

The Socialization of Members of a String Quartet towards their Roles as Musicians

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of others (influential persons) in the socialization process of members of an amateur string quartet. The questions were: who encouraged subjects to become involved with music during pre-college years, college, and post-college years; and, how was the process different from the experiences of music educators in earlier studies? These questions have been tested earlier in a large-scale survey and in a case study setting (1994 and 2007). This study (2008) was done on 4 amateur musicians who played in a string quartet. Using similar research questions for the role of musician from previous investigations, this study will show the part that others played in the developing social roles of the subjects as musicians. According to Regelski (2007), the significance of the amateur musician in musicking deserves the attention of music educators. Often the only difference in an amateur and a professional musician is that the latter is paid (Booth, 1999). In this study, taped interviews were used to gather information about how the beginning and amateur musicians' concept of self has changed over nearly two decades of performing with a string quartet. Who encouraged them to keep playing? What discouragements did they face from others? What factors, such as being paid, and audience response have contributed to their inner concepts of self as a successful musician?

Introduction

The life-long process of finding our niche within groups of people is known as socialization (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Brim, 1966). It requires common knowledge and skills to function within a group. The earliest and most fundamental impact upon the individual from this process comes during the primary phase (Cooley, 1922) when family members as significant others (Denzin, 1977) provide the individual with a framework from which their later development is analyzed (Brim, 1966). The secondary phase begins as schooling and later training for a specific occupation are added, but the influence from earlier years is maintained and continued (Berger and Luckman, 1966).

In the field of music education, role perception and the ambivalent nature of occupational identity as both musicians and educators has been studied across life cycles (Bladh, 2003; Clinton, 1991; Cox, 1994; Cox, 2007; Harris, 1991; Isbell, 2008; L’Roy, 1984; Roberts, 1990; Roberts, 1993a). From this research, there is evidence that the role of musician develops much earlier than that of educator or teacher (Cox, 1994; Cox, 2007). Family members, especially mothers, were most often mentioned by subjects as important in the process.

Previous Research

In 1994 (Cox), Arkansas music educators were studied. The 310 subjects were asked who influenced or encouraged them towards their roles as musicians and their roles as teachers during childhood, adolescents, college years, and adulthood. Fifty follow-up interviews were conducted from among the 310 subjects. Results showed that parents, especially mothers, were most likely to have influenced subjects to become involved with music and continue during their life cycles. The study showed that there was much support for the role of

musician, early on, in subject's lives, but not for the role of teacher. The development of the role of teacher came later. Earlier studies showed that college music education students consider themselves musicians, but rarely describe themselves as teachers (L'Roy, 1983; Roberts, 1993a).

A qualitative, follow-up study was done in 2007 (Cox, 2007) in which three subjects were asked similar questions to those used in the 1994 interviews (Cox, 1994). Who influenced subjects towards their roles as musicians across their life-cycle, and who was influential towards their roles as teacher? This study showed much of the same results as the first study, that parents and grandparents were key players in the socialization process of subjects towards their roles as musicians. The role of teacher developed much later. The 2007 study differed from the earlier one (Cox, 1994) in that subjects were able to address the *negative* impact that some important people, especially ensemble directors, colleagues, and college level applied music instructors may have had. The more detailed and in depth, face-to-face interviews seemed to make the difference.

What about musicians who are actively engaged as 'amateurs?' Do they have different patterns of socialization? Can they name people in their life cycles who influenced them to play or sing? Is there evidence that the impact of *self* as significant other or influential person is a strong factor?

Purpose Statement and Definitions

The present study is an auto-ethnographic approach in that my own reflections, as a member of the group, are a part of the study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of others (influential persons) in the socialization process of members of an amateur string quartet. The questions were: who encouraged subjects to become involved with music

during pre-college years, college, and post-college years; and, how was the process different from the experiences of music educators in earlier studies?

The Searcy String Quartet actually has 5 members who play regularly. Only four (two violins, a viola, and a cello) are engaged for each job, but it has been necessary to expand the list of ‘substitutes’ to try to fulfill the growing number of requests and work within each player’s schedules. Hence, there are four subjects in the study besides my own reflections on the data.

