responses seemed to vary drastically between the two schools. At CLC, students had several examples of interactions that occurred outside of music class in which they had orchestra and non-orchestra related discussions. Josiah from CLC was generally quiet and brief in his interview responses. However, when asked about when he talks with his teacher, he indicated that his teacher was someone he could talk to, even if no one else had time. Josiah explained that he spoke to his teacher, "When I need help with something or sometimes we'll just talk when she has free time or something." When asked who initiated these conversations, Josiah stated, "I go to her." Josiah described how his teacher was easy to talk to, stating, "She knows how to make a conversation so you can, like, talk." Similarly, Jessica from CLC described how she has spent time talking to her teacher at her sporting events and recalled that she spoke with her teacher during the school day. Jessica energetically explained, stating:

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

We have soccer games, and she sometimes goes to them. And last year we had volleyball games and she went to some of them and we talked to her about it... I was happy because she was there supporting us. Everyday actually she is over there [in the hallway] and we actually all go and talk to her and just say “Hey” and “How's your morning been?”

Other students at CLC also regularly talk with their teacher outside of class. Rose described how Ms. Glaw often has to urge her back to her other classes, stating the following:

Because she will be like, “Where are you going? You gotta get to class. I don't want you to be late for class or nothing like that.” So we will just start the conversation and she will be like, “Ok. I will just see you tomorrow.”

Rose’s tone conveyed that meeting up with Ms. Glaw in the hallway is fun and that she and her fellow students put off going to their other classes in order to quickly say “hello” to their teacher. In general, the students from CLC engaged in both music and non-music related discussions with their teacher and made time to speak with their teacher outside of class.

When observing at CLC, the students and teacher engaged in non-orchestra conversations and seemed to perceive talking with their teacher as a low-pressure and friendly interaction, which confirmed what was expressed during the student interviews. When Sophia first entered the room, she was smiling. Ms. Glaw immediately said, “Good morning guys! I bet you had fun in gym class.” Sophia nodded and put her arm around Ms. Glaw’s shoulders. Sophia gestured towards her new shoes and clothing and Ms. Glaw said, “Oh, cute. Those look great. Go ahead and get set up.” Similarly, while giving their hands a break and answering some questions, the teacher would engage the students in conversations unrelated to orchestra. At one point, Ms. Glaw said, “It’s hot in here! Are you guys warm?” Several students quickly outburst, “Yes!” and one student said, “Yeah, it’s mega-hot.” Ms. Glaw replied, “Mega-hot? I don’t know if it’s

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

mega-hot.” The tone of this conversation was one of camaraderie and a little bit of humor as the students and teacher shared a common annoyance. The student-teacher interactions at CLC created an atmosphere where students felt comfortable enough to talk with their teacher about both musical and unmusical topics.

In contrast, students at EES did not recognize themselves as having non-music conversations with their teacher. When asked if they talked to their teacher outside of orchestra, four students responded briefly, indicating “No.” Follow up questions, such as whether they ever talked about anything outside of orchestra class resulted in responses such as, “No. Mostly just about orchestra” and “No, everyone just talks about music or just, we really don't ask questions unless it's about the instrument.” Although Bryan said he did talk to his teacher about things unrelated to orchestra, his response indicated that he and his teacher primarily discussed orchestra music. He stated, “[I talk to her] about getting different types of music so I can learn them.” EES students perceived that they only talked with their teacher about music related topics.

During an observation at EES, I noticed that only classroom-oriented conversations occurred, which matched the descriptions given by the students. As students entered the classroom, the teacher was ready for class to begin and monitored students arriving and retrieving their instruments from a closet. The students and teacher did not greet one another, rather, when a conversation did occur, the students and teacher immediately jumped into discussing the matter at hand, such as when a student explained why she did not have her instrument with her that day.

One possibility is that students at EES are under the impression that if they are talking to their orchestra teacher they are either in trouble or having difficulty with some aspect of playing

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

their instrument. Heather explained her rationale for not having outside conversations with her teacher stating:

Actually, I don't talk to our teacher that much...It's because I know so much and I don't worry that much. I usually talk to my main teachers, and all my special teachers- it's usually "hi, bye, goodbye, hello, good morning" – a very polite way to notice them and there's no reason for me to talk to them anymore.

This student in particular seemed to see orchestra as a place where she was successful and that if she had to talk to her teacher it would mean that she needed help on her instrument. When asked what other students talk to his teacher about, Michael from EES responded, "Well, if they do something bad in music class." It seemed that the EES students shared a common perspective with each other of only discussing orchestra related topics with their teacher.

In sum, students had a diverse range of perceptions regarding their teacher with some students seeing their teacher as a positive source of learning, an encourager, and as someone they could interact with both in and out of orchestra. Other students perceived their teacher as someone who led class, who was discouraging at times, and who they would only talk to regarding matters of orchestra. Students seemed to understand as to why their teachers took certain actions despite holding some negative perceptions. Although students' perceptions of their teachers were both positive and negative, the quantity and comprehensiveness of their responses supports the idea that teachers do play a role in their students' lives.

Research Question 4: What role do community members, including teachers, parents, administration, and professional musicians, play in the recruitment and retention of beginning string students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Participants explained the role of community members, including teachers, parents, and professional musicians, however, participants noted that teacher-facilitated experiences within and outside of school were the most prevalent ways the students were exposed to orchestra prior to joining an elective string class. All five students from EES identified that they had been able to experience a professional orchestra concert prior to choosing to be in their school orchestra. At EES, the teacher organized a yearly symphony trip for all fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Students could choose to join orchestra at EES in fifth grade so the teacher took them on this trip as a way to begin stimulating their interest. Two students from CLC described how they took a field trip to the symphony after they had joined the orchestra program at their school. Only two of the students from CLC shared the details of their symphony trip suggesting that these students found the trip to have less impact on their orchestra recruitment and retention than students at EES. Both schools in this study contained grades kindergarten through sixth or twelfth and, at least for the students at EES, they were aware that these trips would occur and looked forward to them until they were old enough to participate. Heather from EES easily recalled her first orchestra experience stating, “Well, I first learned what an orchestra was in fourth grade when Ms. Brook took us all on a field trip to the orchestra. And you would see all the instruments.” Other students also commented on how many different kinds of instruments there were. Bryan from EES was very aware of what he witnessed at the symphony concert and, with excitement, stated:

We went downtown. I don't remember exactly the name of the building, but it was a big stadium. And like, all different types of instruments, like violins, violas, cellos, bass, trumpet, trombones, tubas, clarinets, flutes, recorders, and like, the percussion instruments, like drums and xylophone, and stuff like that.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Bryan not only got to see and hear the instruments, but also was able to try playing some of them that day. Michael, another EES student, had a similar experience and explained his time at the “instrument petting zoo” stating the following:

I think it was either at the beginning or the end [of the concert]. They had instruments that you could try out for kids. I think it was. And I think I tried the violin and the lady there said that I should try playing one of those instruments because I sounded good apparently. So then after that when I was able to do it here [at school], I did decide to do it.

