

*ANTIGONE IN FERGUSON: THE EXPERIENCE OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE
DEMOCRATIC CHORUS IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE MUSICAL PRODUCTION*

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Doctor of Philosophy

by

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*ANTIGONE IN FERGUSON: THE EXPERIENCE OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE
DEMOCRATIC CHORUS IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE PRODUCTION*

presented by Philip Woodmore,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank my family for their continuous support and encouragement to pursue my love and passion for music in all areas of my life, now including doctoral studies. Thank you to Bryan Doerries and the entire Theater of War Productions family for all of their support and love during this process. Thank you to my Crestview Middle School and the Center of Creative Arts (COCA) families who have given me encouragement through this journey. Finally thank you to the Phil Woodmore Singers and all my music family in St. Louis who have supported my music efforts for over 10 years.

TO:

Grandma Mamie Woodmore

My number one fan until her death in 2015.

This one is for you!

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
Chapter One	1
Introduction	1
The Beginnings of <i>Antigone in Ferguson</i>	3
The Music of <i>Antigone in Ferguson</i>	6
Purpose of Study	10
Research Questions	11
Theoretical Framework	12
Organization of the Study	12
CHAPTER TWO	14
Literature Review	14
Transformative Power of Music	16
Prison Choirs.....	17
Homeless Choirs	20
Intergenerational Choirs.....	23
Music Education	25
Protest Music	27
<i>Antigone in Ferguson</i> and Social Justice	32
Conclusion	33
Chapter Three	35
Method	35
Introduction.....	35
Research Questions	35
Research Method	36
Ethics, Reflexivity, Positionality	38
Theoretical Framework.....	40
Primary Participants.....	41
Data Collection	46
Structure of <i>Antigone in Ferguson</i>	52
Project Location	54
Rehearsal and Performance Schedules (8/8/2018-10/13/2018).....	55
Data Analysis	56
Trustworthiness.....	58
Conclusion	59
Chapter Four	60
Findings	60

Focus Group Participants	61
Focus Group Analysis	61
Analyses of the Seven Participants' Responses	65
Participants	66
Research Question Conclusions	88
Transformation Discussion	92
Additional Findings	100
Conclusion	103
Chapter Five	105
Summary and Discussion	105
Impact of the Rehearsal Process	106
Impact of the Show Process	108
Discussion of Research Questions	111
Implications	116
Limitations of the Study	118
Future Research	120
Summary Remarks	122
References	124
APPENDIX A	135
RESEARCH FORMS	135
1. Research Participant Informed Consent	135
2. Recruitment Script	135
INFORMED CONSENT	136
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT	137
APPENDIX B	138
INTERVIEWS	138
GOOGLE DOCUMENT LETTER AND INSTRUCTIONS	139
PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	140
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS	141
Interview with Melody	141
Interview with Mark	144
Interview with Mitchell	147
Interview with Michael	153
Interview with Meghan	155
Interview with Maxwell	158
Interview with Melissa	160
APPENDIX C	168
DIRECTOR'S JOURNAL	168
APPENDIX D	178
FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT	178
APPENDIX E	204

HARLEM STAGE SCHEDULE	204
<i>APPENDIX F</i>	206
GLOSSARY	206
<i>VITA</i>	207

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	46
Table 2	61
Table 3	66

*ANTIGONE IN FERGUSON: THE EXPERIENCE OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE
DEMOCRATIC CHORUS IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE PRODUCTION*

Philip A. Woodmore

Dr. Wendy Sims, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the experiences of seven of the auditioned chorus members in the five-week run of *Antigone in Ferguson* at the Off-Broadway theater, Harlem Stage in Harlem, New York in the Fall of 2018, through the lens of the theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a). *Antigone in Ferguson*, an original musical production based on the ancient Greek drama *Antigone* (Sophocles, ca. 441 B.C.E./2016), was created in response to the young Black man in Ferguson, Missouri, who was killed by a police officer and whose body was left on the street for over four hours. The performance includes four actors, a democratic choir comprising singers representing various professions including police officers, and choirs from the community. After each performance, facilitators mediate a discussion with the audience members to address the social justice issues raised during the performance.

Seven chorus members served as participants in this study, completing all requirements including a focus group session, pre-interview questionnaire, semi-structured individual interview, blog about their experience throughout the production, and final reflection. Cohen's (2007a) theory of transformation, based on research about prison choirs, served as a framework for this research and the data analysis. The theory states that the complex relationships through the sung texts, the choir's social and cultural contexts, interactions with audience members, and enhanced self-perception of the

performers afford the potential for positive transformational change in the performer (Cohen, 2007a, 2008).

Findings suggest that the transformative power of music was displayed in the seven participants' responses to their experiences as chorus members in this production. Based on their spoken and written statements, all seven participants indicated that positive change occurred related to the music and the processes involved with putting on this show, including awareness and attitudes toward social justice issues and enhanced self-perceptions.

Chapter One

Introduction

Antigone in Ferguson was birthed from a wild hunch that an ancient Greek play about a teenage girl who puts everything on the line in service to law she believes to be greater than the law of the state, the law of love, would resonate with people living in Ferguson, Missouri and in other communities that have become synonymous with Ferguson, through incidents of police brutality and racialized violence, all across the country and the world. (Bryan Doerries, *Antigone in Ferguson* Director and Theater of War Productions Artistic Director [personal communication, July 8, 2019])

On August 9, 2014 an 18-year old Black young man, Michael Orlandus Darrion Brown was shot dead by a White police officer and his dead body remained on the street in the heat of summer for four and a half hours in Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. As a result of what many in the community described as the senseless killing of an unarmed Black youth (Baldwin, 2018), a gathering turned into protest marked by daily demonstrations and violent confrontations with armed local police (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015), which brought national attention to this event and to the city of Ferguson. Although I have heard many people say that something needs to be done about these senseless deaths of children of color at the hands of law enforcement, sadly the killing continues. According to the Washington Post, in an article about the use of lethal force by police officers since 2015, Black Americans were overrepresented among all those killed by police under all circumstances (Beer, 2018).

As a male educator of color at a middle school in a large district of suburban St. Louis, I felt it was my duty to mentor and teach the young minority students at my school the pathway to success in life and how to avoid situations that might lead to such horrific tragedies. I am passionate, in this regard, for every student under my care, but am especially concerned that students of color achieve their potential in a mostly White school district. I believe in the power of education, and furthermore feel that music is an effective tool to unite people. So, in my classroom, I strove every day to inspire young people to make good decisions, be upstanding citizens, and continue to actively acquire knowledge. I worked hard to build a community in my classroom and my school so all students felt comfortable and successful. However, after the tragic events in Ferguson, many of our students of color didn't know how to process their feelings and struggled in the classroom environment for many weeks and months.

I also have a heart for social justice, but did not know my role to effect change after the events in nearby Ferguson. Even as a Black male raised in an upper-middle class home by two very loving parents, I have experienced the terror of being pulled over by a police officer and having major uncertainties about what the outcome of that event might be. Meeks (2010) provides a definition of Black profiling, and explains how to manage those emotions during an encounter with the police and how to manage these types of situations for a successful outcome. Although I enjoyed working with young people of color at school and helping to inspire them to live an exemplary life, there was still an unfulfilled yearning inside me to do more in the arena of social justice. I was completely unaware that a project to bring social justice topics into the St. Louis community was in the infancy stage and would need help from a local music leader.

The Beginnings of *Antigone in Ferguson*

In 2014, Christy Bertelson, speech writer for Missouri Governor Jay Nixon and friend of Bryan Doerries, who knew about his Theater of War Productions projects (2020), contacted Doerries to ask if he might embark upon a project to help the Ferguson community begin to heal. Doerries declined this offer with doubts that he had the wherewithal to be effective in this community and situation. Doerries had spent the last six years of his career building a brand of theater with the belief that the audience knows more than the actors about the issues portrayed in the artistic production than the actors. Therefore, the objective was to create a setting where thought-provoking and honest conversation happens following an artistic presentation. Furthermore, Doerries is a strong believer that theater is for all people, not just the elite, and has vowed to offer all of his performances for free to audiences all over the world.

Two years after the initial request, however, Doerries revisited the play, *Antigone* (Sophocles, 441 B.C.E./2016), and thought this might be the answer for Ferguson. To be effective in the community, though, he felt he needed both the community's commitment to the production and a musical chorus of community members that was democratic and held diverse views. Following the Ferguson demonstrations, tensions were high in our community. Trust and faith in law enforcement in St. Louis was lost and in need of repair. As a part of this model, Doerries wanted to create a chorus who could sing the Greek choruses of *Antigone*. Therefore, Doerries googled "St. Louis Police Choir" and found an article about a concert I held at St. Louis City Hall with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Choir, which, at that time, I had directed for eight years. Doerries found my contact information, which he relayed to his friend Bertelson.

In August of 2016, I received a phone call from Bertelson asking if I would be interested in a project that a Greek mythology scholar from Brooklyn was doing in St. Louis to help our community begin to heal from the murder of Michael Brown and protest that followed. She explained that the project was called *Antigone in Ferguson*, and its beginning form was a translated version of the ancient Greek tragedy *Antigone*, written by Sophocles (ca 441 B.C.E.). Doerries, the translator, needed some original songs to accompany the text. His plan was to adapt this story, which tells the tale of a young woman, Antigone, who defies the decree of King Creon that her brother, Polynices, who was killed in a civil war, must lay unburied on the ground. King Creon sentences Antigone to death for her defiance after she defies the king's decree and buries her brother anyway. Eventually, he decides to show mercy on Antigone following much counsel, but he learns he is too late— not only has Antigone committed suicide, so have the king's son and wife. Doerries' plan was to use his translated version of *Antigone*, performed with four professional actors and a chorus singing the Greek chorus parts, to initiate a conversation in Ferguson about how the community could heal and move forward. Doerries is a master discussion facilitator who uses his talents following every performance of the Greek tragedies he turns into modern dramas by offering a one- to two-hour guided conversation with the audience regarding the topics in the performance they just witnessed. Doerries' main goal in obtaining a chorus for this project was to create a chorus that included police officers, activists, members of the faith community, and concerned citizens, among others, reflecting the very audience demographics he hoped to curate and attract for the project. Bertelson contacted me to discuss what might be possible for this project and to connect me with Doerries.

Doerries then contacted me directly, and after a few days of conversations, I agreed to gather a chorus representing diversity of thought, background, and occupation to comprise the body of singers to represent the chorus in the show. Furthermore, I agreed to compose all the music for *Antigone in Ferguson* that this diverse democratic chorus will perform representing the community of interest. A part of our conversation and a major selling point for me was the idea that ancient Greek tragedy can be an opening into meaningful conversations with modern day challenges (Moore, 2016), and that by adding the power of music (Hallam, 2010), could be an exceptional opportunity to initiate conversations to help the St. Louis community begin the healing process. Moreover, community members, activists, faith leaders, police department members, local government officials, officers' wives, and community youth singing the music would provide a perspective on the conversation that audience members might not otherwise have — and deepen the impact of the performance.

Inspired by the concept of this work and what it would bring to St. Louis, I quickly began forming a potential chorus for this project. During the previous 12 years of music education work in St. Louis, I had the privilege of working with a variety of different choirs, including the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Choir that is comprised of police officers, officer's wives, government workers, officer's children, and civilian members; the Center of Creative Arts (COCA) Music Companies Allegro and Adagio, companies I created when designing the voice program at COCA in 2007; and Trinity Community Church Choir, a choir I directed as the minister of music for several years; and several of my voice students. I asked 34 singers and musicians to be part of

this project and created tentative rehearsal and performance schedules based on the ambitious plan for this performance in September, 2016.

I began with an intensive script reading and analysis of the 2016 translation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. This led to a lyric writing forum, with the help of one of my trusted voice students, based on the poetic writing in the Greek choruses in the play, followed by song design and music composition. After creating lyrics for the songs, I decided to compose something in addition to the show that was just an offering from me, and not based on one of the Greek choruses. Thus, the idea for the song "I'm Covered" (Woodmore, 2016), the finale of *Antigone in Ferguson*, was born. As I worked on melody lines, lyrics edits, song ideas, score structure and like matters, I was proud to bring together something special for Doerries and the *Antigone in Ferguson* team. After three short weeks of creativity, I created a five-song score plus "I'm Covered" for the project, notated the score using music writing software, and prepared for our first community rehearsal on September 6, 2016.

The Music of *Antigone in Ferguson*

The music for the completed musical *Antigone in Ferguson* (Doerries & Woodmore, 2016) had a variety of song structures and genres represented. I labeled the final product as a musical with gospel music influences. The cast included four storytellers—one mezzo-soprano, two tenors and one baritone. (For definitions on any technical terms about music or theater used in this research project please refer to Appendix F). The mezzo-soprano for the production, De-Rance Blaylock, is an accomplished vocalist from the St. Louis area. Blaylock is a Normandy High School graduate and was one of Michael Brown's teachers at that high school. The two tenors for

the production were Detective John Leggette of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department and Duane Foster, Fine Arts Coordinator of the Normandy Schools Collaborative. Foster was Michael Brown's middle school drama teacher and had a successful career on Broadway prior to coming back to his alma mater, Normandy, to educate and inspire students. The baritone for the production was one of my voice students, Gheremi Clay, who had participated in the dance program at the Center of Creative Arts (COCA) from a very young age and began a career in musical theater during his tenure at COCA.

The opening number is in the structure of an anthem. I took the theme of light that was shared through the lyrics and used that as imagery for the music writing. The homophonic voicing is dense and the lyrics give a lot of context to the story. When the action in *Antigone in Ferguson* begins, the audience is immediately taken into a scene between Antigone and her sister, Ismene, who are having a private conversation about the King forbidding the burial of their brother. Antigone is loyal to her family and therefore she is determined to bury her brother, who was left lying on the ground. Following this conversation, the show opens musically with the first song, "Oh Light of the Sun" (Woodmore, 2016c), which provides information surrounding the events that happened prior to the opening scene. The most striking moment of this song is the final line, which states, "And may we never forget what happened here, and never go to war again."

The second song, "Oh the World" (Woodmore, 2016e), was shaped around a gospel trio. I took the text from the second Greek chorus and used three of the soloists to share the story in a more intimate way. This song tells a story about the wonders of the

world and celebrates humankind. In its final version, we decided to layer the full chorus on top of the trio at the end, reintroducing the main theme from “Oh Light of the Sun.”

The third song, “Destiny” (Woodmore, 2016a) begins with a recitative section that conveys the impact of war over the ancient Greek generations, then proceeds to reveal how the tragedy of this family was destined to happen, and concludes with the chorus chattering about Antigone’s destiny, accompanied by music with elements of jazz. The most thought-provoking moment of this piece is the last line, which immediately becomes a homophonic choral moment of the chorus reflecting on Antigone’s destiny in life. The fourth song, “Oh Love Invincible” (Woodmore, 2016d), is upbeat and has gospel elements. It begins with a story about the power of love and then leads into a plea from the chorus to “let Antigone live.”

The fifth song, “Purify the City” (Woodmore, 2016f), is a musical theater style piece that celebrates the king’s decision to release Antigone. This piece highlights the irony between the celebration of the people and the reality that Antigone has already hung herself. “Purify the City” conveys a strong message about how people need to unite as a community. Along with the recitative work presented by the soloists and the trio in “Oh the World”, these songs help shape the story of *Antigone in Ferguson* and offer a different creative lens for the storytelling.