Defining the term ‘amateur’ may be a challenge as it relates to this study. A Thorndike-Barnhart dictionary (Barnhart, 1969) defines amateur as ‘a person who does something for pleasure, not for money or as a profession.’ Regelski (2007) said that using the term, *amateur*, to suggest a type of student performance that is less than perfect is judgmental. He further states that whatever instigated the ‘admiration’ of music should be nurtured so that it makes ‘life seem incomplete without music.’ Subjects in this study began playing their instruments as ‘amateurs’ by this definition. Playing for pay came years after career decisions had been made, and the money associated with their services was never seen as a major source of income. All of the subjects referred to the pleasure that they derive from the participation in the Searcy String Quartet, and it was for that benefit that they began their association. Thus, the other four subjects, excluding myself, are defined as ‘amateur.’

Influential persons are those in the life cycles of subjects who have had an impact on career choices and decisions. In previous studies (Cox, 1994; Cox, 2007) this term and *significant others* have been used. The term, *influential persons*, was chosen for this study to facilitate communication with the subjects.

Background Information

In 1992, we formed the Searcy String Quartet. The invitation was extended during a rehearsal for the Homecoming Musical production. We were in the orchestra pit when I invited three of the community members to join me for a weekday rehearsal to organize the ensemble. They eagerly accepted at the time, but a couple of them told me later how they wondered why I would ask them, because they felt inadequate, but also complimented. In 1998, another, more experienced violinist and public school science teacher moved to the community and began playing, regularly, with the group.

You might question my judgment. Why invite two players who qualified as beginners and another who only played on occasions to join me in this project? Wouldn't it be easier to bring in musicians, already trained, from Little Rock or Memphis when we needed them?

My plan was to introduce a wedding repertoire based upon my own arrangements of traditional music and a collection of easier love songs, plus other reception-appropriate pieces that, with some work, the group could play. At the time, we were receiving one or two inquiries each year about a string quartet for weddings. Most of the calls came at times when college students were not in town or were engaged in final exams. The resident musicians were more likely to be available for such. If we 'imported' musicians from Little Rock or Memphis, money was always an issue and rehearsal time was never adequate.

Although I began working with the original three members of the quartet as we prepared music for weddings and receptions, there were other purposes in my mind. We were located in rural Arkansas and I wanted to do my part to encourage others to play stringed instruments. My ultimate goal was to help generate enough interest so that a string curriculum could be added to the music programs in the Searcy Public Schools. The Searcy String Quartet was 1 of the community projects that I initiated to work towards the goal. Our first playing experiences included many receptions and ceremonies on the university campus

for which we received no pay. When we played for our first wedding and the reception that followed, we were paid for our services and that practice has continued.

Interviews

Initially, the interviews done with the subjects in this study were taped in a group setting. The quartet travels to and from 'gigs' in one vehicle, and so the tape recorder was passed from one subject to another during the trips. Questions from previous studies (Cox, 1994; Cox, 2007) were modified to fit the subjects in that the role of teacher was not addressed. Subjects were asked to describe how they became involved with music and playing their instrument. They were asked who helped them get started and offered support for playing or singing during childhood and adolescence; college years, and adulthood.

As the results of the first interviews were analyzed, other questions were formulated for clarification and to complete the data. It was necessary to individualize these questions because each subject expressed unique patterns of influence during the earlier sessions. The later questions and responses were done *via* e-mail.

Results

The first subject was given the name, Cynthia, for this study. Cynthia is married to a band director. Cynthia's major field of study is biology and she teaches science courses at Searcy High School. As a teenager, Cynthia qualified to play violin in the Texas all-state orchestra, and while she worked in Texas, she played with the San Angelo Symphony. Cynthia moved to Searcy in 1998, six years after the quartet began playing together. Realizing that we needed someone to play viola in my place because I was scheduled to be teaching in Italy

during the spring of 2000, she purchased an instrument and quickly learned to read alto clef. She also began, immediately, to substitute when the other violinists needed relief.