Other students recalled that the performance included vocalists and a variety of performers. Corina from EES stated, “It [the concert] was fun. They actually had opera singers singing it with the music.” Corina was surprised that there was more to the orchestra than just instrumentalists and this seemed to spark her interest in joining orchestra. Jessica from CLC expressed her excitement stating, “It was awesome because there were dancers and actors and stuff and I actually got to see something live that I really wanted to for a really long time.” It seems that getting to see an orchestra as something that interacts with other fine arts encouraged these two students to either join the orchestra or to continue playing a string instrument.

Although the orchestra experiences allowed the students to learn about the symphony, one student expressed how going to a concert year after year caused her to lose excitement for the trip. Alison from EES explained how her feelings changed stating, “As a fourth grader it sounded pretty cool to go somewhere else and listen to other people create beautiful music. As a sixth grader, I don’t know anymore. We went in February and it kind of bored me.” Being taken on these trips seem to have inspired some students’ interest in orchestra, but for others the symphony trips lost their appeal over time.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Although every student at both schools participated in a field trip to the symphony, one student from EES additionally attended orchestra concerts with his family. Michael explained that his first time seeing an orchestra was when his family took him to see the symphony. Michael, who had not been very talkative during the interview, shared much more when talking about when he decided to join the orchestra, stating:

After my grandpa took me and my sister to the Black History Month performance downtown at the symphony orchestra... There was opera there and a friend of my mom's and grandpa's was there as well. And we listened to music for about an hour or two. It's pretty fun.

When speaking about this experience, Michael seemed particularly proud of attending this event with his grandfather. Michael spoke slowly and made sure I understood that this event in particular was what made him want to join orchestra.

Students were also able to experience orchestra performances within their elementary schools. At EES, the teachers exposed students to multiple yearly school orchestra performances where the students watched the older students perform. Three students from EES described how they were encouraged to join orchestra by seeing the older students perform at school events that were facilitated by their teachers. Heather explained:

Because every Multicultural day or graduation day you would sit down and watch the string players play and originally it would be fourth, fifth, and sixth [grades], but it just recently changed to fifth and sixth. So as soon as I got into fifth grade it was an instant thing for me to sign up.

Bryan shared this sentiment, stating, "It wasn't only the events. What also inspired me to do it [orchestra] is seeing the other fifth and sixth graders who played." Similarly, when asked who or

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

what encouraged her to join orchestra, Corina from EES stated, “All the other students from years past. They come and tell us about it.” By seeing older students perform, the students were excited to follow in their footsteps, to try out a new opportunity, and to participate in those events.

At EES, being able to perform at school events encouraged the students to join orchestra because these events were an opportunity for the students to demonstrate something they and their teacher were proud of within the greater school community. When observing the students and teacher at EES, it was clear that the upcoming Multicultural day and awards ceremony concerts were considered important to the class and school community. Even though they did not vocalize it, when observed, Bryan and other students in his class sat up tall, did not talk, and focused intensely when playing the concert pieces during rehearsal. In between each piece the students would talk loudly to one another, dance, and make jokes, but when the teacher announced that in order to be ready for the concert they needed to work on the next piece the students gave her their full attention. Even students that had been unwilling to sit up and play the warm up exercises sat up and played the concert music. Additionally, the concerts were the focus of classroom activities and the teacher referred to a dry-erase board to alert students of how many rehearsals were left until the performance. After reminding the students how important it was to prepare for these events, Ms. Brook stated, “Well, we’ve got two weeks until the [Multicultural] festival, after that we have one and a half weeks until that grand day!” Ms. Brook was referring to the awards ceremony and the enthusiasm in her voice and choice of language helped to emulate how important the upcoming events were. In addition, when talking with Ms. Brook in email and in-person she was very excited to share information about the upcoming

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

events and invited me to attend. The observed excitement and diligent preparation displayed by the teacher and students made it clear that being a part of these events was important.

During the student interviews at EES, it was also apparent that the students considered these events to be valuable to the school community. Bryan was quick to recite the details of Multicultural day, including the date, who was invited, and the purpose of the concert. Bryan confidently explained, “Then we would play Multicultural Day, which is coming up on May 20th. So it's almost up.” When asked about who attends these events, Bryan stated, “On awards day the whole class and on Multicultural day all the parents and other students... It's like the graduation. Everybody can come. It's like a celebration for our cultures like Mexico, Guatemala, Argentina, Cuba.” Likely due to the classroom discussions with his teacher, Bryan was well informed about the concerts and was proud to tell me what would happen at these community events. When asked why she joined orchestra, Corina from EES explained, stating, “And we watched it from the school when they had these big things going on, like performances, like awards day, cultural day, and all the month things when we watched them. So mostly that is what encouraged me to do it.” It was clear from the reverence given to these events that students wanted to be a part of the concerts that they had watched year after year.

At CLC, due to the teacher, students also learn about the orchestra program over several years. Ms. Glaw explained that playing the violin is a part of the general music class curriculum for all students. Rose recalled this stating she remembered playing a string instrument in kindergarten before transferring out of the district and years later returning to CLC for sixth grade. Other students said they also learned about orchestra during music class. Jessica said, “Like first grade. I started catching on because the teacher, she would always teach us and make us write the bookwork and stuff. And then I started catching on.” Students explained other times

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

they had been able to play the violin in elementary school such as during an after school program in fifth grade. Sophia from CLC explained when she decided to join, stating, “Last year. It was towards the end of the year because [Ms. Glaw] was doing after school orchestra for fifth grade.” Most students, besides those that had recently transferred to CLC, had experienced violin in music class ever since kindergarten. Although the extent of the skills they were taught or how developed they were in their abilities, the students had the opportunity to learn what string instruments were prior to selecting it as an elective course option.

Although teacher-facilitated events and experiences were the most prevalent way of exposing the students to the orchestra programs, family support was also discussed in the student interviews. Before being recruited, four of the students had family members that had positive experiences with music participation. Jessica from CLC explained that she knew her mom enjoyed orchestra stating, “My mom, she loves the cello because my sister would always bring it home and she [my sister] would always play. And my mom, she's just like my sister — likes everything she basically falls into.” Jessica found that this positive experience translated into her own interest in playing cello. She explained, “Because my sister... she would always bring her cello home. And I was so excited to use it and stuff and I finally got the chance to.” Sophia from CLC shared that before she was old enough to join, she watched her brother’s band concerts, which were held side-by-side with the orchestra. Sophia explained, “Because my brother, last year, he was in band and I would get to go to his concerts and get to see the orchestra play too. So I think that is kind of what helped interest me.” Whether it is a family member or friend, being able to see the older students perform exposed these students to what opportunities would exist once they were of age.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Other students commented that their families had positive connections to orchestral music. Michael from EES described the musical advice given by his family. He stated:

They like orchestra. They listen to jazz and orchestra [radio] stations sometimes and that's like the only type of music my mom wants me to listen to as I go to sleep. Because I like listening to music as I go to sleep. So she will tell me to listen to either jazz or orchestra music.