King Creon experiences the weight and consequences of his decisions at the end of the play. Having changed his mind regarding the death sentence of Antigone, the king finds his son died from suicide, alongside Antigone. Returning to the palace with his son’s body, he discovers that his wife has also committed suicide out of grief at the news of her sons’ death. The play ends with the king leaving the city in despair and sorrow.

At the end of the story of *Antigone in Ferguson*, Miss Blaylock leads the chorus and audience in singing “I’m Covered” (Woodmore, 2016b), an emotional and healing hymn that provides a strong punctuation for the end of the show, before a discussion that occurs at the end of the production.

Along with the 24 chorus members who agreed to participate in the premiere performance, a group of instrumental musicians signed on to the project, as well. Jason Davis, at the time the Assistant Chief of Police of the Metro District, agreed to be the keyboardist for the production. His brother and co-triplet, Ja’Mes Davis, who served as a Sergeant for the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, played the saxophone. Normandy High School Band Director, Bernard Long Jr., played the drums, Pastor Willie Woodmore of the Trinity Community Church played guitar, and I accompanied the chorus on lead piano and conducted the show.

After two rehearsals, creation of practice tracks, score editing, coaching, and three production meetings, Doerries and his team came in for dress rehearsal on Friday, September 16, 2016. He expressed his appreciation for what we had done in our community to prepare for this trailblazing experience. We premiered *Antigone in Ferguson* on Saturday, September 17, 2016 in the Little Theater at Normandy High School, the school that Michael Brown attended. Sharing my work with that audience was an overwhelming and emotional experience. It was also a privilege to perform this work on the stage from which Michael Brown graduated two years prior.

After our premiere performance at Normandy High School we moved the production to Wellsprings Church in Ferguson, where we gave two more free public performances the same day attended by over 1,000 people. With the success of this

premiere performance we were immediately invited to a corporate office building in New York to perform for a prestigious foundation's executive team and New York City community members in October, 2016. We then presented at the PopTech Conference in Camden, Maine; also in October, 2016, followed by performances in St. Louis, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland; a summer workshop in Athens, Greece; a basketball court in Brownsville, Brooklyn in New York; Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire; Williams College with a choir of one hundred and twenty singers in Williamstown, Massachusetts; Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts; return performances in St. Louis at Harris Stowe State University; and New York City, New York at the New York Public Library. After a successful year of traveling the show around the country, we were awarded a grant to perform a five-week run of the show at the Off-Broadway theater, the Harlem Stage in Harlem, New York in the fall of 2018. Because I had been with this project from its creative inception, I had a clear understanding of the music, the process, the structure of the show, the power of the piece and have witnessed the reactions to this work by the Phil Woodmore Singers, the traveling choir with the show, and the many audiences for whom we had performed for during the tour. However, the experience in New York gave me the opportunity to build new relationships with chorus members there and observe how this project affected their lives over the course of the two-week rehearsal process and the five-week run.

Purpose of Study

Building a chorus in New York City for the upcoming performances at the Harlem Stage proved to be a challenging task. I did not have enough connections in New York City to contact artists directly. Scheduling and time limitations also proved

problematic, along with budget constraints. Therefore, I decided to invite several of the original members of the Phil Woodmore Singers to participate in this run as a support system and representation of the original cast. I needed the support of New York City vocalists as well to make this project a success, so decided to hold auditions there. This leads to the topic of this study, which is a qualitative phenomenological investigation of the New York City auditioned chorus members of the Harlem run of *Antigone in Ferguson* and how they were affected over the course of the process through the music and audience interactions.

Research Questions

I designed this study to investigate the transformative power of music for the chorus members through the lens of the *Antigone in Ferguson* auditioned chorus. The following research question guided this study: **How does performing in the chorus of a theatrical musical performance designed to elicit conversations concerning social justice issues affect the chorus members throughout this process?** To help answer this question, there were four sub questions:

1. What did participation in this experience mean to the performer?
2. What role did the music play in the experience for the performers during the five-week run of the show?
3. How did the post-performance discussions contribute to the experience of the performers?
4. In what ways, if any, has the music impacted the performers' ways of thinking about issues addressed in the production *Antigone in Ferguson*?

Theoretical Framework

This work is based on reports of how successful prison choirs can provide transformational experiences for the participants (Cohen 2007a, 2008). Cohen constructed a theory of transformation, which states that complex relationships among the sung texts, the choir's social and cultural contexts, interactions with audience members, and inmates' enhanced self-perceptions afforded the inmates the potential for positive transformational change (Cohen, 2007a). This study drew on parallel topics as experienced by the chorus members in *Antigone in Ferguson*: complex relationships between the sung texts and the chorus' social and cultural contexts in relation to the music, interactions with audience members in the form of moderated discussions and one-on-one conversations after performances, and chorus members' self-perceptions through the processes of rehearsing and performing music pertaining to social justice issues.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized as follows: This chapter describes the creation of the *Antigone in Ferguson* project from inception to the Harlem Stage. Furthermore, it explains the purpose of this study, provides the research questions, and introduces the theoretical framework. Chapter Two provides an in-depth review of the literature that provides context for the present study. The literature review references the foundation of music in Black culture through the lens of the Civil Rights Movement, protest music and examine the transformative power of music found in different music organizations around the country. Chapter Three explains the methods and the procedures used to conduct this study. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the data, including themes that

emerged during the study. Chapter Five presents conclusions and interpretations based on the data, as well as implications for implementing this type of work in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Four years ago, a production entitled *Antigone in Ferguson* was born in St. Louis, Missouri and premiered there on the stage of the Little Theater at Normandy High School. This ground-breaking production was very well received with its social justice themes, artistry and unique performance model. After a successful tour across the United States and Europe, *Antigone in Ferguson* booked a 5-week run at the Off-Broadway theater, the Harlem Stage in Harlem, New York. Below is a quote from Broadway critic Ben Brantley's review published in the New York Times:

Never underestimate the wisdom of the chorus during a tragedy, onstage or in life. It is the gospel chorus reacting to confrontations among the characters, that viscerally lifts [*Antigone in Ferguson*] into timelessness. Conducted by Phil Woodmore, who also composed the music, this choir includes social workers, law officers and teachers from St. Louis and its environs, among other places. In other words, they know what they're singing about. Lushly blended in layered harmony with detours into virtuosic solos, their voices swell in wonder, praise and sorrow at the mysteries of life and fate. (2018, p. 5)

Since the show's inception, I have watched the chorus members, actors, audience members, staff, ushers, and all involved be transformed by the experience created in *Antigone in Ferguson* through its innovative model. Bryan Doerries, *Antigone in Ferguson* Artistic Director, stated, "the show is an experience, not a performance" (personal communication, September 14, 2018). Audiences are participants in the performance, as much as the actors and singers on stage. Doerries continued, "I am a

strong believer that the audience knows more than the performers and we [the production staff and cast] are here to learn from the audience” (personal communication, September 14, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the potentially transformative power of music through the lens of seven of the 13 auditioned chorus members in the 5-week run of *Antigone in Ferguson* at the Off-Broadway theater, the Harlem Stage in Harlem, New York in the fall of 2018. To set the stage for this concept, I will discuss the ideas of some of the important thinkers who have described the transformative power of music at various points in history, as well as examine different choral organizations and models that have exemplified transformation through chorus members’ experiences.

Over the past 13 years, Mary L. Cohen has researched prison choirs and the benefits of inmates performing in the arts. Based on the results of a study she conducted in 2007, she developed a research-based theory called the theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a) that she applied to her work with prison choirs thereafter. The theory states that there are complex relationships through the sung texts, the choir’s social and cultural contexts, and interactions with audience members that enhance inmates’ self-perceptions and afford them the potential for positive transformational change (Cohen, 2007a). In the current study, I draw on topics that parallel those: complex relationships through the sung texts, chorus’ social and cultural contexts, interactions with audience members, and chorus members’ enhanced self-perception through the process pertaining to social justice issues. In applying this theory to members of the *Antigone in Ferguson* chorus, my intent is to use the same model of socializing, goal-setting, and discussing life

outside of the chorus to build a case that the theory of transformation has provided a platform for the participants to be transformed through the show's music.

Transformative Power of Music

The transformative power of music has been discussed in research for many years (Baxter, 1996; Carlson, 2013; Hesser, 2001; Tame, 1984; Tunstall, 2012). Like others, I have personally experienced the transformative power of music in the middle school classroom (Schmidt, 2005; Tunstall, 2012) where I instructed a few thousand students for 12 years. Music continues to play a major role in many of my former students' lives. Talking about the power of music was an explicit part of my lesson plans throughout the years, and was a talking point to the audiences during many of the concerts I held each semester. Although there are many testimonials about the transformative power of music in the classroom, in this study we will focus on transformation in a musical theater setting and with adult participants.

Many great thinkers have given testament to the transformative power of music. In an article addressing her theory of transformation, Cohen (2008, 2010) discussed the influential work of prominent musicians Robert Shaw and Elvera Voth. Shaw has received 40 honorary degrees and other types of citations in his career, and has been said to have transformed choral conducting into an art and nearly single-handedly raised its standards to a new level (Cohen 2008, 2012). After a performance, Shaw shared what the performance experience meant to him and how it elicited feelings beyond just the music, saying, "That was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life . . . you can buy the sound but you can't buy the love" (Berg, 1991, p. 45). This quote from Shaw establishes

the transformative experience of art, but also highlights the value and need for love in today's society which also is displayed through the art.

As an educator, I was inspired by the words of Shaw and other great thinkers and shared those ideas with my students. Until this project, I did not know what I was doing was consistent with the applications of the theory of transformation. This was used more deliberately with the music and production of *Antigone in Ferguson*, with the intention of stimulating thinking and motivating an important and needed conversation about the state of society with the audience members.

To further understand the applications of the theory of transformation, I began with a study of choral music organizations that use music to bring people together, often for therapeutic purposes: prison choirs, homeless choirs, and intergenerational choirs. I was interested in investigating the idea that, "Music can help to create, sustain, and alter social reality as well as reflect it, sometimes in a single act" (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2015, p. 8).

Prison Choirs

The first example of the transformative power of music in a choir setting is the prison choir. The creation of prison choirs is often attributed to two important choral leaders, Elvera Voth (1923-) and Robert Shaw (1916-1999). Cohen (2008) explained that Voth partnered with Shaw to bring awareness to, and raise money for, prison choirs.

Many authors have written about the life and music work of Elvera Voth (Cohen 2009; 2010; Oswald, 1998; Waters, 1997). Voth had a nontraditional upbringing in music. She grew up on a farm in Kansas with a dream of being a country western singer and guitar player. However, instead of a guitar, her father purchased her a piano. Voth

learned to play piano by ear at the age of eight and began playing at church. Eventually she moved to Alaska, where she prepared choirs for Shaw from 1962-1973 for the *Music to Match our Mountains Alaska Music Festival* (Cohen 2008).

In an interview, Voth shared that during her retirement, she wanted to bring arts experiences to a “starving” segment of society for whom she felt deep empathy: the incarcerated population (Cohen, 2010). Voth and Shaw’s shared passion for social justice and musical excellence defied traditional aesthetic frameworks of music for music’s sake. They both believed that choral singing could be a vehicle to transform lives and promote social change, as was my intention with the music for *Antigone in Ferguson*. Voth and Shaw demonstrated this in an event hosted in North Newton, Kansas—a community sing-along to raise money and launch a non-profit organization called Arts in Prison, Inc. (Lee, 2014). The subsequent collaboration between Cohen and Voth (Lee, 2014) through the Kansas City Corrections Department became a model for prison choir programs.

Voth shared a story of a man serving a life sentence who received a standing ovation after a solo during a concert. As the man returned to his seat, he came back to the microphone and said, “Do you have any idea what it’s like to be given a standing ovation when you’ve been told all your life that you’re not worth a damn?” (Lee, 2014, p. 20). Cohen delineated in her research how Voth described positive effects resulting from prison choir programs, such as self-esteem, worthiness and competence, and a willingness to take risks (Cohen, 2008). Voth and Shaw both believed the profound value of choral singing and the manner in which it could transform people positively (Cohen, 2008).

Cohen and other researchers have invested much time in prison choirs and have documented their transformative power for the inmates and the community (Cohen, 2008; Lee, 2014; Silber, 2005). Lee (2014) reported informal data showing that since the start of the Oakdale Community Singers, relationships between staff and inmates had improved, and trust had increased. Singers stated that they look forward to rehearsals, saying that it was like “coming out of the daily mud,” and Lee explained that the gathering created a sense of normalcy for the inmates (Lee, 2014, p. 20). Furthermore, the warden at the facility in which this research was conducted shared that he, “saw hardcore young men make miraculous changes within themselves, such that they could be trusted to perform in senior citizens’ homes or community events” (p. 17). He also commented on the positive difference in the inmates in their day-to-day routine through the structure and power of the community choir. One effective activity that the director did with her inmate choir members was to use their experiences to write original pieces that the community group was able to perform. She equated these pieces to some of the African-American spirituals that have been passed down through the years (Lee, 2014). This and many other examples of the positive impacts of prisons choirs have allowed for increased funding for prison choir programs (Cohen, 2007a, Goodwin, 2019) and also provide more inmates with opportunities to use their creativity for the communities that many inmates feel have forgotten about them (Lee, 2014).

Lee reported that Cohen, as well as other choral directors interviewed, believed that a choral program in prison can be a form of restorative justice. She explained in an interview for the journal *The Voice*, “As choral musicians, we say we’re changing lives in the church and in school, but let’s go to the next step. When one goes into prisons you are

transforming lives—theirs and your own—in a very different environment” (Lee, 2014, p. 22). Silber (2005) presented a similar perspective in her work with women’s prison choirs. She shared that in a choral setting, the choir members become part of a community, where challenging moments, as may be present in any group interaction, are softened by the musical framework. This was a significant contribution to the production of *Antigone in Ferguson* when the final song, “I’m Covered” (Woodmore, 2016), was performed, as it appeared to soften the hearts of audience members before they were asked to enter into a very delicate conversation with multiple points of view.

Homeless Choirs

Another example of the transformative power in music is found in the literature about homeless choirs. Several articles have reported on how homeless choirs have touched lives around the country and the world (Chen, 2017; Green, 2019; Rehwald, 2019). An example of one of these organizations is The Urban Voices Choir, composed of artists and performers from the Skid Row neighborhood in downtown Los Angeles. Upon a review of their website, I found a wealth of information about the organization and the choirs. The choir shares music and its healing power with many individuals and audiences inside and outside the neighborhood of Skid Row, the epicenter of Los Angeles’ homeless crisis. This choir is one of many programs presented by Urban Voices Project, a non-profit, that “brings the healing power of music directly to individuals disenfranchised by homelessness, mental health issues, and unemployment” (Urban Voice Project, 2020). Among its projects, the organization uses community singing and music education to provide practical opportunities for individuals to transcend their current circumstances and participate in a creative program of positive change. Other

organizations doing important work through music with homeless and disenfranchised individuals are also active in San Diego and Dallas (Green, 2019). Jonathan Palant has done impressive work with the Dallas Street Choir and created a model that many have used across the United States (Green, 2019).