Cynthia said that her grandpa took her to fiddling contests when she was a very young child. She enjoyed the experience because she loved being with her grandpa and also because she was fascinated by the fiddlers. One day she saw a neighbor girl carrying a violin to school. She ran to catch up with her and to ask about it. The girl told her that she would have to wait until she was a sixth grader to take lessons in school. Cynthia reported that she couldn't wait to get home and ask permission. Cynthia received excellent support from her parents and grandparents throughout her early experiences. During adolescence, however, the earlier support and influence shifted.

I felt somewhat behind in music because of some decisions my parents me and because of other decisions that were out of my control. I wanted, desperately to play in the Lubbock Symphony. I went to one rehearsal and was invited to play for the season, but then found out that my mother was not willing to let me drive to rehearsals across town at night, nor was she willing to take me there regularly. I also thought that everyone who majored in music would have already had music theory before college, and that I was behind in that respect. Theory was not offered in my school, and my request for a transfer to a school where it was offered was denied. My parents made no effort to help me get the transfer except that my mother drove me to the administration building and sat in the car while I went in, alone, to plead my case. My parents were quite glad that the transfer was denied. They would have had to find a way to get me to school across town. I really felt abandoned at that time. It seemed that all the encouragement I had been given at an early age was pulled out from under me. As I look back now, I realize that much of that was my own selfishness coming through. My parents did sacrifice a lot for me. But at the time I needed support the most, I thought it wasn't there. That, along with another major feeling on my part, caused science to be much more attractive to me as a major. You won't like this part, but it was my real feeling at the time, so brace yourself! I had no respect for women orchestra directors and did not want to put myself in that position. The directors whom I respected were men, and, to me, it was a man's field, for that reason, I had no interest in teaching music in school...only in playing or teaching, privately.

Cynthia majored in biology, but played in her college orchestra on a sizable scholarship. She had the following to report about her adult years and those who have influenced her to keep playing.

I am very blessed with a husband who appreciates my love for playing and has always encouraged me. We got to know each other in an orchestra hall. How great is that? I had to stop playing, regularly, for a few years when we were too far from an orchestra and I knew no one who played a stringed instrument. Mark would keep the boys and let me go practice in his office from time to time so that I didn't feel like I was losing everything I had worked for. That meant more to me than any non-musician could ever imagine. I cannot stand the thought of not playing. I know that the time will come when my hands won't be able to do it any more. I pray that it will be a long time before that happens.

When asked if there had been people who, as an adult, have made it difficult for you to continue to play, Cynthia answered with these words.

Yes, the rudeness of the first symphony conductor I played for made it very difficult. He was rude to everyone, very condescending attitude. I had little practice time. Anderson was less than a year old, and I was teaching full time. So I always felt inferior to the other players. I played for that conductor for only one year. A few years later, when Mark started playing, I started again. As you know, Charlie was hard to work for, sometimes too, but he really didn't discourage me as much as his wife did. She was extremely difficult for the entire section. We were all relieved when she didn't show up for a concert weekend.

The last question asked what factors contribute to your inner concept as a musician? Is it the money that we are paid, the compliments from the audience, or other things?

The money is nice, but I really don't play just for the money. I just love to play. Compliments from the audience are also good when they are genuine, but my greatest sense of accomplishment comes when I know that, as a group, we did a good job. Whether it's the HU orchestra, quartet, or symphony.

Subject number 2, Rebecca, plays cello with the quartet. She is married to a retired biology professor who played clarinet in school bands. Rebecca's family of origin was rich with music. Her father taught voice at the college level and led singing at church. Her mother was a former Julliard student, and played piano and violin. Rebecca played piano and sang, as a child, and was mostly taught by her mother. She articulated wonderful support from parents and grandparents for her involvement with music at an early age.

Yes, my parents were wonderful and encouraging of my early efforts. By age 3 or 4, I could pick out melodies on the piano and soon afterward, added a bass note. Mom taught me to read music and showed me the notes on the piano. She continued to teach me and I practiced 20 minutes a day, usually, and was doing quite well. When I was 12, Dad had a 'nervous breakdown' when my brother was

diagnosed with a congenital hip deformity which resulted in 3 years of wearing a brace, followed by a primitive hip replacement (he was 12), and constant pain ever since. We also moved 3 times in quick succession. Life, as I had known it, fell apart. I continued to play the 8 or 10 pieces on the piano—some Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, but had no lessons. I always loved the music in church. Since Dad led singing, I was exposed to mostly the ‘good ones,’ and they stuck in my mind and still serve me well. I now know that I was very depressed, and the music comforted me.