Although Heather from EES did not directly link this to her decision to join orchestra, she shared that she had experiences that connected her orchestra experience to her home life. Heather stated:

Our family members have all tried an instrument. My aunt tried viola. She said she wanted to play it so bad, but unlike me, she couldn't. She never forgot the finger placings and her nails are too long, which is why I have no nails till this day.

Throughout the ten interviews only what were considered positive or neutral family experiences or attitudes towards musical participation were reported. For these students, their exposure to orchestra and string instruments leading up to their decision to join a string program were positive and memorable.

Although the research question aimed to address if administration played any role in recruitment or retention, all five students that shared perceptions of their principals had relatively sparse and minor comments. Compared to the detail and personal information students offered when responding to the other interview questions, it seems that they perceived their principals as not having a major role in their orchestra program. When asked to tell me what their principals would say about the orchestra, Rose from CLC put it plainly, stating:

I don't know what he thinks because I am not in his head, but he comes in here and sees what we are doing and sees if Ms. Glaw is doing what she needs to be doing to teach us.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Alison from EES told me that her principal would say that orchestra is “maybe something to do with our time rather than going home, lounging on the couch, and not doing homework... He thinks it’s a good way to spend our time.” Similarly, Josiah stated flatly, “He thinks it's good. He thinks it sounds good.” One student seemed to recognize her principal as someone who gave permission for the orchestra to be a class and to host events. Corina from EES stated:

He says that it's very good that we are learning more about the music and he's like the one that helps the music teacher throw these performances to like show what we learned over the year...Because Ms. Brook actually talks to him before she makes a new club.

Josiah from CLC said that the principal comes into her class sometimes, stating, “Like sometimes he walks in the room and we play and he's smiling.” However, Sophia, another student at CLC, said that her principal does not come into class, stating, “No, he will walk by the classroom sometimes.” The students spoke positively about their principals, however, in general they seem to perceive their principals as not playing a major role in facilitating the program or recruiting and retaining students.

Students perceived teacher-facilitated events as the primary source of their orchestra exposure prior to their decision to join or stay in a string program. While principals did not play a role, students perceived professional ensemble experiences, family members, and the school community at large to encourage their recruitment and retention into a beginning low socioeconomic string program.

Overall, findings regarding students’ perceptions of recruitment included the themes of verbal recruitment, orchestra as a means to self-growth, and orchestra as a low-pressure decision. Students perceived enjoyment of gaining skills, being with friends, receiving incentives, potential career and scholarship opportunities, and middle school class choices as impacting their

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

decision to remain in a string program. Between the two schools, students considered their verbal interactions with their teachers differently. Additionally, students had a range of perceptions regarding their teachers with some seeing them as strict, encouraging, and discouraging.

Teacher-facilitated recruitment events, such as elementary concerts and professional orchestra field trips, were the most prevalent ways that students were exposed to orchestra prior to joining a program. Allowing beginning string students to share their perceptions of recruitment and retention brought forward new areas of research and nuances of experience to be further investigated by music educators.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

CHAPTER V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand students' perspectives of recruitment and retention strategies in above-average enrollment beginning group string programs within low socioeconomic status (SES) communities. Students' perceptions of recruitment strategies were aligned with current research, but, in contrast to the current literature (Albert, 2005; Vasil, 2013), were focused on specific experiences rather than on whole recruitment events. Additionally, student perceptions included the idea of orchestra as a low-pressure decision, which may be connected to bridging the gap between elementary and middle school programs (Hartley & Porter, 2009). In line with previous research (Cook, 2013), students indicated that middle school class choices played a role in their retention. The idea that friends encourage retention was consistent with Vasil's (2013) findings. However, the previously examined role of teacher relationships (Shields, 2001) and career opportunities (Abeles, 2004) were not clearly represented in the current findings. Students in the current study seemed to perceive their teachers differently than teachers had perceived themselves in previous research (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Shields, 2009). Confirming previous research (Albert, 2005), students perceived teacher-facilitated events as the most prevalent means of exposure to orchestra. Unlike Vasil (2013), students in the current study did not perceive instrument try out night as a meaningful factor in their recruitment. Additional aspects of the extant literature were not perceived by the students as important to their recruitment or retention in a beginning string program (Albert, 2005; Cook, 2013). Further, students presented retention strategies that are not immediately present in the extant literature. The following discussion of findings will address each research question individually, followed by the limitations of the current study and implications for teaching practice and future research.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Research Question 1: What recruitment strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to join a string program?

Students perceived verbal recruitment, the enjoyment of developing orchestra skills, and seeing orchestra as a carefree commitment as the recruitment strategies that persuaded them to join a beginning string program. To be clear, student interviews revealed multiple factors that likely encouraged the students to join, however, when asked specifically what convinced them to join, students perceived only a few aspects of their experience as directly influencing their recruitment. Three students, two from EES, shared the perception that talking with others, including their teacher and older orchestra members, convinced them to join orchestra. Students explained that this verbal recruitment occurred in their general music class and at elementary school concerts. When examining the perspectives of teachers, parents, and principals, Albert (2005) found that exposure, such as concerts performed at elementary schools, were perceived as one of the biggest factors in student recruitment. Students from EES indicated that they remembered and enjoyed seeing elementary concerts before joining orchestra, however, the students' perceptions were specifically focused on the conversations they had with their teacher and with older orchestra students at these recruitment events. When asked what encouraged her to join, Corina from EES said, "All the other students from years past. They come and tell us about it." While Albert's (2005) findings suggest that adults recognize the actual recruitment events, such as elementary concerts, as being effective recruitment strategies, this study suggests that the students perceived the conversations they had at these events as being a meaningful part of their decision to join a string program.

Students perceived orchestra as a place of self-growth and considered demonstrating this growth an effective recruitment strategy. When asked how they would get more people to join

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

orchestra, students in the current study suggested recruitment events, such as having students try out instruments, explaining and demonstrating the capabilities of each instrument, and inviting prospective students to watch beginning through advanced ensemble rehearsals. Similarly, Vasil (2013) found that first-year band students from an urban, low socioeconomic charter school considered recruitment events, like instrument try out day, a factor in their recruitment. It is unclear if Vasil's participants joined orchestra simply because they got to try out the instruments or if they were intrigued to learn of the potential growth they could experience by joining an instrumental ensemble. It seems that both Vasil (2013) and Albert (2005) determined that recruitment strategies, such as concerts and instrument try out events, were worthwhile recruitment tools, while students, at least in the current study, perceived the conversations within the events to be the most memorable and persuasive aspects of their recruitment experience.