University of Missouri faculty member, Dr. Brandon Boyd, has also started a successful homeless choir called the Interfaith Community Shelter Street Choir in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This choir is an outreach program organized by the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. The author of an article about a presentation given by Boyd on the formation of prison and homeless choirs reported that Boyd shared many memorable ideas about the power of music and how this idea transfers to his choir members (Kono, 2018).

Another model of an organization that is helping the homeless through music is the Choir with No Name. Based in London, England, the Choir with No Name's mission is to program choirs for homeless and marginalized people in their community. Presently, they have four choirs all over London. Members of each choir get together weekly for a rehearsal that ends with a dinner. Their founding mission is that singing makes a person experience positive emotion, is a distraction from all of life's challenges, helps to build confidence and skills, and helps nurture genuine friendships. Based on a review of their website, it seems to me that this choir is extremely successful and has a very positive impact on the members as well as the community. One member shared that the Choir with No Name completely changed the outlook of his life (The Choir With No Name, 2019).

Bailey and Davidson (2013) investigated and researched a homeless choir by interviewing seven members of the choir. Based on their analysis of the perceptions of

the choir members, they found elements of the transformative power of music, and concluded that there were direct therapeutic needs being met from the choir experience itself. Choir members shared that the experience helped to alleviate depression, increase self-esteem, improve social interaction skills, and induce cognitive stimulation. One member of the group studied reported that, “most of the guys who are in the choir sing with their heart, with their guts. . . . they are not great singers and they probably never will be, they are just singers!” (p. 26). This is consistent with Shaw’s argument about the strength of the community built when a group of people come together to sing. Bailey and Davidson (2013) also said that even though the choir members might not be trained professionals, the vocal freedom and enthusiasm of the group dominated practices and performances. I found this point to ring true in my work in *Antigone in Ferguson*; as I was looking for choir members, it was important to find people who were dedicated to the cause and had a heart for the community, not just talented singers. Teaching the elements of singing is the easy job; however, finding singers who mean every word they sing is not so amenable to instruction.

Five of the seven members Bailey and Davidson (2013) interviewed described their experience as therapy. The therapeutic nature of choral singing is a recurring theme in many studies about choral music (Dingle et al, 2013; Harris & Caporella, 2019), especially choral singing in prison choirs (Cohen 2008), intergenerational choirs (Conway & Hodgman, 2008), and in the music classroom (Mitchell, 2016). Bailey and Davidson put the homeless choir in context through Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) flow theory suggesting that the cycle of mental self-indulgence can be overcome through “investing psychic energy in goals and relationships that bring harmony to the self

indirectly” (p. 136-137). Furthermore, the advantages of group singing, in this particular case homeless choirs, are consistent with flow theory, which suggests that investing cognitive energy in social interactions can promote understanding, creativity, and productivity, and, in turn, enhance life satisfaction (Bailey & Davidson, 2002, 2013).

Intergenerational Choirs

In a research project Conway and Hodgman (2008) conducted about intergenerational choirs, one of the participants noted that, “People are very different and it can be hard to find a common ground. It’s the magnitude and value of shared music that made this happen. The love of music was strong” (p. 227). The participant was a college student, reflecting on the performance of Faure’s *Requiem* by a choir composed of college students and senior citizens. The way in which the shared music served to draw the two age groups together was the focus of the interview response, and expresses the transformative power of music in the intergenerational choral setting. The intergenerational choir, as defined by Beynon et al. (2013) is, “a purposeful bringing together of different generations for the teaching, learning, and sharing of singing in a ‘mutually beneficial’ fashion” (p. 5). This definition was based on the earlier work of Ayala et al. (2007). Darrow et al. (2001) explained that intergenerational choirs break down barriers such as depression, loneliness, and fearfulness over the future. These elements are considered human experiences that occur at every age.

The participants in the intergenerational choirs found it to be mutually beneficial in creating empathy and understanding, dissolving stereotypes and negative attitudes, while also providing an opportunity for the singers to have a musical experience, either through participating, observing, or listening (Darrow et al, 2001). Making music

together can bring together people from different age groups (Beynon et al., 2013). It seems possible that music, along with the singers' experience that comes with age, and the enthusiasm of youth, can help bridge the generation gap—not just for the participants, but also for people exposed to these groups (Darrow et al., 2001).

The model of intergenerational choirs has been used in many settings. There is research on community groups comprised of elderly singers from senior centers who worked with high school-aged students (Darrow et al., 1994), mixed-aged community groups who worked with college-aged students (Conway & Hodgman, 2008), and groups of senior citizens that worked with elementary and middle school aged students (Bales et al., 2000). This model is a prime example of the transformative power of music, as the shared music helps the young and everyone in between communicate in ways they could not have done outside of this context. In a study about the health benefits of music and singing, choir singing was discussed as a regular group activity that tends to draw members together as a single entity that must work together to produce a good sound (Dingle et al., 2013). This may help explain one reason intergenerational choirs are effective, as the rehearsals provide opportunities for members to form social support groups and shape a social identity.

This rings true in the research findings of Conway and Hodgman (2008), who worked with college students and community choir members in a collaborative intergenerational choir performance project. They reported that attitudes of the young singers toward the elderly through the intergenerational choir experience moved in a positive direction, as did the attitudes of the elderly toward themselves. Their study highlights the potential power of music as a pathway to deepening intergenerational

communication and understanding. Darrow et al. (1994) reported that intergenerational choirs can provide opportunities for personal and musical growth, establishing meaningful relationships, dismissing stereotypes or prejudice, and modifying negative attitudes. Similarly, Belgrave (2012) found that older adults valued interactions from a music-based intergenerational community program, reporting that the combination of being in contact with the younger generation, the quality of the interaction, and the duration of the program provided occasions to develop friendships among people of various ages. These interactions assisted individuals from multiple generations to see that there were similarities among all generations (Belgrave, 2012). Therefore, it seems that the power of music, along with the wisdom of the elders and the enthusiasm of youth, can help to bridge the generation gap. Intergenerational choirs are thus an example of the transformative power of music.

Music Education

Research shows that music education has become a critical component of the educational system in today's society (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; Kelstrom, 1998; Petress, 2005). Choir singing has demonstrated powerful effects on both professional and amateur singers. It reduces the stress hormone cortisol during choir rehearsal (Beck et al., 2000), increases the hormone oxytocin, improves the immune system, and enhances mood and wellbeing (Clift et al., 2010). Given the diversity represented in public schools today, music educators must remain sensitive and open to students' cognitive and social-emotional needs (Salvador & Kelly-McHale, 2017). Diversity in schools, according to these researchers, encompasses, but is not limited to, "socioeconomic status, country of origin, language, religion, ability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and race" (p. 7).

With so many factors affecting our students' way of living and ability to learn, we have an important job as music educators to encourage and help our students to thrive.

In their report on intergenerational choir, Conway and Hodgman (2008) discuss the MENC Publication, *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education*, which suggests that since convincing research establishes that music is fundamental to the way people learn, feel, and develop as human beings, an expanded definition of music education is needed. They recommend looking beyond schools for music learning and agree that everyone is a musician. I am honored at the opportunity to combine my work in music education with my community outreach initiative and tie in my desire to contribute to the social justice conversation in our country with the *Antigone in Ferguson* project. All of these elements have come together in a project that opens the door for positive change through music.

The authors of multiple studies on the transformative power of music found that singing can be a powerful mood regulator, and an excellent way to expel stress and negative emotions (Henry, 2016; Lamont, 2012), which is a valuable benefit in the middle school choir classroom. The Phoenix Youth Programs (2016) shares their mission and power of music to improve the lives of young people, "Our choir programming is designed to support youth in their development and encourages both formal and informal learning. We utilize the profound transformative power of music as a platform to engage youth and build their capacity for skill development" (p.10). This statement is consistent with my beliefs and teaching practices, and I found this model to be effective in my classroom as I worked to build a community of good citizens through the vehicle of music. The choir, like other musical activities, has therapeutic benefits. The musical

medium is a non-verbal one, inviting the soul into a metaphysical journey (Silber, 2005). In his book *Rhythm and Resistance*, Pratt (1990) described this phenomenon as “enclaves of autonomy” (p. 24) generated by music, where one can escape and create a new reality.

The profound transformative power of music as a platform to engage youth and build their capacities for skill development is one of the most effective teaching tools in the classroom (Schmidt, 2005; Tunstall, 2012). As a music teacher, I worked to share my joy of music with my students every day.

Protest Music

The beginning of the Civil Rights Movement was a profound time for music in American history. There has been a great deal of discussion concerning the Civil Rights Movement and the ways in which it deconstructed and reconstructed American democracy, citizenship, and education (Rakaba, 2016). The modern Civil Rights Movement emerged in the South, where a protest tradition was, and remains, firmly rooted. The movement broke from the protest traditions of the past in two ways. First, it was the initial time that large masses of Black people directly confronted and effectively changed the deeply embedded systemic inequalities among groups and institutions responsible for their oppression, and secondly, this was the first time in American history that Blacks adopted nonviolent tactics in mass techniques to bring about social change (Morris, 1986). Music played an important role in the nonviolent protest movement. Civil Rights Music became an interdisciplinary area of academic study, including the role of music in the socio-political organizations and other movements (Rabaka, 2016).

Black popular culture and Black political culture were intensely interconnected during the Civil Rights Movement. In many senses, the Civil Rights Movement

symbolized the culmination of centuries of African American politics creatively combined with African American music. This music was largely regarded as the African American message between 1945 and 1965 (Trecek-King, 2016). While the campaign for civil rights came to a head in the 1950s and 1960s, many individuals still search for equity and opportunity. Rosenthal and Flacks (2015) explain in their book, *Playing for Change*, that most Americans are aware of the freedom songs of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s associated with the Civil Rights Movement. The Reverend Jesse Jackson once noted that, “while mass action—marches, sit-ins, boycotts and the like—created the body of the Civil Rights Movement between 1955 and 1965, ‘the music breathed its soul’” (p. 4). Rosenthal (2001) explained that “people tend to summon up an image of demonstrators under siege from police linking arms and singing ‘We Shall Overcome’ (Seeger & Carawan, 1959),” (p. 11). In this instance, and many others during the Civil Rights Movement music, uplifted and brought encouragement to marginalized communities. However, Rosenthal argues that music during times of activism has many functions such as giving hope or encouragement to those already committed, educating those who seek knowledge, recruiting, and mobilizing those not already committed to the struggle (2001).

Rabaka (2016) highlights artists whose music is part of an unacknowledged repertoire of musical activism dating back to spirituals through the present day such as, The Soul Stirrers, The Staple Singers, Nina Simone, The Supremes, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Little Richard, and LaVern Baker. Furthermore, it was these artists and others during the Civil Rights Movement who made music that unified Black America. Rabaka (2016) explained that during the Civil Rights Movement:

. . . music was much more than merely music. The mixture of music and politics emerging out of the Civil Rights Movement is critically examined as an incredibly important site and source of spiritual rejuvenation, social organization, political education, and cultural transformation. (p. 1)

Social activism through the arts has been a strong presence during most of African American history, dating back to slavery and the use of singing as a tool to communicate. Trecek-King (2016) describes how many of the pillar musical moments in U.S. history are related to social justice. For example, jazz was born in the era of Jim Crow, and the art form held themes of politics, race, and culture. Many jazz artists of the 1960s, Art Blakey, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and Max Roach, to name a few, became politically assertive. Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie both played several benefit concerts for civil rights organizations. Trecek-King argued that jazz was a symbol of social progress. He discussed a composition Duke Ellington wrote in the summer of 1963, “My People”, which was based on the cultural contribution of African Americans and was meant to be used as a tool to educate adults and youth about Negro history (Trecek-King, 2016).

Along with jazz artists, other musicians, such as folk musician, Woody Guthrie, became leaders in the social justice movement and helped modernize the concept of protest in song. In the 1930s, Guthrie witnessed prejudice, hatred, violence, and hunger during the Dust Bowl Era and wanted to bring attention to the devastating poverty throughout the country. He wrote a song in rebuttal to Irving Berlin’s hit “God Bless America” (1938) which he initially called “God Blessed America,” with six verses set to

the tune of the Carter Family's "Little Darling, Pal of Mine" (1928). This would later be known as "This Land is Your Land" (1945) (Trecek-King, 2016).

Gospel artist Mahalia Jackson (1912-1972) was one of the best-known gospel singers of her time (Tallmadge, 1961). Gospel music is a broad predominantly American genre of Christian songs and hymns in which the creation, performance, and style vary according to cultural and social contexts. Jackson played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement. She first met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1956 at the National Baptist Convention include location. At King's request, she made many appearances singing at marches and rallies, including the March on Washington in 1963 (Trecek-King, 2016). Congressman John Lewis said during one of his speeches that, "The Civil Rights Movement without its music would have been like a bird without its wings" (Trecek-King, 2016, p. 12). Trecek-King's (2016) main message is that music of the Civil Rights Movement, and especially music associated with the speeches and rallies of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., highlighted the struggles of the past and present, and provided an opportunity to begin conversations. Jackson and the other acclaimed singers, musicians and artists of the Civil Rights Movement offers me a framework from which to compose the music for *Antigone in Ferguson*, with a goal to advocate for positive change in society.

Music as a form of protest and activism is found in other communities of thought and parts of the world. Rickwood (2017) reported on protest with community choirs and environmental activism in Australia. The author shared a story of a community women's choir that filled the Australian Parliament House foyer and performed "Lament" by Glenda Cloughley and Judith Clingan (2003) repeatedly on the day that Australia's

intention to invade Iraq was announced. A Chorus of Women, the name of the community choir, was known to “sing into the politics of peace, social justice and climate change” (Rickwood, 2017, p. 117). Along with environmental activism, choral music organizations have served many political purposes, such as the Almanac Singers who traveled the country in 1941 to help organize workers into new unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (Denisoff, 1968).

Rosenthal (2001) explained that songs, singing, and singers are integral to changing the world. Music shakes the foundations of an established order. In addition to the Almanac Singers, there are many examples of music serving to support a political movement or spread a message to a body of people. The “Wobblies” of the Industrial Workers of the World used music as an integral part of their organizing in the early 1900s, and even dating back to the 19th century, the Hutchinson Family of New Hampshire toured the country singing their songs supporting the leading movements of the day (Rosenthal, 2001). Bohlman (2013) set the scene for how music was used in Poland’s first democratic election in 1989. She focused on three topics: the political activism of musicians, activists who turned to music as a political instrument, and the musical ambitions of the communist authorities, the Polish United Workers’ Party.

Music as activism has served a profound tool at affecting change used in many places in history and around the world. Music can serve as a vital ingredient in compelling a community to not only accept diversity, but to value its unique contribution to society (Treck-King, 2016). The music of *Antigone in Ferguson* is a modern-day example of protest music, and its use in the musical demonstrates how the power of music can stimulate needed conversation in our communities. These conversations will

allow a platform and opportunity for change within people's hearts and minds, this much needed shift in society will begin with the spark that these conversations can provide.

Antigone in Ferguson and Social Justice

Antigone by Sophocles (ca. 441 B.C.E.), is a play describing the journey of a young girl in the pursuit of justice for her family. The underlying themes of the play are Antigone's conflict between society's need for law and order and an individual's need to follow her conscience, as well as the "psychological devastation that comes in the wake of a social disaster" (Moore, 2016, p. 5). The result of social disasters can be psychological wreckage that is enormous, and the scarring of the collective psyche, which could be considered trauma for individuals and communities (Weinert-Kent, 2014). Moore (2016) explained that Greek tragedy in performance can respond to contemporary events in remarkably powerful ways. The intermingling of ancient drama and modern politics, however, often brings controversy. It is by using this controversy that Doerries facilitates guided thoughtful conversations with all audiences who see his translated Greek tragedies.