Rebecca entered college as a music major, but changed to English with a French minor after only one semester. Here are her words regarding this decision.

School choruses were always a great source of fun for me, and I did sing in the A cappella at Harding. After one semester of majoring in music, however, I knew I couldn’t face the recitals.

As an adult in the 1970s, Rebecca became fascinated with the flute and took lessons. She worked hard and played well enough to join the university orchestra’s flute section at the same time that her daughter was studying cello. As she watched her teenager drift toward other interests and the cry for string players continue, Rebecca decided to play her daughter’s cello. Rebecca’s mother was very supportive of it all, and so she began her work on the cello in the 1980s.

Rebecca responded to the question of who encourages and influences you now as an adult musician.

Rebecca: Church music (and church in general), which had been very satisfying, became a huge disappointment in the 1970s. The situation continued to decline. Finally, Robert retired and we found Trinity Parish Church—one of the best things that ever happened to us. On the ‘musical note’, I was quickly accepted into choir and soon was coaxed (with the help of anti-anxiety and antidepressant drugs) into playing the cello with [the choir director] accompanying on piano or organ. I have even sung duets and trios. Of course, the music is only part of the joy and blessing that comes from finding a wonderful church with warm and welcoming (and encouraging) people; but that’s another story. You have been the most constant encouragement in my adult musical experience. Thank you for daring to gather the quartet group and continuing to teach and encourage all of us. Quartet sustained me through years of very little music.

Patricia: What factors contribute to your inner concept of self as a musician?

Rebecca: Positive response from others (quartet or orchestra members as well as ‘audiences,’ means a great deal. I know when I’ve played well (or not), but good

comments from others are always gratifying. Being paid for playing came so late in my life that I already enjoyed the experience without being paid. After years of being paid, however, it is an affirmation that I'm actually 'good enough' to be playing 'professionally.' Still, not being paid for choir doesn't diminish the enjoyment to me in any way.

Subject number 3, Jenny, is a registered nurse with a specialty in community health. When the quartet was organized, she was an instructor in the College of Nursing. She is married to a native of White County, Arkansas. In recent years, Jenny has been teaching private violin in our Searcy Community School of Music. She continues to work as a community health nurse.

Jenny: It was my grandmother who had the violin in her attic. She gave it to me, and my dad got it into playing condition and found me a teacher. My mom always enjoyed my playing and would tell others that I played and sometimes would want me to perform! My dad accompanied me for Solo and Ensemble festival when I needed a piano player! Mom took me to my weekly hour-long lesson across town and waited for me or ran errands.

Patricia: Did anyone encourage you to major in music during your college years?

Jenny: I did not major in music because I did not feel that I was a good performer or that I would enjoy my music as much if it were a 'job.' I also liked the medical field better as a profession. When I was in college in Nashville, I joined the Nashville Youth Symphony because I missed until after I graduated because there was no extra time for music during nursing school! I played with the Harding orchestra when Trinton was the director. My mom was a nurse! She used to come home and tell me stories about her patients and her work. She was also the camp nurse where we went to church camp.

Patricia: In adulthood, who encourages and influences you to keep playing?

Jenny: You are the one who probably kept me in my music since then. I think you have encouraged me the most as professional in the music field. Tyler has always encouraged me by keeping the kids when they were young when I was at rehearsal or gigs. He always kides me that I need to learn how to play the 'fiddle.' My parents were always excited that I continued my violin. After my mom got sick, remember how excited she was that we were going to play there. My kids have always thought it was great that I could play the violin. The all took piano lessons and lessons on other instruments.

The only source of discouragement that Jenny described was with *self* because she finds very little time to practice. She finds little challenge in the quartet repertoire and the

private lessons that once gave her an incentive to practice are no longer in place. Family responsibility made it hard, early on, to be a part of a music ensemble.

The fourth subject, Sara, is married to a professor of art. As a young child, Sara can remember no one who encouraged or supported her early involvement with music.