Students from EES perceived joining orchestra as a low-pressure decision and that this carefree environment encouraged their recruitment. For example, when asked what the benefits of orchestra were, Heather from EES, stated with certainty, "The benefits of orchestra are you are learning a new instrument, so you are getting a new talent. You can give up if you want to. You do not have to stay there forever." Heather went on to reiterate how easy it was to stay or leave orchestra multiple times during her interview. Looking at the existing literature, the idea of orchestra as a carefree commitment does not readily present itself. However, Hartley and Porter (2009) found that later starting years for orchestra enrollment predicted retention, which may relate to the perceptions of the students in the current study. Harley and Porter (2009) identified that programs whose students who began orchestra in sixth grade had the highest retention in seventh grade when compared to students who started earlier in elementary school. It is unclear whether these students were in elementary school getting ready to transition to middle school or

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

if they started orchestra in sixth grade at the middle school level. Students at EES were in sixth grade and preparing to move over to middle school for seventh grade. This may explain why some of them perceived orchestra as a carefree decision; it may have been something they could opt out of during their transition to middle school. In contrast, students at CLC, also in sixth grade, were already a part of the middle school so perhaps their perception was that orchestra was a more long-term commitment. It should be noted that students at CLC did not consider orchestra participation a low-pressure decision, possibly due to the fact that they were unable to change their orchestra enrollment as easily due to scheduling conflicts. Hartley and Porter's (2009) study seems to suggest that grade level predicts retention, however, the current study suggests that a break between starting year and middle school may allow students to reconsider their participation in orchestra.

Although multiple positive aspects of the orchestra programs were revealed throughout the study, students specifically considered verbal recruitment as the most prominent strategy used in their recruitment in a beginning string program. Adults in Albert's (2005) study considered exposure to large ensembles at elementary school concerts the most effective recruitment strategy, however, similar to the current study, these may have provided opportunities for teachers and older orchestra members to verbally recruit new students. Additionally, students were interested in joining orchestra because of the array of skills they could develop over time. It appears that adults, like Vasil and the participants in Albert's (2005) study perceive the recruitment events as effective, while students in the current study reveal that more specific experiences that coincided with these events, such as learning about self-growth, may be more important to students. Finally, students presented the idea that joining or leaving orchestra could be a carefree decision, which is not clearly represented in the existent literature.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Research Question 2: What retention strategies do students of low socioeconomic status value and perceive as affecting their decision to stay in a string program?

Students in the current study indicated that middle school class choices were a factor in their decision to remain in orchestra. For instance, when Michael from EES was considering the choices he would have to make when he reached middle school, he stated, “If [I had to choose] between sports and orchestra, I would probably do sports, but if I had a chance to do both, I would do both – probably.” Similarly, when surveying orchestra students who had quit after their first year ($N = 43$), Cook (2013) found that 75% had left orchestra in order to take another elective with 45% indicating that they had a sports conflict. Unlike the current study, Cook (2013) found that of those who left orchestra to take another elective, 80% left to join choir or band. During interviews, the current participants suggested other classes they and other peers might take in middle school, but none of the students indicated that they would switch to another music class. However, two students, one from each school, determined that they would either switch to a new class (non-music) or, if they stayed in orchestra, play a different instrument. Although participants in Cook’s (2013) study had already quit orchestra, the two studies confirm that, for these students, wanting to be in other classes plays a role in a student’s retention within beginning string programs.

Students indicated that different benefits and relationships motivated them to remain in orchestra. However, expanding our understanding of the literature, students did not perceive that teacher relationships played a role in their choice to stay even though their teachers took actions that seemed to improve student retention. Looking at teacher mentoring, Shields (2001) found that sixth grade music students who were deemed at-risk wanted their music teachers to take a personal interest in each student as an individual and wanted this concern to carry across to other

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

classes. Additionally, Fitzpatrick (2011) found that teachers of urban students believed that “understand[ing] the life that students live outside the classroom” was significantly more important for urban teachers than for suburban teachers (p. 239, $r = .30$). Unlike the participants in these studies, when asked about retention, the students in the current study did not perceive having a relationship with their teacher as necessary to continue in orchestra. For some of the students it actually appears that their teachers may have made them want to discontinue participating in orchestra. When asked to tell me about her teacher, Rose from CLC stated, “She's a good orchestra teacher. Sometimes she's nice, but I'm not going to say she's mean, but she can get you to a place where you don't want to do it any more.” Further, when asked why they might continue in orchestra, none of the students’ responses included discussions of their teachers. However, when asked to identify something that definitely made him want to join orchestra, Bryan from EES stated, “The number one person who changed my mind to join orchestra was Ms. Brook.” It seems that if teachers do play a role in retention, it is a highly individualized and uniquely perceived by each student.

Although students did not indicate that their teachers played a role in their retention, they did perceive having friends in orchestra as a reason for continuing in a string program. Several students indicated that their friends grew throughout their time in orchestra. When asked to explain how her relationships with her classmates was different now compared to the start of orchestra, Heather from EES stated:

We're pretty good friends. I got used to them, they got used to me. Most of the people I wasn't friends with are the people I share stands with and then since we are always next to each other, we still had to get along. Now we have fun. Also the class has become way looser with each other.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Likewise, students from CLC explained that they made friends while in orchestra. When asked how she makes friends in orchestra, Maria from CLC explained, “You can, like, sometimes when you forget your book and stuff, like, then you can share with somebody else and you can interact with them.” Vasil’s (2013) interviews with fourth grade beginning instrumental students from urban, low socioeconomic schools also revealed that students considered developing friendships throughout their time in orchestra as a reason for their retention. Vasil reported that every student ($N = 6$) in the study shared this perception. Both of these studies suggest that peer relationships play a role in retention within beginning instrumental programs.

Looking at extrinsic motivators, students indicated that career and scholarship opportunities were reasons that their peers might continue in orchestra. However, they did not consider this to be true for themselves. When examining the effects of professional orchestra partnerships with elementary schools, Abeles (2004) found that students who received instruction focused on increasing student musical interest chose musician as a career choice more often than students who did not receive the instruction. Additionally, older students who had participated in the partnership prior to the study attributed their participation to the professional orchestra partnerships (Abeles, 2004). Although students in the current study did not participate in a professional orchestra partnership, it seems that students are aware of the possibility of pursuing music as a potential career option even though they may not consider it a retention strategy for themselves.

Students in the current study held perceptions that are not clearly represented in the extant research as well as those that contrast existing studies. Seven students perceived the enjoyment of orchestra and of learning new skills as a reason that encouraged their retention in a beginning low SES string program. Heather from EES described both her and her peers’

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

perceptions of orchestra, stating, “A lot of people say they enjoy it.” However, staying in orchestra for the pure reason of enjoying your time there and the skills you develop does not seem to be immediately present in the existing literature.

Additionally, three of the current participants perceived tangible awards and incentives as encouraging their retention in orchestra. Corina of EES was adamant that chocolate encouraged her and her peers’ retention, stating, “That is mostly why people are in it, again, for the second year – for the Symphony bar.” In contrast, Vasil (2013) specifically examined extrinsic motivators of instrumental sixth grade students ($N = 6$) and found that family, environment, social factors, and finances, not tangible incentives, were perceived by the students as affecting their decision to continue in a band or orchestra program. Since students in the current study perceived multiple factors as affecting their retention, it seems that tangible awards and incentives may play a meaningful role for some students.