Prior to *Antigone in Ferguson*, Doerries had only adapted plays to stimulate the audience's conversations. The addition of music to this new version was a new concept for his model and his company. It also should be noted that the play *Antigone* (Slavitt, ca. 441 B.C.E./2007) had already been performed in St. Louis following the death of Michael Brown, by a theater company who coincidentally had already programmed the play to open their 2014-2015 season. Timothy Moore (2016) documented the Upstream Theater Company's experience with developing and putting up this show amidst the tragedy ensuing in the Ferguson community in August, 2014. Even though their

production had been scheduled prior to the murder of Michael Brown, the parallels became very prevalent to the creative team, and were incorporated into the program notes and discussion by the director.

To provide another layer of outreach through music, the model used by the *Antigone in Ferguson* production included the use of choirs from the community or choirs from area churches to sing along with the core ensemble. Silber (2005) provided an excellent explanation for the use of the multi-vocal ensemble and why the choir is so important in many settings. He explained that the multi-vocal ensemble could be a metaphor for relationship, in which the individual is called upon to control their own voice, and at the same, time blend with the voices of others. He stated, “This delicate balance requires both personal skills: self-control, patience, ‘finding’ one’s voice, self-expression, intuition; and the relational skills necessary to produce a harmonic whole in negotiation and cooperation with a diverse group” (Silber, 2005, p. 254). During the process of *Antigone in Ferguson* the relationships built amongst the chorus members in the cast and the members of the choirs from the community invited to perform with us were observed by the audiences who came to see the production. Furthermore, by turning the play into a musical, energy was generated from the choir that appeared to stimulate audience participation in the post-show discussion.

Conclusion

Cohen’s theory of transformation (2007a) states there are complex relationships through the sung texts, the choir’s social and cultural contexts, and interactions with audience members that enhances singers’ self-perceptions and affords them the potential for positive transformational change. Reports of research and anecdotal descriptions of

successful prison, homeless, and intergenerational choirs provided me with a model for using music to impact change in a choir setting. My goal was that the chorus, in turn, would impact their community. Furthermore, *Antigone in Ferguson* follows in the tradition of the historical importance of activism for civil rights and social justice through music. This research study was designed to explore one possible application of the theory of transformation, by examining the potential of this musical experience to transform the perspectives of members of the *Antigone in Ferguson* auditioned chorus.

Chapter Three

Method

Introduction

In this study, I investigate the potentially transformative power of music from the experiences of the *Antigone in Ferguson* auditioned chorus in Harlem, New York. I approached the research from a phenomenological perspective (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1999), to examine the lived experiences of the chorus members, and also drew from heuristic inquiry (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010), a form of phenomenological inquiry that brings the personal experiences and insights of the researcher to the conversation and analysis. I sought to determine whether the theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a) was reflected in the chorus members' responses to the music and to the experience of performing in this show, and what the outcomes of this experience were for each participant.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this investigation: **How does performing in the chorus of a theatrical musical performance designed to elicit a conversation concerning social justice issues affect the chorus members throughout this process?**

To further investigate this main question, there were four sub questions:

1. What did participation in this experience mean to the performers?
2. What role did the music play in the experience for the performers during 5-week run of the show?
3. How did the post-performance discussions contribute to the experience of the performers?

4. In what ways, if any, has the music impacted the performers' ways of thinking about issues addressed in the production *Antigone in Ferguson*?

Research Method

Methodology

Finding evidence of the transformative power of music through the *Antigone in Ferguson* project must come from gaining an understanding of the chorus members' backgrounds and what they are bringing to the experience at the start of the process, retrieving information from them about their responses to the music during the show process, and facilitating reflections from each chorus member after the process concluded. To collect all of this information, I chose a qualitative research design, considering that, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.6).

Phenomenological Inquiry. Of the various qualitative research designs, phenomenological inquiry best provides the means for understanding individuals' lived experience with a particular phenomenon, in this case participation in the *Antigone in Ferguson* chorus. Phenomenology, popular in the social and health sciences, psychology, nursing, and education, was developed from the philosophical ideas of German mathematician, Edmund Husserl (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1999). Based on his assumption that "we can only know what we experience", this type of qualitative research focuses on the experience (or phenomenon) itself (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1999; Yin, 2016). Researchers and experts in phenomenology such as Moustakas (1990) and van Manen (1990) have propelled this methodology forward by emphasizing the

phenomenological interview as the primary method for data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The product, then, of a phenomenological study is a “composite description that presents the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence)” (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

Heuristic Inquiry. As a participant in the study as well as the researcher, I employed heuristic inquiry (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The word “heuristics” originated from the Greek word εὕρισκω (/hjʊəˈrɪstɪk/) meaning “to discover or to find” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Heuristic inquiry does not exclude the researcher from the study; rather, it incorporates the researcher’s experiences with the experiences of co-researchers. The researcher is required to have a direct experience of the phenomenon in question (Moustakas, 1990) to discover its essence and meaning. Heuristic methodology attempts to discover the nature and meaning of a phenomenon through internal self-search, exploration, and discovery (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic methodology encourages the researcher to explore and pursue the creative journey that begins inside one’s being and ultimately reveals its direction and meaning through internal discovery (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). In regard to *Antigone in Ferguson*, as the choir director, composer and researcher of this project, I have direct experience with the phenomenon and will be providing personal reactions to the process and how the project was shaped through a director’s journal I kept during the process.

Ethics, Reflexivity, Positionality

Ethical Considerations

After receiving consent from Theater of War Productions to complete this investigation during this run of the show, I submitted a request for research approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon gaining IRB approval, I sent out a letter of consent to each participant. I received a signed letter of consent from each interviewee. Social justice and interactions with law enforcement can be a sensitive topic for some involved in the project. Therefore, anonymity was strictly enforced in hopes of giving the chorus members the opportunity to speak freely and provide the most truthful data (Cozby & Bates, 2015). Furthermore, to protect the participants' privacy, all documented conversations and materials were password protected throughout the process. To find the Informed Consent letter given to participants, please refer to Appendix A.

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality, participants' names and any revealing information tied to institutions or specific experiences were coded with only the researcher having access to the key. Audio transcriptions were locked on the researcher's phone before being transferred to a secure file on the researcher's password-protected computer. In discussions of the findings, all names and identifiable information were changed to protect the participants (Creswell, 2013). All information shared on the blog was shared between the researcher and the individual chorus member in a private document that was kept under password protection and all interview responses we kept on my computer also under password protection.

My Role: Conductor/Music Director as Researcher

As the music director and composer of the show and the heuristic researcher of this phenomenological study, I had a unique role in this research project. Thus, the phenomenological method of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) was an appropriate model for my participation. Furthermore, using the qualitative technique of bracketing (Beech, 1999; Tufford & Newman, 2010) allowed me to provide more information on my approach to the research project. I worked to bracket my experiences and beliefs going into this process, and attempted to minimize my personal beliefs and biases in the analysis.

Being a part of this project since its inception has created some personal bias related to this process and the power of music I am presenting. In Chapter One, I commented on my frustration with how the events surrounding Michael Brown's murder affected our community and specifically, my young Black students. Beyond my duty as an educator, I was perplexed about how I could give back to the community during such a volatile time. *Antigone in Ferguson* was an artistic expression that I offered to share with my community to start a meaningful conversation.

After two years of performances and thousands of audiences experiencing this show, I witnessed how the music of *Antigone in Ferguson* impacted people in different ways. I hoped to see positive change in the lives of the chorus members in the Harlem Stage run. However, it was important that I had minimal influence over their thinking. Therefore, I implemented the process of having them experience the show for the first time and sharing their reactions to what they heard and felt rather than listening to my testimonies from past experiences. With this in mind, I decided to keep a journal of my

thoughts and experiences during this run, rather than sharing everything with the chorus members during the process. This helped keep my biases and opinions out of the conversation as much as possible.

Furthermore, I considered myself a participant in this process just as much as a researcher and observer. During the run of *Antigone in Ferguson* at the Harlem Stage, I served as the music director, choir leader, and music producer for the show. I was responsible for organizing and rehearsing the band and chorus, as well as playing lead piano. During the rehearsal process, it was also my responsibility to bring the chorus onboard to the full experience. Along with helping them learn this music, I was responsible for ensuring they understood their important roles as members of this team and participants in the conversations after the show.

Even though I have had many experiences with this music and this show, I did my best to remove my biases and opinions of the work and the music from conversations with the chorus members, so as to allow the participants to experience this show in their own way and to capture their lived experiences throughout this project. Furthermore, I did not want the participants to feel that their opinions affected their position in the chorus or role in future projects. Therefore, limiting the expression of my personal beliefs was critical to the success of this project.

Theoretical Framework

I am applying Cohen's theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a) that she based on her findings in her prison choir research for the framework for this project. Descriptions of successful prison choirs provided a model for how music can be used to impact individuals within a specific community, which has the potential to, in turn, change and

impact the larger community. Cohen's theory of transformation, which I am applying as to new phenomenon, states that complex relationships through the sung texts, the choir's social and cultural contexts, and interactions with audience members enhanced inmates' self-perceptions and afforded them the potential for positive transformational change (Cohen, 2007a). These components will be adapted for use in this study with respect to changes in thinking related to social justice issues. Through phenomenological methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) combined with the framework of the theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a), I hope to discover how each chorus member is affected by the music and the show's process.

Primary Participants

When asked by Theater of War Productions to participate in the run at the Harlem Stage, part of the plan was building a new democratic chorus to include law enforcement officers, activists, people from different faith communities, community leaders, as well as professional performers. This was designed to be a representation of the chorus created in St. Louis for the original production. We decided that a portion of the original St. Louis chorus would participate in this project as guest artists and then we would hold auditions to fill in the additional singers. After determining who would participate from the St. Louis chorus, we still needed 10 more singers: three sopranos, three altos, two tenors and two basses. Over a period of two weeks in the fall of 2018, I held auditions for these chorus members in New York City.

Before my arrival in New York, a notice was put out to a few audition blogs and an email went out to several networks to advertise the audition. We also asked a few local artists to send the information out to their community networks. Along with these

resources, we sent information to the New York City Police Department (NYPD), local churches, and a few social justice groups. Planning this show from St. Louis presented a few challenges because I was not able to personally invite people to audition, however after much communication we received a good response from the community.

During the audition process, we sought 10 members of the New York City community to participate alongside the members of the St. Louis core group. The St. Louis core group consisted of 12 members of the original 29-member chorus and band that premiered *Antigone in Ferguson* in September of 2016. I chose to use the New York City (NYC) chorus members as participants for this study because they were unfamiliar with the show and the process that the St. Louis team had created and performed.

We held two days of auditions and heard 47 singers over the course of those two days, with callbacks for 18 singers. During the callback, singers were asked to participate in a brief rehearsal segment of “Oh Light of the Sun” (Woodmore, 2016) and perform a solo segment from the show. Also, callback participants were asked a few brief questions about their commitments to social justice, what they knew about the show, and how they felt about the project. The selection of the chorus members was intended to result in a diverse body of singers from different life experiences and with varying opinions on social justice and law enforcement, to achieve our goal of a democratic chorus, similar to the original chorus created in St. Louis. As a result of the audition process, we cast 13 members, three more than originally expected, to accompany the 12 members who joined us from St. Louis.

Following the offer letters and acceptance by all 13 NYC chorus members, I sent an email message with details requesting them to be the participants in my research

project. I shared my letter of consent with them and asked them to sign it if they were willing to participate in this project. I stressed that their acceptance or participation in the *Antigone in Ferguson* run was not contingent in any way with their participation in my research. All thirteen chorus members signed the letter of consent.

Of the 13 members of the NYC chorus, seven fulfilled all requirements to serve as participants in this study; one soprano, two altos, two tenors, and two basses. These requirements were: acceptance of a position in the *Antigone in Ferguson* chorus through a signed contract with the production team, signed consent form for the research project, participation in the focus group discussion, filling out the pre-interview questionnaire, participating in the semi-structured individual interview, and a post-performance reflection. Additional information provided by the participants were also included for analysis but were not required. That information could be in the form of additional reflections on a Google Document I provided for them, and spontaneous individual or group conversations with me throughout the process. While the focus of the study was on the seven chorus members, as described previously, I was both a participant in the process and the primary researcher. Below are descriptions of characteristics of the seven participants of this study. Note that all names used here are pseudonyms. Table 1 provides a summary of these descriptions.

Participant 1

Melissa is a White female soprano vocalist in her late 20s, with a career as a freelance artist and employee at a prestigious arts center in New York City outside of the *Antigone in Ferguson* project is as a freelance artist and an employee of the Lincoln Center in New York. Melissa has been living in New York City for several years, and her

hometown is in Missouri. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Melissa serves as a chorus member and has a few lines in the dialogue of the play.

Participant 2

Meghan is a Black female alto vocalist and is also a soloist for the production. Meghan is in her mid-50s, had a career in social work for 15 years and has performed music and theater all over the world. Meghan was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and has raised her family in New York as well. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Meghan served as a chorus member, had a few lines in the dialogue, and was a substitute for the soloist for the final song after the discussion.

Participant 3

Melody is a Black female alto vocalist in her late 20s. A Brooklyn, New York native, she has been a freelance artist and banker for several years. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Melody serves as a chorus member and also a swing soloist for several pieces in the show.

Participant 4

Michael is a Black male tenor vocalist in his mid-40s. He is an officer in the New York City Police Department and the pastor of a church in Queens. Michael was born and raised in Queens, New York and is raising his family in New York as well. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Michael served as a chorus member.

Participant 5

Mitchell is a Black male tenor vocalist in his mid-twenties. Mitchell recently moved to New York City, and his hometown is in Missouri. He is a recent college

graduate and a music educator. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Mitchell is a chorus member and swing soloist.

Participant 6

Mark is a Black male baritone vocalist in his mid-20s. Mark was born and raised in Queens, New York and just returned to New York after attending college in the South. Mark is a freelance vocalist currently pursuing his teaching degree. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Mark is a chorus member and swing soloist.

Participant 7

Maxwell is a Black male baritone vocalist in his early 20s. His hometown is St. Louis, Missouri, and he is currently attending college fulltime in the Midwest. Maxwell was granted a semester sabbatical to participate in the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, and he used his experience as a research project for his university. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project Maxwell is a chorus member.