After pondering my musical background since you wrote and inquired about it, I am quite surprised that I am today playing in and managing a string quartet. I feel that I had very little encouragement before the age of 15. I also had huge gaps in my musical training. One time, I went about five years without playing my violin at all, and another time, I went 17 years without playing. I began playing in either the fourth or fifth grade when I lived on Air Force base housing outside of Wichita, KS. My dad was a career Air Force enlisted man. I do not remember anyone wanting me to choose the violin, but my first experiences were in a group string class at school in either fourth grade or fifth grade or both. I can remember two girls in my string class who played far better than I did and had had previous training. One was a very pretty girl named Ann who played the famous Humoresque piece by—I think—Dvorak and she played it, in my opinion, flawlessly. The other girl was named Cindy and she played very well and had kind of a snooty attitude and said to me, ‘if anything is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well.’ Neither one of my parents was musical or encouraging. My dad, as I told you before, always offered me a quarter if I would quit practicing. When I mentioned this to my mom sometime in the last year, she surprised me by not taking my side and by saying, ‘Sally, you have no idea how awful you sounded those early days!’ This, of course, was very hurtful to me. I do remember some private lessons in those early days in the nearby town of Derby, KS, with a young female teacher. My mom was of the opinion that if I had not practiced much that week, then there was no need to go to the lesson at all. So, my private lessons were sporadic and I think it was probably because we could not really afford those lessons. With five little girls and only one income, money was tight.

Sara described her husband’s influence and encouragement to keep playing violin in adulthood. They met during college years, or the period that began Sara’s 17 years of no violin playing.

Jesse would encourage me to play during these 17 years, but at some point, my violin had been taken by my mother for some work on it, when I was much younger, and when we picked it up at the music store, the scroll had been broken off and then re-glued. We were never informed of it by the store until we got it home. From that point on, my violin was very difficult to tune. So, when Jesse would want me to play for him, I would struggle to tune the violin and the pegs would keep popping out, and I would give up. Because of the problems with my violin, I was unable to play for Jesse or for my own amusement.

When Sara and Jesse moved to Searcy, Arkansas, Jesse joined the art faculty. The orchestra director at Harding University heard that Sara could play and he invited her to join the orchestra in the fall of 1982. When her new baby was a year old, Sara began playing in the pit orchestra at the university for homecoming musicals. Then, from 1985-1987, Sara and Jesse were in Lincoln, NE for Jesse to complete his Ph.D. in art education. Sara was able to study with the same teacher whom she had during her adolescent years in Lincoln. With student loan money and the teacher's guidance, Jesse purchased a violin for Sara that she treasures and plays with the quartet. It's fair to say that both the Lincoln teacher and husband, Jesse were very influential in Sara's musical involvement as a young adult.

We spent every lesson both years working on 2 Boccherini duets and most lessons would only cover 2-6 measures, and then we would see if we could put it together with him playing his part and me playing mine. It was exceedingly difficult for me, but I loved it! I wanted to do it to show that I could, and to make Mr. Collins proud of me.

When they returned to Searcy, Sara called the director of the pit orchestra for the homecoming musical to ask if she might play again that fall semester. The director, recalling Sara's earlier playing, was not thrilled about her rejoining, but he allowed it. During one of the rehearsals, in front of everyone, this director said, 'You're playing better now, Sara, much better than before.' Sara felt like he was pointing out to the others how badly she had played. However, she continued for five years to play with the pit orchestra each fall. When I asked Sara to tell me more about why the director's remark 'crushed' her, she said that she was 'guarding' her playing from him because she knew that she was 'over her head.'

I still remember a beautiful duet that you and the student concertmaster played in *The King and I*, my first pit experience. I was amazed at how beautifully you played, and how you made it seem like nothing.

Sara said that it was during the pit orchestra experiences that I became her musical mentor. Sara said that she appreciated my kindness, encouragement, and reassurance. She said that I made her believe that she sounded better than she actually did.

Sara received support and encouragement from one of her sons. He always wanted people to know that his mother wasn't just a homemaker, that she had a job as a member of the quartet. Sara, herself, wants to keep playing because she had a desire to have a 'sense of identity as one of the string quartet members and not just as Jesse's wife or the mother of her four children.