Overall, students perceived that there were many aspects of string programs and schools that had an impact on their retention. Aligned with the current study, Cook (2013) determined that students in her study had left orchestra to join other middle school electives, including band and choir. The contrast between the current study and Fitzpatrick’s (2011) findings indicate that teachers and students perceive the teacher’s role in retention differently. Like previous research (Vasil, 2013), students in the current study enjoyed spending time with friends in class and indicated that friendships were built within their orchestra classes. Additionally, it is unclear if earning scholarships or pursuing a career in music encourages student retention although students perceive that these opportunities exist (Abeles, 2004). Students additionally presented retention strategies that were not found or in contrast to the existing literature (Vasil, 2013).

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Research Question 3: What perceptions do beginning string students of low socioeconomic status have of their instructor?

Students had perceptions of their teachers that included viewing them as strict, encouraging, and discouraging; however, these perceptions were communicated differently than the way teachers in previous research involving retention had described themselves (Fitzpatrick, 2011). For instance, when asked to describe what her peers would say about her teacher, Maria from CLC stated, “I think they would say she's kinda strict about how to do stuff.” Maria also understood the benefit of having a strict teacher stating, “Because when she is strict it actually helps us be better at it because...if she wasn't strict, they'll [peers] just be lousy in their music and it will be messy.” When interviewing successful teachers from urban schools, Fitzpatrick (2011) found that the teachers believed they needed to hold their students to high expectations, such as insisting that their students work towards All-State contests and that small ensembles stay after school to rehearse. Teachers in this study believed that it was their responsibility to improve their students' lives in both musical and personal ways (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 242). Like Fitzpatrick (2011), in order to support student success, the teachers in the current study may have been holding their students to high expectations and the students perceived this as strict. However, it is also possible that the students perceived something differently than what was being described by the teachers in Fitzpatrick's (2011) study. Although the teachers in the current study also worked in low socioeconomic, urban schools, qualitative research is not generalizable.

Also related to recruitment and retention, the students at both schools indicated that their teachers took actions that encouraged their participation, however the teachers identified different actions they took in order to be responsive to the communities' needs. The students did

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

not perceive these strategies. When asked to explain why she thought her teacher was the best, Jessica from CLC stated, “Because, like, she encourages you. She's like, ‘C'mon, c'mon. You can do it.’” Michael from EES also indicated that his teacher’s actions encouraged him and his peers to participate in orchestra, stating, “Like in the morning, some of us come in and practice before school and she'll, like if we have problems playing, then she will come over and help us with it.” In contrast, Ms. Glaw at CLC explained that there were certain actions she took because she understood what her community needed in order for the program to be successful. For instance, on concert days Ms. Glaw has the students stay after school to warm up for the concert and organizes dinner for them. Since many of the students’ families work long hours, students either ride home with their families or take the transportation Ms. Glaw provides. Ms. Glaw believes that providing transportation and a meal is the only way some of these students will ever be able to participate in a concert. At EES, Ms. Brook sends parent letters home in both English and Spanish and holds multiple orchestra sign-up nights to accommodate parents’ work schedules, however the students did not mention that this was meaningful to them.

Similarly, the teachers interviewed in Fitzpatrick’s (2011) study believed that it was necessary to recognize the specific needs of a community and to make any accommodations in order to support student success. For example, the teachers allowed students who could not fit music class into their schedule to rehearse after school and still perform at the concerts. Additionally, teachers in Fitzpatrick’s (2011) study did not force their students to take their instruments home, recognizing that in a gang-filled neighborhood, an instrument would quickly go missing. Results of the current study support that although students do not perceive their teachers as responding to the communities’ needs, these actions may play a role in supporting the recruitment and retention of beginning orchestra students. It is possible that if I had asked the

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

students about these specific aspects of their music program that they would indicate that these accommodations supported their community needs and continuation in orchestra.

In the current study, some students indicated that they were close with their teachers while others distanced themselves from any connections with their teachers. Students at CLC indicated that they talked to their teacher outside of class about non-music related topics. Jessica described a time when she spoke with her teacher, stating:

We have soccer games, and she sometimes goes to them. And last year we had volleyball games and she went to some of them and we talked to her about it... I was happy because she was there supporting us. Every day, actually, she is over there [in the hallway] and we actually all go and talk to her and just say "Hey" and "How's your morning been?"

In contrast, students at EES shared a common perception that they did not talk to their teacher outside of class or about non-music related topics. One student described this, stating, "No, everyone just talks about music or just, we really don't ask questions unless it's about the instrument." In previous research, Shields (2001) interviewed at-risk youth who had received mentoring in conjunction with self-selected music instruction and found that students believed teachers should get to know their students as individuals and that this knowledge should encompass their lives both inside and outside of music class. The current study found that some students joined and stayed in an orchestra program regardless of having an out-of-class, non-music relationship with their teacher. These findings suggest that recruitment and retention are not necessarily dependent on having teacher interactions that occur both in and out of orchestra. It should be noted that students in Shields' (2001) study were inherently different than students in the current study in that Shields' participants were deemed at-risk based on academic, social skills, and behavioral characteristics and might place greater value on teacher mentoring.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

To summarize, students may perceive their teachers' high expectations as strict, but do not solely view this as a negative quality. Although teachers appear to be meeting the needs of their students' communities (Fitzpatrick, 2011), students in the current study do not seem to consider their teacher's actions as supporting their recruitment and retention. Additionally, understanding students individually, both within and outside of music class, does not seem to play a role in the recruitment and retention of all students. This is in contrast to Shields (2001) who found that having a mentoring relationship with their teacher supported at-risk music students.

Research Question 4: What role do community members, including teachers, parents, administration, and professional musicians, play in the recruitment and retention of beginning string students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

Participants perceived teacher-facilitated events as the most prevailing factor in their exposure to orchestra prior to joining a string program. For seven of the students, five from EES, getting to attend a professional orchestra concert encouraged the students to join or stay in a string program. Similarly, Abeles (2004) found that students who attended professional orchestra concerts or who, in addition, received classroom instruction led by professional musicians were more likely to identify "musician" as a potential career option. Like the current study, Abeles (2004) found that seeing any level of orchestra, professional or beginning, may be the first exposure a student has to orchestra. Five students in this study were first exposed to a professional orchestra due to their teacher taking them on a field trip. Students reported that the concerts were the first time they had learned what an orchestra was and that it encouraged them to join and stay in a beginning string program. For example, when asked when was the first time she learned what an orchestra was, Heather from EES stated, "Well, I first learned what an

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

orchestra was in fourth grade when Ms. Brook took us all on a field trip to the orchestra”

Describing the same trip, Corina from EES explained, “It [the concert] was fun. They actually had opera singers singing it with the music.” Although Abeles (2004) focused on the relationship between attending orchestra concerts and careers, the current study suggests that exposing students to professional ensembles may support their recruitment into and retention in beginning string programs.