Table 1*Summary Demographic Information about the Research Participants*

Participant	Name	Sex	Voice	Age	Profession	Hometown
P1	Melissa	F	Soprano	27	Performer/ Lincoln Center	Washington, MO
P2	Meghan	F	Alto	54	Performer/Social Worker/Activist	New York, NY
P3	Melody	F	Alto	29	Performer/ Bank Teller	New York, NY
P4	Michael	M	Tenor	43	Police Officer	New York, NY
P5	Mitchell	M	Tenor	24	Performer/ School Teacher	St. Louis, MO
P6	Mark	M	Baritone	23	Singer/ Choir Director	New York, NY
P7	Maxwell	M	Baritone	21	Fulltime Student	St. Louis, MO

Data Collection

Patton (2015) explained that one data source in qualitative research is “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (p. 314) which are obtained through interviews. Therefore, I collected data from the chorus member participants through a focus group discussion, pre-interview questionnaire, semi-structured individual interviews, and reflective online journals (blogs) throughout the process including post show reflections. For a transcript of the focus group discussion please refer to Appendix D, for the pre-interview questionnaire please refer to Appendix B, and for the semi-structured individual interviews and reflective online journals please refer to Appendix B. I included discussions with the participants in my director’s journal, as well as my own observations and reflections. For my director’s journal please refer to

Appendix C. Below is detailed information on all the data collected throughout the process. The first data collected was from the focus group, followed by the pre-interview questionnaire, then, next the semi-structured individual interviews, followed by any blog post the participants chose to share throughout the process, and finally the final reflection.

Focus Group

The focus group was the first step in the data collection process. I used this to introduce the project to the chorus members as well as introduce the chorus members to each other. Beginning the process with their initial thoughts allowed me to track how the chorus members' opinions changed over the course of the show, as well as help them connect with each other to begin the process.

At the beginning of the first rehearsal, I gathered the chorus together and read my recruitment statement for the research project. Anyone who was no longer interested in participating in the complete research project was asked to participate in the focus group interview since it was a way to introduce each chorus member to the group and the project.

The focus group was audio recorded with the permission of everyone in the room. Some of the members of the focus group did not complete all requirements to participate in the full study, however. Because I had their initial permission, I am using the non-participant comments from the focus group as a separate set of data for the purpose of this study. The members of the focus group who did not complete the study will be referred to as FGM1 through FGM5. A chart summarizing their demographic characteristics is provided in Table 2 in Chapter Four. I spoke first to provide a model for

those who needed guidance through the conversation, and also encouraged transparency as we began this process. I asked each chorus member to introduce themselves and share the degree to which they were comfortable within the group setting:

1. Please introduce yourself: age, profession, and musical background
2. Please share what you know about the project and any hopeful outcomes - individual and for the group.
3. Your story- anything you would like the group to know about you that makes you who you are.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

I developed an interview questionnaire to gather the chorus members' initial thoughts on the matters discussed in *Antigone in Ferguson*. I sent the participants these questions to contemplate prior to their interviews, through a private Google Document. These questions allow each chorus member to reflect and respond privately to some more sensitive material surrounding the show, as well as take their time to contemplate about their responses. Each chorus member was asked to respond and reflect on the following pre-interview questionnaire:

1. Your Journey – How did you arrive at the audition for *Antigone in Ferguson*?
What interested you in this process?
2. The Impact – How do you think *Antigone in Ferguson* will inform your thinking moving forward?
3. Your Opinion – Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police?)

4. Your Expectation – What are your expectations as a performer about the project, the audience, the community?
5. Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

Individual Interviews

To have one-on-one contact with each chorus member during the beginning of the project to discuss the production, their thoughts about the show and process, questions they had about the research project and reflection on their Google Document responses, I required each chorus member participating in the research project to schedule an interview with me within the first two weeks of the process. The interview began with the questions they answered on the Google Document, and then followed up with questions listed below to continue the conversation.

Each interview was structured a little differently based on the participants' responses and most lasted for 20 or 25 minutes. I recorded them on my cell phone and they were password protected throughout the entire process. All interviews were transcribed; the transcriptions are available in Appendix B.

I included the following questions in each semi-structured individual interview in addition to those they had received in advance:

1. Anything you would like to add to your Google Document responses?
2. What do you think about the process so far?
3. How do you think rehearsals are going so far?
4. What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?
5. What was your experience learning the music of *Antigone in Ferguson* and how has the music informed the play *Antigone* for you?

Online Reflection Journal (Blog on Google Document)

To gather participants' thoughts over the course of the research project, I created a password-protected folder in Google Drive with a Google Document for each participant. The Google Document contained their pre-interview questionnaire responses and writing prompts for the rehearsal process. I alerted each chorus member when I shared a link to their online reflection journal (blog) and instructions to access the document to answer the pre-interview questions and track their reactions to the process during the upcoming weeks. Following the pre-interview questions at the beginning of the project, the chorus members were asked to reflect at specific check-in points in the process and also complete a post-show reflection. I requested check-ins on the Google Document periodically but these were not required by a specific date.

I made each chorus member aware in their semi-structured interview of the importance of completing all required research components to continue to serve as a participant in this research project, but that reflections during the process were optional. Three participants responded on their blogs. I left several questions on the blog to prompt participant responses. A free write option was also a possibility. The questions provided were as follows:

1. What is your perception of the police?
2. What was your last or most impactful interaction with a police officer?
3. How do you contribute to the social justice movement in our society?
4. What is your profession?
5. What was your experience learning the music of *Antigone in Ferguson* and how has the music informed the play *Antigone* for you?

6. How has *Antigone in Ferguson* impacted your life personally and how have you seen *Antigone in Ferguson* affect audiences and other chorus members around you?

Final Reflections

As a final step of each chorus member's online reflection journal (blog), they were asked to give a final reflection on the production. This was designed to get the chorus members' last impression of the process, and provide them with the chance to debrief about the show. Each chorus member was asked to reflect on their experience and write a blog post within two weeks following the final performance. Final reflections were asked to be the last thing written in their online journal with a date attached. All seven participants completed their final reflection.

Director's Journal

In an effort to continue this heuristic research model (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985) and continue bracketing myself in this process (Beech, 1999), I decided to keep a journal (Tufford & Newman, 2012) to provide context throughout the teaching process and performances during the seven weeks of rehearsals and performances. I documented conversations, interactions and meaningful experiences through field notes. I also included reflections after rehearsal and shows as soon as possible following the experience as to not forget details. Comments from my director's journal are used in Chapter Four to help support the answers to the research questions. I journaled heavily at the beginning during the rehearsal process and then throughout the run as ideas, concepts, and events of interest were revealed during the process. I also wrote a final reflection entry as a part of my director's journal.

Structure of *Antigone in Ferguson*

As described in Chapter One, *Antigone in Ferguson* was part of the Theater of War Productions project, which used a unique model for all of their productions. *Antigone in Ferguson* has a similar structure; however, the addition of music was a new element to the traditional Greek play selected and translated by Artistic Director Doerries. The model of used by Theater of War Productions in many of their shows like *Antigone in Ferguson* is similar to the work of Boal's (2002) Theater of the Oppressed and his "spect-actors" (Brown & Gillespie, 1999; Green, 2001).

The first part of the structure was the pre-show environment. The creative team developed a slideshow of pictures, videos, and interviews with the chorus members to introduce them to the audience. This first element was important because it provided the audience a view into the lives of the chorus members outside of the show and portrayed their humanity, which might not be conveyed through the production. This helped the audience understand that most chorus members were not professional singers, but a democratic body of people who had other professions and lives outside of music. This was important because every time this choir sang the audience was blown away by their sound, stage presence, and emotional power of the music.

While the slideshow presentation was running, the chorus came out twenty minutes prior to the actual show performance to sing a set of warm-up music. The artistic director labeled this "warm-up music" because it invited the audience into the experience, opened the doors to the audience's emotions and perhaps reservations, and it sets the mood in the room before we begin the show experience. The music director selects this warm-up music is selected each night from a collection of gospel songs familiar to

audience members of certain faith communities as well as audience members who connect strongly with Black culture. This warm-up music serves an “invocation”, as it is called in the Black church, or an inviting of the Holy Spirit into the room before we begin our show. Incorporating this element of Black culture added a layer to the discussion and the experience for the audience.

Following the warm-up music, the artist director and co-facilitator step out to greet the audience and share about the experience in which they are about to take part, using the warm-up music as an example of the first departure from traditional theater. After the warm-up music and the welcome from the facilitators, the show begins immediately.

Specific to *Antigone in Ferguson*, the chorus serves as a model for the audience showing them how to unite despite opposing viewpoints and opinions, as they sing together and share in the performance regardless of their differences. Furthermore, outside of the performance when the chorus gets together, they hold conversations about where members are in life, struggles, and celebrations.

The show is about an hour and five minutes long—concluding with a gospel power ballad—a pinnacle moment in the show designed to encourage heartfelt conversations about social justice, as opposed to the audience sitting on the sideline as spectators. Then, facilitators, including Doerries, come out to lead the post-show discussions. Four representatives of the community are introduced—not celebrities or politicians—who stand in front of the audience to initiate the conversation and model the way forward. Next, the facilitators move out into the audience to solicit audience members’ responses, using three or four questions to guide a conversation, for about an

hour and fifteen minutes. Doerries reminds the audience that the discussion is the most important part of the event. Following the post-show discussion, the chorus returns for a final departure song, and then refreshments are provided in the lobby to encourage people to linger to extend the post-show conversation.

This very specific model adheres to much of the mission of Theater of War Productions and is a model that provides theater for all people, not just those who can afford it. Furthermore, it allows *Antigone in Ferguson* to be an experience; not merely entertainment; but an opportunity for growth, thought-provoking conversation, and healing for all involved—chorus, staff, actors, and audience members.

Project Location

After many conversations with venues in New York, a contractual agreement was made with the Harlem Stage in Harlem, New York. As stated on their website, the Harlem Stage is a performing arts facility that cultivates Harlem's cultural legacy to contemporary artists of color. The Harlem Stage Gatehouse has been a New York City landmark building since 1890, when it was built as the pivotal facility within the Croton Aqueduct system. This building was restored in 2006 into a flexible performance, rehearsal, and support space. What was originally a source for distributing fresh water to New York City, is now a vital source of creativity, ideas and culture (Harlem Stage, 2020). With this rich history, the creative team knew the Harlem Stage was a very appropriate space for the show.

Rehearsal and Performance Schedules (8/8/2018-10/13/2018)

Rehearsal and performance schedules were mapped out at the beginning of the planning process. A summary is provided here. For a more detailed description of rehearsal and performance schedules, please refer to Appendix E.

Week 1

During the first week of the process, the 13 chorus members all gathered for the first time. Until this time, members did not know who made the final cut because there was no official list posted, just individual offer letters sent out. Offer letters had been sent out privately so that we would have viable options in the event that someone declined and we needed to reach out to any of our back-up vocalists, but all thirteen accepted the offer. There were three rehearsals the first week: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. During the first rehearsal, we spent the first hour and fifteen minutes in the focus group interview. The second and third rehearsals had two long breaks for individual and small group conversations. There was not a formal large group conversation either of those days. The focus for Day 2 and Day 3 was the music. I invested a lot of time the first week working on warm-up music and then finished the week with work on the originally-composed music.

Week 2

The chorus had the second week off from rehearsals so I could handle other production business. This also allowed time for me to conduct semi-structured interviews with individual chorus members.

Week 3

We incorporated the St. Louis singers and musicians into the process during Week 3. We rehearsed Monday through Thursday in the evenings to accommodate chorus members who had jobs outside of this show. By this point in the process, we were running major portions of the show in preparation for tech week.

Week 4

Week 4 was tech week; we held tech rehearsals Tuesday through Friday. A different chorus from the community joined the core group each day. Saturday was the first dress rehearsal with the actors who gave the dramatic readings of the dialogue.

Week 5

The first week of the show run we held a dress rehearsal with an invited audience on Tuesday. Wednesday was a preview performance for VIP members of the NYC theater community and members of the press. Thursday was the official opening night, followed by a performance on Friday and two performances on Saturday.

Show Run (Week 6-9)

The show ran Tuesday through Saturday evenings, with a Saturday matinee for five weeks for a total of 30 performances.

Data Analysis

After the conclusion of the show run, I collected the information from the Google Documents from each of the seven participants who had completed all required components. I transcribed their interviews and included them in the Google Document after their written comments.

Interviews

I transcribed all of the individual interview audio recordings. Most transcriptions were brief because many participants just added a few comments to their written responses. I then reviewed the transcriptions to fix typographical errors. The seven chorus members produced 41 pages of comments from their transcribed interviews and blogs. I also transcribed the focus group interview; findings related to the focus group are reported in Chapter Four. I also analyzed comments related to the research questions.

I conducted analytical coding for data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I employed both open-coding techniques (Rivas, 2012), as well as coding categories related to the theoretical basis of the study, the transformative power of music, to analyze the data. I initially coded the data myself. Then, I used the online program, Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants, 2018), to aid in the analysis.

I first highlighted key words or phrases from the interviewees' responses and wrote memos in the margins that either addressed a research question or prompted a question I needed to answer later (Creswell, 2013). I compiled all of the memos and key ideas on a separate document where all the main ideas from the participant responses could be compared together. When ideas were repeated as categories, I placed a check mark next to the category or idea to visually see the common themes to emerge. I then enacted the same procedure for all seven participants.

Following the above-mentioned coding process, I imported all the transcripts and blog responses into the Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants, 2018), software to compare the software's analysis of the materials. The main uses of the software were to

create charts, graphs, and an overview of information I provided. Therefore, the results were very comparable to my initial coding.

Trustworthiness

Member Checking

I sent each transcript to the respective participant for review and to check accuracy. I asked each chorus member to confirm that my analysis was a correct representation of their comments and thoughts throughout the process and, if not, to make revisions. Only three participants indicated places they wished to clarify.

After completing the initial data analysis, I sent portions of three interviewees' analyses to them with questions for clarification (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I completed final member checks after I compiled all the interview and blog responses into one description to report the data for each chorus member (see Chapter Four). I communicated with all seven chorus members, getting their approval for the descriptions. Four participants approved what I wrote about them. I communicated with three other chorus members over the phone about changes they wanted to make to their responses; one member and I corresponded by email with a few changes. Finally, I sent the materials back once more to all seven participants to do one last check with edits and changes I made to their portions of the project. All seven gave final approval.

To ensure dependability, I engaged in peer checking by sending a portion of the transcripts to a fellow scholar familiar with qualitative research expertise to code the data and compare agreement in analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I then compared my fellow scholar's codes with my initial codes. While the verbiage varied slightly, we agreed that the codes were similar and a consensus was established.

Conclusion

The intent of this study was to track and document the possible transformative power of the music of *Antigone in Ferguson* on the experiences of each chorus member. To do this, I first gained IRB approval from the review board of the university and then announced the auditions for new chorus members to join the show in New York City. After auditions, I approached the 13 new members about participating in this research project with a recruitment script. After those interested signed the informed consent letter, we held the focus group. Seven of the 13 members of the chorus completed the remaining components of the study and served as the main participants. These participants were asked to fill out a pre-interview questionnaire and schedule an individual semi-structured interview. Then, the participants were asked to blog about the rehearsal and performance processes, focusing on their experience with the music and how they were affected by the show regarding the social justice issues discussed in the post-production conversations. Following this process, I asked all participants to write a final reflection on their experience during this project.

All interviews were transcribed and analyzed with open coding techniques. My hope was that findings related to the collective experiences of the chorus, as represented by each participant's individual experiences, would emerge from the data as the participants reflected on their experiences from all aspects of the process.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to observe the transformative power of music, through the lens of Cohen's theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a), for the auditioned chorus members in the five-week run of *Antigone in Ferguson* at the Off-Broadway theater, The Harlem Stage in Harlem, New York in the fall of 2018. In this chapter, I will present findings that answer each research question based on the data from the seven chorus members who completed all steps of the process. This includes themes that emerged from chorus members' responses in regard to the transformative power of the music of *Antigone in Ferguson*. The narrative presented will help the reader to create a snapshot of how the music, the show, and the process of *Antigone in Ferguson* affected the auditioned chorus members during the two-week rehearsal and five-week run and help to capture the essence of the chorus members' lived experience during this production.