When the question was put to Sara about who, in their adulthood, not only influences them to keep playing, but also, at times discourages them, she related that one of her good friends told her that she didn't like the kind of music that the quartet plays. Sara felt that her friend should have kept that comment to herself. She also told me about her oldest son as another source of discouragement. Amos is working on a D.M.A. in oboe performance at Ohio State University. He plays very well and seems aloof to his mother's musical endeavors. She said that when our clientele have family members who may not have encountered a string quartet before and give her negative feedback, she feels discouraged.

The last question that I asked the four subjects in this study was what factors, such as being paid and audience responses have contributed to your inner self-concept as a successful musician? All of them said that while the money is good and has been increased over the years, they value the compliments from listeners more and the self-satisfaction that they receive from belonging to the group. The subjects in this study fit the profile for 'amateurs' more closely for the way they responded to this last item.

Discussion

Besides the obvious indicators from the subjects about who influenced them to play or sing across their life cycles, they gave me insight into how hard they have worked over the years of our association. Sara and Rebecca described their long hours of practice before each gig, especially in the early years when all of the music was new to them. They both continue to spend a lot of time preparing their parts. I felt humbled in the face of the stories because I never practice our quartet music outside of the regular rehearsals, and, at times, have felt impatient at having to repeat phrases so many times for them. Sara, Rebecca, and Jenny all told me that I play a significant role in influencing them, as adults, to keep playing. Hearing the words from each of them, individually, is yet another humbling experience. I hope that my impatience never showed through to the extent that I might have been a source of discouragement. When I consider my role in the quartet as musical director, the concept involves a lot of teaching. Because two of the three were beginners at the onset, I have assumed the role of a music teacher as we work together. The interaction with Cynthia also involves teaching.

All of the participants spoke about how much the quartet playing experience means to them. They said that, although the money is good, the main reason that they continue to play is for the love of music and the satisfaction that they receive from hearing good comments from clients and from knowing, themselves, that they played well.

My own attitude is different. While I enjoy the association that we have as a group and I am proud of the results, the money seems to be more important to me now than it was at the onset. The repertoire is appropriate, but, for me, lacks challenge. Clients choose similar music and there is little variety. Wedding and reception music is mostly traditional. I see myself as a musician with a job to do. As I recall the financial needs of my family in 1992, it's understandable that I would look for ways to increase my income. Although I needed the

money, I never imagined that our Searcy String Quartet would become so well known and generate as much income for all of us as it has done. In the early 1990s, I was playing with several symphony orchestras in Arkansas and teaching preparatory students. As the work with the quartet increased, it became harder to schedule symphony rehearsals on weekends and quartet gigs. When I think about my own role models and private violin teachers from my childhood, I remember that they taught private lessons in the afternoons after a full day of teaching music and directing school ensembles. In the evenings, they often rushed to symphony or opera rehearsals before they ended their day at 10:00 p.m. They often come to mind when I am rushing from teaching college level classes and private lessons to private lessons for preparatory students, and then to rehearsals or gigs in the evenings and on weekends.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of others or influential persons in the socialization process of members of an amateur string quartet. The questions were: who encouraged subjects to become involved with music during pre-college, college, and post-college years; and, how was the process different from the experiences of music educators in earlier studies? Because this is an auto-ethnographic study, my own reflections on the other 4 subjects' responses are a part of the discussions.

Subjects were able to report both positive and negative influence during their pre-college years from influential persons in their families. When compared with results of previous studies, the influence during this crucial time in the life cycle was similar for subjects 1, 2, and 3. However, all of the subjects in the present study reported negative influence from parents or *self* when they were making career choices.