In contrast, Vasil (2013) found that 83% of the students in her study considered instrument try-out night a factor in their decision to join the middle school ensemble. In her study, the music teacher had instruments for third grade students to try and then allowed them to decide if they wanted to enroll in an instrumental music class for the following year. At CLC, the teacher described that students had been playing string instruments as a part of their elementary general music curriculum and that they were already familiar with what instrument they wanted to play by the time they reached sixth grade. The teacher explained that the CLC version of instrument try-out night happens after the students are enrolled in orchestra during the first few days of class. This is when students actually rank and receive their instrument choice. Students from CLC indicated that playing violin in their elementary music class, not an instrument try-out night, encouraged them to join the sixth grade orchestra. At EES, students have an instrument try-out day in fourth grade during their general music class after their trip to the symphony. It is interesting that in the current study only one student mentioned a day where they tried out and selected an instrument and, further, that the student did not indicate that trying out an instrument encouraged him to join the orchestra. This study suggests that an instrument try-out night was not as memorable to the EES and CLC students as those in who participated in Vasil’s (2013) study. It is possible that instrument try-out night made an impression on the students in Vasil’s

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

(2013) study since it appeared that may have been their first exposure to band and orchestra instruments. However, this is not the case for students at EES and CLC.

Also related to recruitment, four students perceived observing older students performing at school concerts as a factor in their decision to join a beginning string program. For example, Bryan from EES stated, “It wasn't only the events. What also inspired me to do it [orchestra] is seeing the other fifth and sixth graders who played.” In the same way, Albert (2005) found that hosting student orchestra concerts for younger elementary students was considered a factor in student recruitment by the parents, teachers, and administrators who were interviewed. Looking at the current study in conjunction with Albert’s (2005) study aligns the student and adult perspective and supports the idea that elementary exposure through student performances at school may be an effective way of recruiting students into beginning string programs.

Although the schools used some culturally relevant music, the students did not indicate that it had an impact on their recruitment and retention. At EES, the annual Multicultural day displayed music that celebrated the Spanish heritage of the school population, which may have interested the students and community in supporting the orchestra. However, when directly asked to tell me more about the music they played in class, students did not indicate that the type of music they played encouraged them to join or stay in their orchestra. For example, when describing the music they played, Michael from EES stated, “Mostly songs from other countries, mostly from Spain and Mexico. There are some songs that we play from Beethoven. That's pretty much it.” Students’ responses lacked any indication that the music, even if it was culturally relevant, had any role in their decision to join or stay in orchestra. In contrast, Albert (2005) found that using culturally relevant music during concerts was considered a reason for students and parents to gain interest in the orchestra program. Teachers, principals, and parents in

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Albert's (2005) study considered using music that represented the community at recruitment concerts aided and influenced the recruitment and retention of students. It is unclear if culturally relevant music was used with the sixth graders at CLC, however, when I was waiting to observe the sixth grade class, I noticed that the seventh grade students were preparing an arrangement of a Lady Gaga song. Their teacher explained that the student who is the highest seller in the school fundraiser is always given the opportunity to select a song for their class to perform at the spring concert. Because they share concerts, all grade levels of the orchestra students at CLC are aware of the music selections they each get to play. Although the seventh graders received the opportunity to play a song that was culturally relevant to at least one student, there was no indication that culturally relevant music was used with the CLC sixth grade students. In opposition to Albert (2005), culturally relevant music does not seem to be a factor in recruitment or retention at EES or CLC.

Examining the role of family in recruitment and retention, Vasil (2013) found that students in her study identified strong family participation with music prior to instruction. In contrast, although students in this study only reported positive family support of their orchestra participation, just two students' responses indicated that having a family member playing an instrument inspired them to join orchestra. Similar to Vasil (2013), the two students acknowledged that their siblings played instruments and that this encouraged them to join the orchestra. Jessica from EES said she saw her older sister practicing her cello at home and was eager for her own chance to try out the instrument. Sophia from CLC attended her brother's band concerts that were held side-by-side with the orchestra and quickly developed an interest in playing a string instrument. For some students, having a family member previously participate in music instruction encouraged them to join a beginning orchestra class.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

However, it is unclear if positive family support of orchestra enrollment is integral to encouraging all students to participate in orchestra. Cook (2013) found that although students ($N = 43$) eventually quit orchestra, 45% of their parents had encouraged them to be in orchestra while 80% of parents were proud of what their student did while in orchestra. Similarly, the current study found that regardless of whether students indicated that they would continue in orchestra or not, their responses indicated that their parents only had neutral or positive things to say about their child's participation in orchestra. For example, Alison from EES, who was unsure if she would continue orchestra in middle school, replayed the conversation she had with her mother about wanting to join the string program. Alison reenacted the dialogue, stating:

“Hey, Mom! She [teacher] said we can sign up for orchestra this year.” And [my mom] was like, “Oh, yeah! Orchestra! What are you going to play?” And I was like, “You are letting me do it?” She was like, “Yeah!”

In the same way, when asked what her parents thought about orchestra, Corina from EES, who was also on the fence about continuing in orchestra, stated, “They think it's good because they never played sports or instruments so they think it's good that I'm playing an instrument and probably want me to play an instrument next year.” Similar to Cook (2013), although families in this study were supportive of their students' participation in orchestra, ultimately the decision to remain in a string program seems to be primarily dependent on other factors.

Looking at the role of administration, five students, three from CLC, spoke about their principal during the interview and none of them considered their principals as having any influence on their recruitment and retention into a string program. For instance, when asked what her principal thinks of the orchestra, Jessica from EES stated, “I don't know because I don't talk to him.” Similarly, when interviewing administrators, Albert (2005) found that principals held

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

perceptions of what encouraged students to join and stay in beginning string programs, but that they did not consider themselves to have an impact on recruitment or retention. Although principals may be aware of their school orchestra's recruitment and retention strategies, the students' perceptions revealed that they do not perceive their principals as having a role in their recruitment or retention, which aligns with previous literature (Albert, 2005).

In sum, aspects of the extant literature confirmed by the current study include the role of exposure through teacher-facilitated professional orchestra trips (Abeles, 2004) and elementary school concerts given by older students (Albert, 2005). In contrast to previous research, instrument try-out night was not a prominent factor in recruitment (Vasil, 2013), there was a lack of evidence suggesting that culturally relevant repertoire aides recruitment or retention (Albert, 2005), and although family support was present in the student interviews, it appears that this did not determine the recruitment and retention of students (Cook, 2013; Vasil, 2013). In alignment with previous research, students do not perceive administrators as playing a role in their recruitment or retention into beginning low socioeconomic string programs (Albert, 2005).

Limitations of the Current Study

In light of readers' specific contexts, the findings only represent what has been found in the school programs examined in the current study and should not be considered generalizable. Additionally, it is possible that the study did not explore all of the factors related to recruitment and retention. For example, when given the opportunity to express what they perceived as most meaningful to them, students did not indicate that the type of music they performed encouraged or discouraged their decision to join or stay within a string program. However, had the students been asked directly about the repertoire or their parent's involvement, details regarding these factors and their impact on recruitment or retention may have been revealed.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

A further limitation is that students were only interviewed for fifteen minutes, which may have limited the opportunity to fully discuss their perceptions of why they decided to join and stay in a beginning orchestra class. Additional interview time or more interviews with each student may have allowed for a more holistic view of the programs to emerge.