Analyses of the data collected through the participant interview transcripts and blog responses are reported in this chapter, organized initially by participants. As described in Chapter Three, the data were obtained from semi-structured individual interviews (Creswell, 2013) with each participant before rehearsals began, online reflection journals (blogs) mid-run, a final reflection (included in the blog) after the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, and finally, my observations throughout the rehearsal and performance process. (My director's notes are listed in Appendix C and will be

mentioned in a few areas in this discussion. Most of the director’s notes are comments on the flow of the rehearsals and performances and not on the reactions of the participants.)

Focus Group Participants

I analyzed the focus group transcript and reported findings alongside the participants’ interviews and blog responses in this report. Five chorus members did not complete all required elements of the research project but did give their consent to use their focus group transcript for the purposes of this research. Their responses are listed under the appropriate research question or sub-question and are labeled with FGM (Focus Group Member) and a number signifying which participant gave the comment. Focus group responses from the seven participants are labeled with the participant’s pseudonym and the letters FG. The focus group-only participants’ demographic information is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Focus Group Participants Only

Variable	Gender	Voice	Age	Profession	Hometown
FGM1	F	Alto	21	Performer	New York, NY
FGM2	F	Alto	28	Performer	PG County, MD
FGM3	M	Baritone	N/A	Director/ Performer	New York, NY
FGM4	F	Soprano	N/A	Performer	Columbia, MD
FGM5	F	Soprano	30	Performer	Washington DC

Focus Group Analysis

During the opening session of the *Antigone in Ferguson* rehearsal process, I held a focus group before the start of music rehearsals. The focus group conversation set the

stage for the rest of the production, as well as for my data collection. Comments made during the focus group also contributed to the thematic analysis. Also, some statements made are quoted in sections of this document that directly address the research questions. For a full transcript of this conversation please refer to the transcript labeled Focus Group Interview, included as Appendix D.

The purpose of the focus group was to acquaint chorus members with each other, and also to get their perspectives on the project along with their personal connections to social justice issues in today's society. Of the 13 chorus members selected to participate in the Harlem Stage run of *Antigone in Ferguson*, nine participated in the focus group and first rehearsal. Four chorus members did not participate; one was late to rehearsal and missed the focus group discussion, one was a college student and was only able to attend the dress rehearsals and performances as a part of an agreement with their university, and the other two had to work during the focus group and first rehearsal. When casting, an important factor was including people from different walks of life, having different fundamental values, ways of thinking, and different professions. Therefore, we had to work around several schedules to create a functioning rehearsal plan.

Two of the 13 members previously participated in the project in New York City premiered in 2016, and one chorus member saw the project during a run in St. Louis, Missouri. Everyone else was new to the project and this model. With that in mind, at the beginning of the focus group session, I asked those who had seen and participated in the project previously to talk about their past experience for the contextual benefit of new

members. However, I encouraged everyone to share their honest perspective without being swayed by the comments of the veteran members or myself.

One of the veteran members began the conversation with her perspective on several issues surrounding the topic of police brutality, racism and gave a reflection on her takeaways from the show. Following her remarks, everyone was given an opportunity to speak. The chorus members were encouraged to share within the limitations of their comfort level at the time of the focus group. I reminded the participants that everyone has a different perspective and are free to openly express that perspective however they see fit. This allows for us to have a productive experience together. Many people commented on the egregious state of our nation and shared stories about racial profiling, police brutality, and systemic racism that impacted their lives and communities. One chorus member shared their frustration with so many people with deeply rooted systemic racism and who are ill-informed in our country and the manner in which they make assumptions regarding how people of color should respond to the shocking tragedies happening in our communities (FGM4). Continuing this conversation, another participant commented on their distrust and loss of faith in law enforcement as related to Ferguson:

I was certainly affected by Michael Brown and Ferguson; it calls people to dig more deeply, to do soul searching, grapple with some issues that may be uncomfortable. I cannot deal with Black people having to be perfect in a situation just to live. Are you going to say that someone can shoot me? And, if someone

stole, you gonna' take their life because they stole a package of cigarettes. Are you out of your mind? Only in America would that be acceptable. (FGM3)

Yet another member chimed in candidly to express her hatred for the police prior to her previous experience performing with this project in 2016. She had not had positive interactions with law enforcement in her hometown on the East Coast. Her perspective was changed after meeting and working with police officers in the *Antigone in Ferguson* production over the past two years. With this in mind, it was valuable to get the perspective of one of the chorus members from New York City who had been in law enforcement for 25 years. They shared a transparent story of the flaws within law enforcement, while at the same time reminding us that there are still many police officers who work hard to uphold the law, serve the community, and treat people with dignity and respect. Quotes from this chorus member are listed under Michael in the participant section.

Finally, during the focus group, one member commented on how different this process was from any other professional production in which they had participated and how they thought the remainder of the process would be transformative (Cohen, 2012). The focus group was very impactful and many shared with me the value of spending time together. Some individuals on the creative team did not see the value of taking time during a tight rehearsal process for this kind of interaction, but I argued that this conversation and these human connections were the only way to make powerful music together.

I'm just excited to be in this music and in this space. And it's not just the fact that we're doing this, I mean we're having conversations and seemingly we will

continue to have conversation and not just showing up, like “here’s your music” and “alright see you tomorrow” do the show, go home and sleep and forget about it, I think this will be a very transformative experience. (FGM5)

The topics discussed in this show evoke vulnerable moments for many people. Therefore, I believe immediately establishing and providing a safe space for the chorus during rehearsals would serve as a model and provide the same safe space for the audiences during the run. The pain and hurt that is revealed through this show is strong, and it is imperative the emotional and mental health of the chorus and audience members are considered; along with the vocal and physical health of the team. Through this conversation, and others subsequently, the chorus was able to find common ground, even if they had different points of view.

Analyses of the Seven Participants’ Responses

There were seven major themes that emerged from the analysis of the seven main participants’ responses (see Table 1, p.46). Data relating to each of the seven themes, indicated by the abbreviated names presented in the table, will be presented with respect to the corresponding research sub-questions, incorporating discussion of how the themes relate to the related literature. These data are based primarily on interview transcripts and the blogs provided by each of the seven chorus members who completed the research project requirements, although some data from the focus group are also included. A full transcript of the interviews and complete blog post responses may be found in Appendix B.

Table 3

Themes and Abbreviations

Themes	Abbreviation
How the music helps the chorus	How music helps chorus
How the music helps the community	How music helps community
Comments about the music	Music
Effects of the show and music on the chorus	Effect of music
Community impact from the production	Community engagement
Chorus member's experience	Experience
How AIF inspires chorus and gives hope to the chorus and community	Inspiration and hope

Participants

During the rehearsal process and run of *Antigone in Ferguson*, seven of the 13 chorus members completed all steps of the research requirements for this project. Each participant's experience is described in the sections that follow based on their demographic information, focus group responses, semi-structured interviews, and blog responses. In reporting the information for each participant, I will answer components of the research questions and address the transformative power of music through their responses. Quotes that directly help answer a specific research question will be labeled with RSQ (research sub-question) and then the question number. Additional information will follow in the Additional Findings section.

Melissa

Melissa is a 26-year-old White female soprano vocalist whose job outside of the *Antigone in Ferguson* project is a freelance artist and an employee at a prestigious center

in New York. Melissa had been in New York for several years, and her hometown is in Missouri. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Melissa served as a chorus member and had a few lines in the dialogue of the play. Melissa struggled with the events of Ferguson and how she was supposed to process these events being a White woman. Because she was so far removed from Ferguson and didn't understand the growing racial tension, she reached out to her mother who shared this story with her:

To be totally honest I was one of those people, I didn't connect with it. I didn't understand, the same year that Michael Brown happened my mom took a teaching position in the [District Name]. She told me this story and it finally just clicked in my mind why it was so important. She was having a conversation with her principal and in the same conversation, she said, "I don't get it. Can you explain to me what?" And he used this as an example: "Grocery shopping. You go grocery shopping with no trouble, as a principal I wear a suit every single day and if I go to the grocery store and I am wearing my suit I'm fine, no one bothers me. But if I go home and change into gym shorts and a sweatshirt and go to the grocery store I'm followed everywhere. Because someone is assuming I'm going to steal." I was like something so small and silly, it seems that I take for granted every day. It just struck me in a way, that's so crazy and I go to the store all the time with no bra and sweatpants and people don't say anything to me. That's the moment that I really felt just because I'm not a person of color it doesn't make it any less important that I am involved and that my voice is heard. That is why I am excited for this project. (Melissa, FG)

Melissa's reflection on her desire to have a voice in these social justice matters came to her through the *Antigone in Ferguson* project. Melissa was excited to be a part of a project that represented her home state, but also sheds light on many social justice issues she was not aware of during the discussion. As she explained:

Being from Missouri and so close to Ferguson, I felt it was important to get involved. I've wanted to be involved in this movement, but never really knew how. *Antigone in Ferguson* has given me the chance to do just that. I am getting to sing beautiful music and being involved in something meaningful. (Melissa, Interview Q1, RSQ1)

The rehearsal process provided an opportunity for chorus members to gather and make personal connections with their colleagues. Then, in performance, they were able to make connections with the audience members through the discussion. Melissa spoke about being intimidated being the only White singer with a group of Black singers, but was pleasantly surprised the majority of the group was excited to have Melissa on board. One of the facilitators of the group shared the need for White allies in America, and how Melissa can use her voice to advocate for the Black community to her White brothers and sisters. In her interview, Melissa also reflected on the rehearsal process and the challenge of being a White singer in this project and trying to learn all of the unfamiliar gospel music that started the show each night:

Learning the music for *Antigone in Ferguson* was so fun for me! To be totally honest, what gave me more trouble was learning the pre-show music that was used. Because it was more of a cultural aspect and as someone who did not grow

up going to church often and hasn't been to church in years, learning the gospel music proved to be the most challenging of the show. The pre-show music was more about feeling and being in the moment than structure and singing what was written on the page, which is something I've always struggled with. But it was such a fun challenge and learning both the pre-show music and the music used in the show has absolutely made me a stronger singer and music reader and is something I'll always be grateful for. (Melissa, Interview Q5, RSQ2)

Another important comment that Melissa shared about this process speaks to the importance and power of the music in the show. She explained how the music helped her understand the story:

When I read the text for *Antigone*, it made sense, especially since it was an adaptation. But what really helped me grasp the concepts and meanings behind the story was the music. Singing the music every night made me fully understand the story in a way I could have never gotten myself by just reading it. (Melissa, Interview Q5, RSQ2)

The most important part of Melissa's blog was figuring out what it means to be an ally for people of color. There were many conversations during the post-performance discussions about how White people should get involved with these social justice issues and how they need to share these messages with their White brothers and sisters.

Melissa was very nervous about auditioning for this production, not knowing how or if she would fit into the process. Because I believed that everyone should have a voice in this conversation, no matter race, gender, sexual orientation, social or class status, or otherwise, I welcomed Melissa and her diverse perspective to this production. However,

there was a chorus member of color who did not share the same feeling on the matter and chose to make Melissa's experience uncomfortable during the process, unbeknownst to me at the time. It was disappointing to still deal with bullying behind the scenes, even in this professional setting. Furthermore, it was unfortunate for one chorus member to ruin the experience for Melissa through their close-mindedness and harsh language toward her. Melissa chose not to share these challenges with the creative team until the end of the process so as not to interfere, at which time we told her we wished this had come to us immediately. According to Melissa:

I had a really hard time with one choir member who seemed to not like me, it is just strange that she is singling me out. I am already the only White person in the show, I didn't do anything to her. (Melissa, Blog Post)

Regardless of the hostility from the other chorus member, Melissa shared in her final reflection that this show and process was life-changing for her, stating that "*Antigone in Ferguson* completely changed the way I think" (Interview Q2, RSQ4). She went on to say that she enjoyed the process even while enduring the bullying from the chorus member, and that she was happy that other chorus members supported her during that time and helped her to find the words to share with the creative team and how to deal with the close-minded chorus member. I was pleased to learn that the rest of the chorus accepted Melissa as a contributing member and advocated for her during this process.

Meghan

Meghan is a 52-year-old Black female alto vocalist and was also a soloist for this production. Meghan had a career in social work and has performed music and theater all over the world. Meghan was born and raised on the East Coast and raised her family

there, as well. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Meghan served as a chorus member, had a few lines in the dialogue, and was a substitute for the soloist for the final song after the discussion. Meghan was a senior member of this production and staff and a participant in the New York City premiere of this production in October of 2016. Meghan was the chorus leader for the New York singers for the premiere and has been a music leader throughout this process. Therefore, she had a lot of insight on this process. Additionally, she was in her 50s and had raised three children, so her commentary came with wisdom acquired through age and experience, as well. During the focus group she commented on a tragedy that happened in her mid-20s:

So, I get to do this Ferguson work which is really near and dear to my heart because my oldest nephew was killed, not by a policeman, but was murdered in the streets of Brooklyn. I was 25 at the time and he was 20, so my passion about Black men being slaughtered in our streets is something that brings tears to my eyes. And I vowed, after losing my nephew, that not another one on my watch was gonna' ever see that as an end. (Meghan, Focus Group)

This account and many others like it were shared during the focus group and throughout the post discussions after the show. In Chapter Five, I will share a personal account of hearing audience members describe experiences of death and murder from police brutality and gun violence that had strong effects on the cast and crew of the show and audiences alike.

There were also themes of mentorship which came from Meghan during the focus group. She offered many of her professional contacts as a way for these artists to grow in

the industry, as well as words of wisdom as the younger artists pursue their dreams. This was an important moment in the conversation because outside of the realm of social justice, performers in this show were making connections that would not only transform lives through music but also through the action of ally or friend and building relationships. Also, during the focus group, Meghan went into detail about how she will use her experiences and connections to help guide the chorus members to success:

And I also want to say being the oldest gal in the room, I have a lot of great [contacts]. I'm inviting everyone that has ever reviewed me in the New York Times and everybody who I have ever worked with to this 5-week run. I think there is enough life for everybody, hopefully this will yield work for all of us. My daughter will tell you, if I can, I put everyone on that I can. You will not be starving for the rest of the year. You are about to get PAID! (Meghan, Focus Group)

I made a personal connection with Meghan, who instantly turned into a mentor and an advocate for my work in New York City. Being a new artist in this environment can be difficult at times and I valued Meghan's validation. Along with providing me with support as I navigated a new city, she also connected me to people in the industry who would appreciate my passion for music and energize my craft. Meghan's mentorship is expressed in the lens of transformation as well because she was helping to transform others through her wisdom and experiences as she herself was also transforming simultaneously through the work of this project.