In a comparison of the socialization process of the four interviewed subjects from the point at which they made a career choice by choosing non-music majors in college, to the processes described by subjects in previous studies (Cox, 1994, Cox 2007), there are clear differences. All of the subjects found influential persons and reference groups from other fields of study. They did not have to participate on recitals or meet ensemble requirements to obtain their college degrees. The ‘side-bets’ (Becker, 1970) that were made by connecting with others in their chosen fields of study and the commitments all related to other endeavors and career goals, outside of music. My own experiences were similar to subjects in previous studies involving music educators (Cox, 1994, Cox, 2007, Roberts, 1990, Roberts, 1991, Roberts, 1993a). Recitals were rites of passage for music majors enrolled in degree programs. By the time that we graduated, there was much invested in becoming experienced performers and music educators. In this study, Rebecca said that she changed her major because she was unable to face the recitals. Other studies (Geer, 1966, Goodlad, 1991, Lortie, 1959, Lortie, 1975, Simpson, 1967) reported evidence that subjects need to be socialized toward their occupational roles during college and post college years so that they come to see themselves as a part of an occupational reference group.

The first subject, Cynthia, could recall parents and grandparents who were happy to support her in playing the violin in the sixth grade, enjoyed all of her concerts and talent shows until she reached adolescence and was seriously considering majoring in music. Cynthia reported the negative and discouraging impact that her parents’ lack of support had on her. She also reported negative influence from *self* as she knew that she wasn’t good enough to have a career as a concert violinist, and couldn’t see herself on the podium as a school orchestra director. Cynthia chose biology as a major during her college years. Cynthia’s husband, a practicing music educator and low brass musician, is her main source of support and encouragement as an adult. She expressed her genuine pleasure at playing the

violin and reported that the money she receives is nice, but not the main reason for playing. Cynthia's commitment to music may be stronger than the others because of her husband's involvement. However, she, herself, described her playing more as a hobby, and an emotional outlet.

The second subject, Rebecca, the quartet's cellist, like Cynthia had parents and grandparents who influenced and supported her to learn to sing and play. Her parents were both well educated and accomplished musicians. During her early childhood, when others have the greatest impact on our social frameworks, Rebecca had both support and instruction. Her brother's illness, her father's mental breakdown, and her parents' subsequent divorce were devastating, not only to Rebecca, but also to her family. She turned to previously learned piano pieces and hymns to comfort her. Rebecca entered Harding University majoring in music, but soon changed to English with a French minor when she, herself, decided that she couldn't face recitals. Rebecca surmised that if her father and paternal grandparents had remained closely connected to her as an adolescent and college student, she might have overcome her fear of recitals. She added that she did not see music as a career field for financial support, because she did not enjoy working with children, and therefore did not want to pursue music education as a major. She did, however, enjoy singing in the chorus during college years. In adulthood, Rebecca's mother supported her daughter in her desire to learn to play the flute by purchasing an instrument for her. Later, she switched to cello because of the need for string players. She reported her cello teacher and later, the director of the Searcy String Quartet as mentor. Rebecca, like Cynthia, used altruistic terms when speaking about playing with the quartet.

Jenny, the third subject, like Cynthia, and Rebecca reported a grandmother and her parents as influential persons who encouraged her to learn to play the violin. Jenny loved to play her violin, but she did not consider majoring in music or music education during college

years. Her mother was a nurse, and Jenny could see herself doing the things that her mother told stories about doing in her own nursing career. Jenny wanted to keep playing her violin because she found it to be a genuine pleasure. Although nursing school took most of her time, when it was possible, Jenny played with the university orchestra. Her nursing studies and clinical experiences were her major focus. She was socialized into nursing (Simpson, 1976). Upon graduation, she played, regularly with the orchestra while working as a faculty member in the College of Nursing. As an adult, Jenny found that her parents remained supportive of her playing as a worthy outlet. Her husband and children were pleased that she was a part of the string quartet and orchestras. She also mentioned the director of the quartet as an influential person now that she is an adult, for her role as a musician. Jenny mentioned that teaching violin for the Searcy Community School of Music serves to validate her role as musician in recent years. However, Jenny remains connected to the field of nursing and her main occupation is in health care.