Also looking at limitations, since individual data indicating race, gender, and age were not collected from the students due to privacy concerns, students in the current study may not have been fully representative of the broader population. Although the researcher conducted interviews and observations at each school, recruitment events or elementary concerts described by the students could have been attended in order to corroborate student interview responses and to inform the research findings.

Implications for Teaching Practice

This study may have implications for how teachers approach recruitment events, incorporate current members, and consider their interactions with students. Teachers may find that by demonstrating that orchestra consists of new skills that promote self-growth, students may be more likely to remain within a string program. Current participants indicated that they enjoyed that orchestra provided instruction on a progression of skills that lead to self-growth. Students additionally perceived wanting to have new experiences as one of the reasons they would potentially choose a different class over orchestra in the future. Students need to see that orchestra skills develop towards new things and perhaps by considering orchestra as full of fresh, new opportunities, students will choose to stay. To do this, teachers might frame their recruitment events to show skill acquirement over time. One way to present this would be to display beginning through advanced ensembles and to talk about the years of instruction it took each group to obtain these advanced skills. Additionally, teachers could try using language that

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

emphasizes the abundance of new skills that can be gained as students become better players. Specifically demonstrating the use of vibrato and unique bowing techniques, such as *col legno*, and discussing how string instruction can lead to these skills may entice students and convince them that orchestra is a place where there are many new experiences and skills to achieve. Including a professional musician or collegiate level performance at recruitment events may encourage students to see orchestra as an activity that remains exciting beyond their current beginning string program. With regards to retention, similar in-class experiences after students have joined orchestra could further inform students of the advanced skills and long-term options that string playing can provide. Teachers might consider exposing their students to advanced playing techniques and performance opportunities by talking to their students about and demonstrating more advanced skills. Introducing students to musical opportunities at the collegiate and professional levels may allow students to see the progression of new skills that can be experienced through their long-term orchestra participation.

Additionally, teachers might consider how they could begin talking to prospective students at recruitment events such as elementary concerts and instrument try-out nights. Teachers should continue hosting recruitment events, however, the current study suggests that having the opportunity to talk with teachers or older orchestra members at these events is most meaningful to the students. Students in the current study indicated that speaking with their teacher and older orchestra members in one-on-one settings was a meaningful part of their recruitment and retention. Teachers might consider that these one-on-one conversations and being personally invested in each student can be perceived by students as significant and lead to their recruitment and retention. To facilitate this, teachers might consider having a meet and greet portion of the recruitment event where potential students partner up with current members

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

and have the opportunity to ask questions and converse. Teachers might also find that utilizing older orchestra members as ambassadors to younger students may encourage greater retention within string programs. Through sharing their personal experience and working to convince other students to pursue orchestra, older orchestra members may have to recall their own reasons for joining orchestra and reinforce their reasons for staying, which may allow them to develop pride and ownership for their ensemble.

This is all leading to the idea that teachers need to further develop the lines of communication with their students. In this study, students valued the individualized conversations they had with their teachers, had viable ideas regarding recruitment strategies, and often had different views of recruitment and retention than their teachers. By including their students' voices, teachers may find that they are getting new ideas and support in addition to demonstrating their commitment to including students in matters of their own learning. The current study seems to suggest that recruitment and retention are not necessarily dependent upon teaching style or program characteristics, rather that those who are successful at recruiting and retaining students in beginning string programs learn from their students in order to identify what works in their particular school. Students could be included in recruitment and retention conversations as well as having time to communicate individually with their teachers because it is meaningful to the students, they have creative ideas to improve the classroom, and it seems logical that their voices be fully heard in matters of their own learning.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of the current study generate further questions regarding the recruitment and retention of students within beginning string music programs in low socioeconomic communities. Replications of the current research may allow researchers to gain a more diverse

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

picture of students' perceptions of recruitment and retention strategies across the United States. Asking more in-depth interview questions surrounding the role of family and musical repertoire would allow researchers to better understand the ways family connections and musical selections might support or hinder recruitment and retention efforts. Additionally, more interviews with low SES students from both urban and rural communities that represent a variety of ages and demographics would improve the presence of students' voices in the extant literature.

Further qualitative studies could allow the music education field to have a broader understanding of recruitment and retention strategies already in use. Research that closely examines the role of one-on-one conversations at elementary exposure concerts and instrument try-out events may allow educators to recruit and retain more efficiently. Investigating current programs that display effective student-to-teacher communication techniques could assist other teachers in building relationships with their students by allowing them to learn how to better connect with their own students. Additionally, interviewing students more in-depth about their interests in pursuing "new" activities might allow teachers to better understand how to keep potentially life-long activities, like orchestra, intriguing and fresh to young musicians.

Conducting quantitative research including surveys would assist educators in understanding the impact of certain recruitment and retention strategies. Identifying the retention rates of programs that start in middle school as opposed to programs that start in elementary school would allow researchers to better understand the role that transitions between school campuses play in the retention of orchestra students. Quantitative studies that determine the frequency and effectiveness of recruitment events, including those used by programs that have high recruitment and retention rates, would help to determine if recruitment events, such as elementary exposure concerts or professional orchestra trips, have any significant bearing on

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

student recruitment and retention. Conducting any of the outlined suggestions for future research with other age levels and music ensembles, such as band and choir, may reveal ways in which all students can be recruited and retained within music programs.

Conclusion

The investigation of recruitment and retention strategies of beginning string programs is necessary to develop effective ways of encouraging students to join and stay in orchestra. Since research has shown that participation in music ensembles has benefits for students (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Kraus et al., 2014), promoting student participation is crucial to allowing all students access to high quality learning opportunities. Students had mixed perceptions of their teachers and interacted with their teacher differently depending on which school they attended. Students identified that the teacher-facilitated events were the most prevalent ways they were exposed to orchestra prior to their recruitment into a string program. Students perceived verbal recruitment, orchestra as a place for self-growth, and orchestra as being a low-pressure decision as encouraging them to join a beginning string program. Students perceived their retention being influenced by many aspects of the program that they enjoyed, including learning to play an instrument and spending time with their friends. Middle school class choices played a role in whether or not students continued in orchestra and was a factor do to the students' interest in pursuing new opportunities.

If we as educators are committed to providing high quality music instruction to all students, then it is our responsibility to identify the ways to get them in class and to keep them there. Students seem to already recognize the importance of music in their lives. To close, I would like to leave you with the voices of the students from this study.

Heather: It was an instant thing for me to sign up, [I] wanted to try something new,

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

and I did.

Sophia: I like her classroom a lot. I like playing the instruments here. I don't want to leave.

Bryan: Because music is like a pal, a buddy.

Michael: Being able to play with my friends and talk with each other and make each other better. That's probably my favorite.

Corina: Yes. I want to try all different instruments.