The most unique portion of the *Antigone in Ferguson* process was the post-show discussion about the work that allows the entire audience and the cast and staff of *Antigone in Ferguson* to engage in an honest conversation to unpack their thoughts and feelings about the show and how it either aligned with their thinking or challenged their positions. Meghan described her thoughts about this to the others in the focus group session:

I am delighted that the conversation is taking place. I pray that the community can find it in ourselves to realize that we are more alike than we are different and we need to accept each other on our own terms. (Meghan, Focus Group)

The idea that music has transformative power (Cohen 2008, 2012) rings true through several of the performer's statements about its impact in the context of this show. In the focus group, Meghan described how the music informed the story, "Singing the music every night made me fully understand the story in a way I could have never gotten myself by just reading [the play]" (Meghan, Focus Group, RSQ2). In her interview, Meghan offered some insightful comments on the music and how it affects the audience. She disclosed, "The music tells a whole other story that the play doesn't share. It gives the audience more information and helps them to understand the story" (Meghan, Interview Q4, RSQ2).

Meghan's comment about the music telling "a whole other story" gives an interesting perspective on the importance of the music to this process, and furthermore, how the music speaks to different audience members in different ways. In her final reflection and blog, Meghan, having gone through a few versions of this process,

reflected on how inspiring this process is and her desire for moving forward: “I hope to continue to grow and walk through life with my heart and eyes open” (Meghan, Final Reflection, RSQ1).

In her blog post, Meghan talked about the importance of the post-performance discussions and how they are so needed for the many audiences with whom we make contact every night. Meghan also was a chorus member who sat on the discussion panel several times and shared her story with many audience members throughout the process. In regard to the audience response to the performance and their transformation throughout the process she shared, “I look forward to the constant growth and changing of my mind as I listen to many perspectives” (Meghan, Blog, Q4, RSQ3). Finally, regarding how Meghan was transformed throughout this process, in her final reflection she made the simple statement, “I am better than when I came” (Meghan, Final Reflection, RSQ1).

Along with Meghan’s mentorship to me and the chorus, it was refreshing to see her honest and playful side, as well. During her interview, I asked about her experience learning the music of *Antigone in Ferguson* and she had this to say,

Well you know I can’t read a note of this stuff and this stuff is hard, but I love it and I love you! It was challenging remembering all these notes, but we are going to get it done. (Meghan, Interview Q4, RSQ2)

As I reflected in my director’s journal, one of the valuable pieces of this process is being able to collaborate with musically educated, advanced musicians and non-music readers in the same space. The mentorship and teaching that happens in this type of community provides an even stronger experience for the

singers. Those who are more advanced are able to assist those who need help with the music, while those who cannot read music but have learned all of the gospel music by rote and/or know the songs and genre already are able to help the advanced music readers with style and culture. Meghan demonstrated that well throughout this process.

Melody

Melody is a 28-year-old Black female alto vocalist. A Brooklyn, New York native, she had been a freelance artist as well as a banker for several years. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Melody served as a chorus member and also a swing soloist. Melody was a very positive influence in the production and the process. Melody was also an encourager, and made sure to help other castmates find a positive outlook during challenging conversations. She also had a valuable story to share, involving the fact that she had given up on music and singing because of all of the rejection she had experienced in the industry. She felt as though her life was going to shift to corporate America, which was not what she envisioned for herself, but she stated that *Antigone in Ferguson* gave her confidence back to pursue music:

This has been an amazing experience and I am so appreciative to be a part of this.

It was not too long ago that I had given up on music and this process gave me my mojo back. It gave me the courage to keep going and confidence in my singing.

(Melody, Interview, Q1, RSQ 1)

Following this response, I asked what, specifically, had boosted her confidence so that I might gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which she had grown through this process. She responded:

Being chosen! It was an honor to be selected for this group and to get paid! Yes Lord! I was working temp jobs and trying to make it before this process and this gave me the courage to go back to singing full time and put myself out there again. (Melody, Interview, Q2, RSQ1)

Melody demonstrates the transformative power of art even in the beginning of the process, her feelings on performance completely changed just from being chosen for this project and affirming that her talent was enough. Melody provided some great insight on the music of *Antigone in Ferguson*. She shared how inspiring it was to work with musicians of all levels, especially those who did not read music. During her interview she shared:

The type of music that you wrote was not the usual type of music that I listen to and sing, but I did enjoy learning with people who do not read music. It encouraged me that so many people had a mixture of talent. And the gospel music was refreshing because we didn't really need to read the music, we could just listen and it helps to train my ear. It was refreshing to be able to do both. It was great to learn and start remembering my music theory. (Melody, Interview, Q6, RSQ2)

These comments about the process and the music shed light on practices that make the performances successful. Melody went on to say:

The music helps me to understand the play. It is much easier for me to communicate through music and for me to understand someone through music.

The music helps me to be engaged. Reading something like Sophocles or

Shakespeare, the music helped me to understand what was going on. (Melody, Interview, Q6, RSQ2)

Melody's interview revealed an important element of music for the education setting, community setting and theater setting: music used as communication. Melody explained that there are people, like herself, who feel more comfortable sharing their passions and stories through music. As Melody reflected on this production, she made some insightful comments on the process and its impact, as well sharing, "The show [*Antigone in Ferguson*] has such a powerful meaning and is for such a good purpose" (Interview Q4).

Regarding social justice, Melody made some comments about where we are as a society and a nation. She spoke about a loss of hope with all of the tragedy around us all the time. She told us of the power of the production and how it has given her hope that all is not lost in our society and specifically the younger generation. She wrote in her blog:

Before *Antigone in Ferguson* I would have said we were lost as a society and helpless, but now I think there is a little bit of hope. Doing programs like this and meeting other young activists gives me hope for our future. Seeing older people who want to listen and encourage our younger generation also gives me hope! (Melody, Blog Q5)

Melody was a critical piece to this process because of her positive attitude, beautiful voice, and thoughtful comments during rehearsals and the post-show discussions. She was adept at sharing during tense moments in the post-show discussions to dissolve tension in the room or bring a different perspective. During her interview, she

reflected on the outcome of the process and the post-show discussion. In regard to transformation she stated, “Lives were changed and people were able to work together in our failing society through the work of *Antigone in Ferguson*” (Melody, Interview Q5).

In her final reflection, she commented how she had grown throughout this process, “I am going to exercise my boldness and stop hiding in the shadows” (Final Reflection). Finally, Melody offered an affirmation of how she will start living her life as a result of this production and process. She wrote in one of her blog posts,

I believe I will be more conscious of how attentively I listen to people and what I say to them. I will be more direct when I address my concerns of different issues with people and/or when they seek my advice. I will stop being afraid to express my thoughts. (Melody, Blog, RSQ3)

Michael

Michael is a 48-year-old Black male tenor vocalist. He was a 25-year veteran of the New York City Police Department (NYPD). He is also the pastor of a church in Queens, New York. Michael was born and raised in New York City and is raising his family there, as well. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Michael served as a chorus member. His position as a member of the NYPD provided the chorus and participants in this project a wealth of resources and knowledge of the happenings inside the department. He was very straightforward in his focus group talk about how he is a unique member of the police department—not only is he a police officer, he also is a pastor and a minister of music. He told us very emphatically during the focus group that all police officers are not law-abiding officers, some officers are corrupt. “And I say all that to say, with the police

department, we like to act like the police are great—no they're not. I did three years in internal affairs and I have locked up cops.” (Michael, Focus Group)

This comment alone, indicating that he has put police officers in jail and not look the other way, allowed the focus group members to let down their guards and listen to Michael as he shared his journey and why this process was so important to him. In his interview, Michael shared the meaning of this production to him and how presenting police officers in a positive light and giving a different perspective to those who had lost faith in the police department was important for the community. He shared many stories about his experiences working in community engagement, and disclosed his biggest desired outcome of this process. He stated in his interview:

As a police officer, it is hard to wear so many different hats in life; police, pastor, father, community member, and I hope that this process will help everyone to see that I am not just a police officer—I do so much more. (Michael, Interview Q4)

Throughout the course of the interview and blogging processes, chorus members made many comments about the role of the music in the production. During the interviews, many felt obligated to share positive and complementary feedback about the music and the production. Michael, however, got straight to the point of his experience with the music during the rehearsal process. He shared in his interview:

The music is hard and it is high!! I don't know who you thought was singing all of this! [laughter] It has been challenging but I have enjoyed it—the music speaks volumes to the play. The music is actually better than the play, but it really helps to tell the story. (Michael, Interview Q5, RSQ2)

Discussing the music rehearsal with Michael was enlightening because he also is a musician from a different time and background, which helped me to learn how different people processed and learned my music. Also, Michael commented on how the show and process transformed the audience, “Lives were changed, people were healed, hope was given to the community” (Michael, Interview Q4, RSQ3). In his blog, he commented how the show affected his perception of race relations, allies, and the capacities for people to unite despite their differences, writing, “My perception has been changed in a good way” (Michael, Blog Q2, RSQ1).

Even though it appeared to me that many of the performers moved carefully around Michael, not knowing how he would respond to certain comments and actions, I enjoyed getting to know him in the interview, and especially reading his blog. He provided valuable insights on why this process works and how it informs the audience. He also wrote in his blog:

The thing that is interesting about this project is the mindset—using the universal language of music and combining it with theater to bring people together to think, then self-reflect, then think out loud helps to prepare us to be better people.

(Michael, Blog, RSQ3)

Mitchell

Mitchell is a 23-year-old Black male tenor vocalist. Mitchell had recently moved to New York City, and his hometown is in Missouri. He was a recent graduate from

college in the South and a music educator. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Mitchell was a chorus member and swing soloist.

While Mitchell was in St. Louis, he was offered a position teaching music at an elementary school in a predominately Black school district. Mitchell commented in the focus group that he quickly discovered teaching was not for him:

I'm a teacher. Elementary school music teacher for two years in the [District Name]. After I graduated, I was fortunate to get a job teaching. I found out that elementary music is not what I want to do in life. (Mitchell, Focus Group)

Mitchell's comment about education provided a platform for others to discuss their lack of faith in the education system, specifically the marginalization of students of color. The current system is not providing a quality education for students of color to succeed. I shared sentiments that the system I grew up with in St. Louis County was no better. St. Louis City districts have been bussing students from their communities to schools in the St. Louis County in an attempt to provide them with a "quality education" however, it has been my experience that not all teachers are prepared to educate children of color.

Mitchell expressed he was so happy to be in New York and representing the St. Louis community in this work, "I am happy to represent St. Louis and honor the life and legacy of Michael Brown in such a powerful way" (Interview Q1).

One thing that I enjoyed about working with Mitchell was the knowledgeable things he would say about the music, because of his music degree and background. He gave some compelling comments about the music in his final reflection blog:

The music became the driving force behind the story. It enhanced the experience as participants and propelled the story forward. The composer did a marvelous job of incorporating the musical traditions of Black Americans by including blues, jazz and gospel music styles while also including other Western traditions such as the anthem and rock-ballad. The composer's use of these styles, to the learned musician, is not merely for the sake of each song being stylistically different, but is intelligently used to reflect the mood at certain points in the story. (Mitchell, Final Reflection, RSQ2)

Mitchell further shared his commentary on how the music affects the show and the community. In regard to the song "I'm Covered" (Woodmore, 2016), Mitchell recalled,

The song creatively brings a resolve in the experience, though it doesn't necessarily solve any of the events in the tragedy. Though we choose sometimes to let others fail or buy into the belief that certain people are better than others, we are still all people, a race of humans who have a spiritual connection to the greater power. (Mitchell, Interview Q4, RSQ2)

The above quote not only speaks to the music, but also speaks to the social justice issues discussed in the show, the humanity of society, and the need to strive for equality. Music has the power to move the social justice conversation forward (Rabaka, 2016; Rosenthal, 2001). As Mitchell stated, "It's hard not to feel as if everyone singing had a conviction to the text; as if we all have experienced the story in our own way" (Interview, Q4, RSQ2). These insightful words give evidence of the transformative power of the music sung in this project. Mitchell's use of the word "conviction" and reference to a

shared experience provide a narrative to what happens every night during the music of *Antigone in Ferguson*.

Mitchell was also a great asset to this project. He started out as a chorus member and grew throughout the process to become a swing soloist for a few productions. In regard to the impact and the transformation power of the production, he had this to say in his final reflection about the post-production discussion, “I was pleasantly surprised by the impact it had on me and how those same feelings seemed to have been communal during the discussion in the audience”. (Mitchell, Final Reflection, RSQ3)

Mark

Mark is a 23-year-old Black male baritone vocalist. Mark was born and raised in New York City and had just returned to New York after attending college in the South. Mark was a freelance artist and was working on his teaching degree. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Mark was a chorus member and swing soloist. During Mark’s interview, he commented on the community aspect of *Antigone in Ferguson*, and also mentioned social justice in regard to work that needs to be done on equality. He shared, “*Antigone in Ferguson* opened my eyes to the work that still needs to be done in our community in regards to equality” (Mark, Interview Q1, RSQ4).

After earning a music degree in college, Mark was interested in pursuing a teaching certification, and had also spent a few years as the minister of music at his church in Queens, New York. With his musical talent and knowledge, Mark was seeking outlets to perform and participate in music productions. He commented on his excitement

about participating in this production stating, “I am excited to be a part of something this large. I have never been involved in such a major production like this” (Interview, Q2).

Regarding the music, Mark had fascinating insights to share. He first reminisced about how this music reminded him of his days in college, “I have enjoyed learning the *Antigone in Ferguson* music, takes me back to my days in college” (Mark, Interview, Q3, RSQ2). Mark also shared how this music had helped him develop as a musician. He stated, “I think the music has helped me grow as a musician” (Mark, Interview, Q3, RSQ2). During Mark’s interview he commented on how excited he was to be a part of a project this big. He auditioned for many productions in New York and was honored to work on a project this size and a collaboration on this level. He disclosed in his interview, “It was nice to collaborate with such talented musicians” (Mark, Interview, Q3, RSQ2). Finally, Mark commented on the value of mentorship and how he was able to learn as a chorus leader during this process as well. He wrote in his blog, “I also learned from the process and watching how you did things as I grow as a conductor and music leader” (Mark, Blog, RSQ1).

In addition to discussing the impact on himself, Mark also commented on how he believed this music and show would affect the community in positive ways. In his blog, Mark shared this reflection about the project, “Musically, I expect this project to captivate the listeners with a flow of different styles of music” (Mark, Blog, RSQ2). I was impacted by something Mark noted in his blog about the community aspect of this production. He wrote, “I feel that the community and audience will feel a part of the show rather than feeling like we are presenting something to them” (Mark, Blog). This

statement speaks to the mission of Theater of War Productions and how we present all of these arts projects. Mark's desire for this level of participation from the audience not only spoke to his music leader's mind, but also his heart as a participant and collaborator in this process.

In Mark's final reflection, he commented on the power of art and how it affected the audience. In regard to social justice, Mark commented how *Antigone in Ferguson* has enlightened him to systemic oppression, "*Antigone in Ferguson* opened my eyes to the misconceptions that are often carried when considering race and society" (Mark, Blog Q2). In his final reflection, Mark commented on the power of art and how it challenged audience members each night:

I witnessed the power of art and saw its impact on many ideologies that filled the room each night. I think most if not all people left with a new way of thinking about a bias that they may have. (Mark, Blog, Final Reflection, RSQ3)

Mark's final statement about bias was a part of the larger discussion throughout this entire process. Most members of this process, choir and staff, were ignorant to the biases they held against certain systems, groups, lifestyles, and livelihoods. Not until these biases were discussed in rehearsal-break conversations, one-on-one conversations, and the post-production discussion, were people able to acknowledge these biases and find ways to shift their thinking or accept others for who they are as people.