The fourth subject, Sara, indicated a unique socialization pattern when it is compared to the others. She said that no one influenced or supported her in her choice to join a school strings class. She reported negative influence from both of her parents. Although her maternal grandparents seemed to encourage her to practice, they modeled musicianship that was, according to Sara, less than stellar. She never considered majoring in music or music education in college because she said that her violin playing was not done seriously, only for fun. Sara had a very kind and patient violin teacher during adolescence, but he did not impact her career choices. It was only when her husband, Jesse, entered her life that anyone had asked her to play. Even then, it was impossible because of a botched repair job on her violin. Jesse was supportive and purchased a good instrument for Sara, and she was able to reconnect with the same Lincoln, NE teacher from her childhood. Even with intermittent playing and few people to influence her, Sara wanted, very much, to play her violin. She was able to

recall friends and orchestra directors who, as an adult, ‘crushed’ her with their comments. On the other hand, she was also able to describe the positive influence of the other quartet members and the director. Sara finds that compliments from audiences and bridal families mean a lot to her satisfaction as a musician.

All of the subjects in this study were able to articulate others who had influenced them, across their life cycles to become involved with music and continue to play or sing during their lives. When compared with subjects in previous studies, with the exception of Sara, the results were similar for early childhood. Cynthia, Rebecca, and Jenny were able to name parents and grandparents, even school music teachers, private teachers, and ensemble directors who positively supported their early efforts. Cynthia and Sara reported negative influence during adolescence from their parents, and Sara reported negative influence from parents during early childhood. We know from other studies that early childhood influence is the strongest and remains with us throughout our lives (Cooley, 1922; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Brim, 1966; Denzin, 1977). In previous studies, music educators were able to recall having parents and grandparents who supported them in their early musical experiences. The real commitment seems to be generated from support during late adolescence when subjects were making career choices, during college when occupational socialization begins, and especially later when individuals enter the work force and become socialized within an occupational reference group.

It should be noted that both Cynthia and Rebecca described *themselves* as influencing their choices to major in non-music areas, even with strong involvement with playing and singing during high school years. Rebecca couldn’t face recitals and Cynthia couldn’t see herself on the podium of a school orchestra setting. None of the subjects considered music performance as a career choice. Therefore, none of the subjects had the influence of college-level music experiences where playing and singing, both solo work and with ensembles, are

requirements for the degree. Their commitment levels to music differ from those of music educators who have faced the formal training and rituals required for graduation.

Groce (1991) studied songwriters and found that the learned social role evolved over time in that songwriters did not decide to become one; rather, they grew into the role. As subjects in his study were able to successfully produce popular songs, they became more closely identified with the social role, especially when they interacted with others in the business. Perhaps the socialization of subjects in this study, excluding myself, may be similar. As the subjects began playing with the Searcy String Quartet, they may have considered it a good thing to do. They expressed their eagerness to accept my invitation to play. However, they could have walked away from the group and little would have changed because, at the onset, there was relatively little commitment. With the passage of years and experience, and the money that they received, the question could be raised about 'side bets' and a growing commitment. However, none of the members rely upon what they are paid for their quartet services to pay their bills.

Although the members of the Searcy String Quartet are technically amateurs, they have taken their involvement with the group very seriously. They are reliable and careful about making the music sound good. All of the subjects report times when they practice long hours to prepare for gigs. Cynthia, Sara, and Rebecca all practice very carefully and often ask the group to help them by repeating a section of the music. Sara, Rebecca, and Jenny have, in the past, scheduled private lessons with the director.

Considering the ensemble members' different backgrounds and occupational socialization patterns, the group works well together. Becker and McCall (1990) said that socialization is a continuous process and that how we define ourselves within a given situation changes, if we want the association to continue. I know that some of my original goals for the quartet involved the inclusion of my college students in the group. Only

occasionally does this happen, successfully. It has been necessary for me to consider the Searcy String Quartet as an entity of its own, and not directly related to my goals as a music educator. From a personal perspective, the conflicts that arise may be explained in the way that I see myself within my occupational reference group that includes a host of other music teachers, ensemble directors, and instructors, from both the past and the present. The other members have their own occupational reference groups, but as amateur musicians, their experiences and commitment levels to music and music education are not as heavily vested as my own. Only through doing this study have I been able to analyze the quartet's social interaction. All of us are members of the same community, and, as adults, we respect each other. Thus, sociological analysis was overlooked until it was done deliberately. The implications from this study should help me, as the director, to adjust my expectations.

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