Maria: I mostly entered orchestra because I want to become a musician when I grow up and I want to learn how to play many instruments.

Alison: Even if you are not all buddy-buddy, or whatever, you will become buddy-buddy in the orchestra room.

Josiah: Because when we play [our principal] smiles.

Jessica: Because it's so fun and over the years I've learned so many stuff so I don't want to just quit and put that down.

Rose: I looked at [the violin] and was like, "What am I supposed to do with this?"
And then that's when she taught me how to play.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

REFERENCES

- Abeles, H. (2004). The effect of three orchestra/school partnerships on students' interest in instrumental music instruction. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 52*, 248-263.
doi: 10.2307/3345858
- Abril, C.R. (2009). Responding to culture in the instrumental music programme: A teacher's journey. *Music Education Research, 11*(1), 77-91.
doi: 10.1080/14613800802699176
- Albert, D. J. (2005). *Instrumental music teachers' strategies to recruit and retain band students in low socioeconomic school districts* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest. (UMI 1429750)
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S.K. (1997). *Qualitative research for education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bornstein, M. H., & Bradley, R. H. (2003). *Socioeconomic status, parenting, and child development*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bucklin, L. (2004). Indiana directory of music teachers. Available from the, *School of Music, Indiana University, 1201*, 47405-7006.
- Cook, B. V. (2013). *An examination of factors contributing to orchestra students' attrition in transition from elementary to middle school* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Costa-Giomi, E. (2004). Effects of three years of piano instruction on children's academic achievement, school performance and self-esteem. *Psychology of Music, 32*(2), 139-152.
doi: 10.1177/030573560401491
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five*

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

approaches (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Elpus, K., & Abril, C. R. (2011). High school music ensemble students in the united states a demographic profile. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *59*, 128-145. doi: 10.1177/0022429411405207

Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2006). The effect of instrumental music participation and socioeconomic status on Ohio fourth-, sixth-, and ninth-grade proficiency test performance. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *54*, 73-84. doi: 10.1177/002242940605400106

Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2011). A mixed methods portrait of urban instrumental music teaching. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *59*, 229-256. doi: 10.1177/0022429411414912

Habibi, A., Beatriz, I., Crimi, K., Metke, M., Kaplan, J. T., Joshi, A. A., . . . Damasio, H. (2014). An equal start: absence of group differences in cognitive, social, and neural measures prior to music or sports training in children. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *8*(690), 1-11. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2014.00690

Hartley, L. A. & Porter, A. M. (2009). The influence of beginning instructional grade on string student enrollment, retention, and music performance. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *56*, 370-384. doi: 10.1177/0022429408329134

Klinedinst, R. E. (1991). Predicting performance achievement and retention of fifth-grade instrumental students. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *39*. 225-238. doi: 10.2307/3344722

Kraus, N., Slater, J., Thompson, E. C., Hornickel, J., Strait, D. L., Nicol, T., & White-Schwoch, T. (2014). Auditory learning through active engagement with sound:

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Biological impact of community music lessons in at-risk children. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 8(351), 1-13. doi: 10.3389/fnins.2014.00351
- Maxwell, J.A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd Ed., Vol. 41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education: Revised and expanded from "case study research in education"* (2nd Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mixon, K. (2005). Building your instrumental music program in an urban school. *Music Educators Journal*, 91(3), 15-23. Retrieved from <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1108735?accountid=4485>
- Recruitment. (2015). In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary* (11th ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recruitment>
- Retention. (2015). In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary* (11th ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/retention>
- Rickard, N. S., Appleman, P., James, R., Murphy, F., Gill, A., & Bambrick, C. (2012). Orchestrating life skills: The effect of increased school-based music classes on children's social competence and self-esteem. *International Journal of Education*, 31(3), 1-18. doi: 10.1177/0255761411434824
- Sandene, B. A. (1994). Going beyond recruiting: Fighting attrition. *Music Educators Journal*, 81(1), 32-61.
- Schmidt, C. P., Baker, R., Hayes, B., & Kwan, E. (2006). A descriptive study of public school music programs in Indiana. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music*

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Education, 169, 25-37. Retrieved from

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/40319308>.

- Shields, C. (2001). Music education and mentoring as intervention for at-risk urban adolescents: Their self-perceptions, opinions, and attitudes. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 49, 273-286.2. doi: 10.2307/3345712
- Smith, C. M. (1997). Access to string instruction in American public schools. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 45, 650-662. doi: 10.2307/3345429
- United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *National school lunch program (NSLP)*. Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>
- Vasil, M. (2013). Extrinsic motivators affecting fourth-grade students' interest and enrollment in an instrumental music program. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 32(1), 74-82. doi: 10.1177/8755123313502345

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

APPENDIX A: Interview questions for students

- 1) When do you first learn what an orchestra was?
 - a. When did you first hear about this orchestra?
 - b. What did you know about this orchestra when you were in elementary school?
 - c. When did you decide to join orchestra?
 - d. Why did you decide to join orchestra?
 - e. Who or what encouraged you to join orchestra?
 - f. Did anything make you not want to join orchestra?
- 2) I see all these kids here in this class. How did they get here?
 - a. Tell me how the other students ended up in orchestra.
- 3) If you were in charge of getting more kids to join orchestra, what would you do?
 - a. What would you tell them?
 - b. When would you do this?
 - c. If your teacher wanted more kids to join this class, what would they do to get more kids in orchestra?
- 4) If you got to choose, would you stay in orchestra next year?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. Why do you think other kids would stay in orchestra?
 - c. Why do you think some kids would not stay in orchestra?
- 5) How would you convince a friend to stay in orchestra?
- 6) If you had a friend who played a string instrument but who wasn't in orchestra, how would they get involved with orchestra?
- 7) Tell me about your teacher.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- a. Can you tell me something you recently learned in orchestra and how your teacher taught it?
 - b. Can you tell me about a time when you or someone else was having trouble with some part of the music and what your teacher did?
- 8) Tell me about when you talk to your teacher and what you talk about.
- a. Do you ever talk to your teacher about things outside of orchestra? If so, what do you talk about?
 - b. Do other students ever talk to the teacher about things outside of orchestra? If so, what do they talk about?
- 9) If I were to ask other students about your teacher what would they say?
- 10) What does your family think about the orchestra?
- a. What does your family think about the concerts?
 - b. Tell me about your practice time.
 - c. What would your family say about your practice time?
- 11) What does your principal think about the orchestra?
- a. What would they say if I asked them to tell me about the orchestra?
- 12) What do other kids who are not in orchestra think of orchestra?
- a. What would they say if I asked them to tell me about the orchestra?
- 13) Tell me about any orchestra experience you have had outside of school.
- a. Do you take private lessons? If private lessons were offered through school, would you take them?
 - b. Do you know of any other orchestras in town?
 - c. Have you ever seen a professional orchestra?

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- d. Have your ever heard any recordings of an orchestra?
- e. Do you know any adults who play instruments? If so, what do they do?
- f. When do you hear or make music outside of school?
- g. When do you see other people make music outside of school?