Maxwell

Maxwell is a 21-year-old Black male baritone vocalist. Maxwell's hometown is St. Louis, Missouri, and he was attending college full-time in the Midwest at the time of

this study. Maxwell got a semester leave to participate in the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, and used his experience in *Antigone in Ferguson* as a research project for his university. In the *Antigone in Ferguson* project, Maxwell was a chorus member. Given that Maxwell's hometown was the setting for the musical, he shared his enthusiasm for contributing to this process, "I am very interested in helping to tell the story of my community. Having lived my life in the Ferguson-Florissant community, I feel like I have so much to offer in this process" (Maxwell, Interview, Q1, RSB 1).

Maxwell provided a lot of valuable information, being the youngest participant in the production and still completing a college degree. He had much to say about the topic of social justice, and offered some insights on where things are with young Black men of color. In his blog he shared,

I have never had a problem with the police, but as of the past few years, I feel that I have become much more aware of their presence. I can't help but think that I could end up as the next hashtag or on the front of someone's newspaper.

(Maxwell, Blog, RSB 4)

In regard to the impact of the show, Maxwell shared how *Antigone in Ferguson* opened a door for him to think differently. Many people shared how this production changed the way they were thinking and had an impact on their lives in positive ways. Maxwell wrote in his blog about how he was impacted, "*Antigone in Ferguson* informed my thinking in a much deeper way. It caused me to analyze things deeper and to hear so many different perspectives in the moderated discussion following the performances" (Maxwell, Blog, Q2, RSB 3).

Even though I did not interview the audience during this specific research project, the chorus members I interviewed gave some insightful comments about their perceptions of how the process and the discussions affected and impacted the audience. During Maxwell's interview he said, "*Antigone in Ferguson* very deliberately tackles themes that people struggle to openly talk about today. Most importantly, it leaves people feeling first, and thinking second—and I think all art serves to provoke thought and feeling" (Maxwell, Interview, Q3, RSQ3).

Maxwell's comment about people feeling first and thinking second is an important part of this process and a valuable observation. The creative team members of *Antigone in Ferguson* are firm believers that the art we are presenting will soften people's hearts and allow for honest conversation in the post-performance discussion. Maxwell gives confirmation that he witnessed transformation throughout this process. In regard to the post-performance impact, Maxwell shared the influence of the show on his experience during the process. In his blog he shared these comments about the process:

I think that *Antigone in Ferguson* will inform my thinking in a much deeper way. It will cause me to analyze things deeper, and I will be able to hear so many different perspectives in the moderated discussion following the performances. (Maxwell, Blog, RSB 3)

Maxwell gave some inspiring comments on the importance of the arts that ring true in many settings. He also shared for a second time the impact of the post-performance discussion on the community and the importance of this conversation. In his blog, he spoke directly to the transformative power of the arts, and how this transformation can help move this conversation forward, writing:

It is my firm belief that the arts are transformative and someone could be seeing their first or last show in the audience. It is important to always tell the story. I hope the audiences connect with us, I know we can tell this story to so many people. One of my main hopes is that this performance can spark an important conversation that needs to happen within our community (Maxwell, Blog)

The outcomes similar to what Maxwell was hoping to see, and did see, in this production are consistent with the theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a). I found it refreshing to talk with a young college student who carries so much passion for the arts and is a part of this transformation process in such a practical way.

Research Question Conclusions

Main Question: How does performing in the chorus of a theatrical musical performance designed to elicit social justice issues affect the chorus members throughout this process?

To answer the main research question, I will draw on the responses of the seven chorus members in relation to the four sub-questions. There was evidence that performing in the social justice theatrical musical production of *Antigone in Ferguson* affected all seven participants' views about social justice, theater as activism, the role of music, and other items discussed during this project. All had a positive response to the production and felt there was value in the process and shared affirmation that this process changed their thinking and way of living in a positive way. Furthermore, most say this change was transformative for them through not only the music but the entire process: rehearsals, connecting with chorus members, performing, and finally the post-

performance discussion. Specific evidence of how the chorus members were affected will be demonstrated with relation to the four sub-questions, based on statements made at the various points across time when data were gathered. Below is a summary of chorus members' responses which are based primarily on the statement quoted in the *Participants* section of this chapter.

Research Sub-Question 1: What did participation in this experience mean to the performers? Conclusions related to the research sub-question are based on responses categorized into three themes: “community impact from the production,” “how AIF inspires the chorus and gives hope to the chorus and community,” and “chorus member’s experience.” Three of the seven performers, all of whom were from St. Louis, commented on their excitement to represent their hometown in this project in a presentation to people from so many different life experiences in New York City.

Participants made direct statements indicating what this experience meant to them as individuals. Several described changing perceptions, including “being better” than when they came to the show, and renewed confidence. The future music teacher, Mark, said that he learned a lot from this process, and planned to use some of the skills and techniques he observed in my directing style with some of his choirs. Several also described a change in their thinking about racism, classism, and biases and the way they will live their lives in the future.

Only one participant described a negative experience. Although she shared a story of bullying by another chorus member, she concluded that this did not affect her overall experience and enjoyment for the process. It was interesting to learn during this process

that the participant who was bullied happen to be the one White person in the production. One might say she experienced perspective-taking as she got a glimpse of what it is like to be a victim of prejudice.

Research Sub-Question 2: What role did the music play in the experience for the performers during the run of the show? This analysis is based on responses categorized under the themes: “comments on the music”, “effects of show and music on the chorus”, and “how the music helps the chorus”. Participants had a variety of things to say about the music and the role it played for them in the show. Six of the seven said that the music enhanced the play and elevated the production. They explained that the music helped them grasp the concepts and meanings behind the story; it became a driving force that told a part of the story the play doesn’t convey and added to the play’s depth.

Participants also discussed their personal reactions to the music. They expressed positive feelings, discussing how learning it was enjoyable, challenging, and helped with growth as a musician. A few of the participants shared that the music was the best part of the production.

Research Sub-Question 3: How did the post-performance discussions contribute to the experience for the performers? This question is answered by responses categorized under the themes: “comments about chorus member’s experience” and “community impact from the production”. All participants shared that the post-performance discussion benefited them in a variety of ways. Two of the participants talked about the impact of the discussion on the audiences and the chorus members. Another discussed the power of art and how it shaped the discussion, and another

described this discussion as life changing for the audience. One of the participants shared how she has changed in the way she will approach people of different races in the future because of the post-performance discussions, and another noted how these discussions were going to shape how she would talk to people she previously may have prejudged as she moved forward in life.

Research Sub-Question 4: In what ways, if any, has the music impacted the performer's way of thinking about social justice? Three themes in the data analysis process provided the most direct insight into the singers' views on the impact to the performer's way of thinking about social justice: "how the music helps the chorus and the community", "comments on the music", and "effect of the show and the music on the chorus". Four of the seven chorus members commented on how this project impacted their views on social justice by making them more aware and pushing them to think more about these issues. One specifically commented on how the music opened their eyes to these social justice issues and the work that still needed to be done in our communities. Finally, there were two participants who only mentioned social justice in their opening remarks prior to the research project and did not discuss it through the process.

I learned through this question that most of the chorus members had been impacted by social justice issues throughout life and even had social justice issues brought up during this process. The impact of these issues, however, came from the discussion primarily, and were not necessarily related to the music of the show.

Based on comments made by the chorus members of *Antigone in Ferguson*, most believed the show had an impact on their way of thinking. The most thought-provoking

comments from the chorus members were about feeling affirmed that this process was their contribution to advocating for the Black community, and furthermore, making a statement against police brutality toward people of color. Some members of the chorus had been struggling with issues surrounding social justice in their respective communities and this show impacted change on their lives, and hopefully on the lives of the audience members.

Transformation Discussion

The transformative power of music is expressed through the words of the seven auditioned chorus members of the *Antigone in Ferguson* project five-week run at the Off-Broadway theater, the Harlem Stage. Along with their words, I have included several experiences and observations that I, the heuristic researcher (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985), have encountered throughout this process as well. So as to not skew the responses of the participants or shift the process in a certain direction, I removed as much bias and information from my conversation as was possible during the process. In the discussion that follows, however, I share interactions, ideas, perspectives, and situations I encountered or experienced in reference to transformation throughout this process as well as the transformation expressed in interviews, blogs, and focus group conversations.

Based on the model created by Cohen (2007a, 2008) with her prison choir research in the Midwest and the theory of transformation (2007a), I identified a number of ways in which participating in *Antigone in Ferguson* afforded the potential for positive transformational change in the performers. These include the complex relationships through the sung texts, the performance's social and cultural context, interactions with

audience members, and enhanced self-perception. I documented a positive change in the transformation of the chorus members who participated in this research, as well as in other individuals I encountered throughout this process.

Regarding the complex relationships through the sung text, several of the chorus members commented specifically on how the music and the messages they shared created a change in thinking for them. Several of the singers who discussed this change of thinking shared their feelings, opinions and concerns during the focus group and first few rehearsals in private conversations. Throughout the process of interviewing, blogging, and primarily the final reflections, I was able to see this transformation over the course of time through the music, rehearsal process, and show run.

One member shared that the music conveyed an entirely different story that the play did not tell, and I encountered many people who complimented me and praised the way I was able to bring the text of the songs to life through my compositions. Direct evidence of this element of the theory is shown in the nightly responses to the music making. Having audience members on their feet throughout the production, responding in a spiritually heightened way to the messages in the songs, and sharing stories of how they entered the space with preconceived notions about the show but leaving with a renewed outlook on life in regard to race, prejudices, and many other topics, reveals how this music, and specifically the message of the music (text), made a direct impact on the chorus and audiences who attended the production. Maxwell said in his interview in regard to the impact of the music, and especially the message of the production that, “I think the music added great depth to the play! I was familiar with the play, but I don’t

think the message would have had the same impact if it had not been for the music”
(Maxwell, Interview, Q4).

Thinking about the social and cultural context of the *Antigone in Ferguson* chorus, the direct evidence of a change in thinking lies in the comments about social justice in reference to the production. Many chorus members commented on their view of social justice (cultural context). Mark blogged how *Antigone in Ferguson* impacted him about the topic of social justice and specifically his own biases about Black society:

Antigone in Ferguson had a large impact on my perception of my own race. After going through the show, I realized a bias I had about my own race. I followed society in categorizing the image of the Black man. I placed a cause behind police shootings rather than actually believing that White police officers were shooting based off of their own bias. I witnessed the power of art and saw its impact on many ideologies that filled the room each night. I think most if not all people left with a new way of thinking about a bias that they may have had. (Mark, Blog)

Regarding the social context of this theory, the change in the chorus members happened through the rehearsal process. The most direct evidence of this comes from the initial focus group where chorus members gathered and shared their stories about their opinions, feelings, and concerns at the start of this process, and then checking in with me and each other throughout the process about progress or transformation happening to them individually. The participants shared general statements about what they enjoyed while working together, saying things such as: “my new brothers and sisters,” “this is my new family,” “I love being with these people,” and many other comments about how the social environment created in this process had a positive influence on them. As

mentioned before in the integrated homeless choirs around the country and the intergenerational choir discussed in Chapter Two, the social aspects of this rehearsal process appeared to be just as important as the performances for the transformation process.

One outlier was one of the chorus members who started but did not complete this research project, and created an uncomfortable environment for the White participant. Unfortunately, this chorus member saw the work as “White washed” due to the several people on the production staff who were not people of color. The chorus member actually had a negative change in attitude and participation throughout the process, although they had a positive response to the music. Interestingly, they were very connected to the music I wrote and came to me several times during the process to share how this music had impacted them. However, per this portion of the theory, the focus was not on talent or connection to music, but on social context, which seemed to deteriorate for this chorus member.

Finally, in regard to enhanced self-perception, this portion of Cohen’s original theory (Cohen, 2007a) ties directly to the prisoners’ self-esteem and pride they felt through the music. Later in this chapter, however, I share a story about someone who was cast in our production who was homeless prior to getting this job. They shared, in a one-on-one conversation, that this production saved their life and gave them hope for the future. Furthermore, Melody spoke about how this process gave her hope, and the fact that she was chosen to participate elevated her musical self-esteem and allowed her creativity to flow throughout this process. Mark also commented in his interview about

having a lot of trouble finding professional work in New York and being rejected from multiple auditions, and he was so thankful for this process and being able to experience this work and this music. Many of the participants made general statements such as “I am better than when I came,” “after Antigone I will view the world differently,” and “my perception has changed in a good way.” These comments and others like them, show the self-reflection and self-assessment that happened with the chorus members during this process, which allowed a positive shift in their self-perception.

From the data, I conclude that a positive change in all seven chorus members was evident. These data reflect the four elements of the theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a) that Cohen created surrounding her work with prison choirs, and used as a framework for this research project.

In addition to aspects related to the theory of transformation framework, I encountered further evidence of transformation during the process. Throughout the five-week run of the show, interactions with the audience members happened nightly during the post show discussions. There is evidence of transformation within these interactions, because audience members shared their thoughts on how this production was life changing for them. The main story that will be remembered by members of the production and myself was a story I will share more fully in Chapter Five, about a gentleman who walked in off the street because he had heard the music as he was passing by, and spoke publicly for the first time in two years during the post-performance discussion.

Along with this powerful story, there were several stories like this, where people stood during the post-show discussion and made statements such as, “I heard this music in my Uber and had my driver stop so I could come see what was happening.” There were also those who thought the choice of gospel music was questionable or not a good choice, however. I interject this final comment because it should be stated that everyone did not have a positive benefit from the music and the interaction with the chorus and audiences. The response of the majority, however, indicated that there was an impact of this interaction through the music.

Consistent with the review of literature on several choir models that promote positive change in their organizations through music-making (Conway & Hodgman, 2008; Green, 2019; Kono, 2018), *Antigone in Ferguson* provides a model that will allow for this positive change to occur for performers and audience members. The current iteration of this experience was developed and refined after many performances of *Antigone in Ferguson* all over the country. Different processes were used for teaching the music of *Antigone in Ferguson* to auditioned choirs, community choirs, university choirs, and church choirs over the past four years. With all of this experience and the work of this research project, I created a model for building a chorus and program to have successful performances of *Antigone in Ferguson* all over the country.

The rewarding part about being the director of this group is that I have had the opportunity to spend a lot of time collectively and individually with the chorus members. During this time, I was able to get an informal baseline on many chorus members’ feelings on race relations, police brutality, capitalism and many other issues as we started

the process, and then see how those changed over the course of this production. The most striking story of transformation came from Meghan, who stood in the initial focus group and said, “I hate police, period.” With the philosophy of Theater of War Productions’ model, based on the principle of allowing space for everyone 's opinion, no one in the room lashed out at her when she made her comment. The group respected her right to her opinion. However, through time, learning this music, and being a part of this process, she really bonded with other members of the cast and began to see things differently. Because of this process and our accepting response to her comment, she was able to share at the conclusion of the project that she now loved her new police officer family and hated “bad police officers,” not all police. This was a powerful moment for everyone in the room as she shared how this process has transformed her thinking.

During my rehearsal-break conversations, many performers shared private testimonies with me about how they had been dealing with a variety of issues. We were working on the song “Thank You” by Walter Hawkins (1990), which closed the production every night, and a chorus member pulled me aside and said they had been struggling with purpose in their life recently and rehearsing this song gave them the motivation and hope to keep pushing. Another evening, one singer came up to me and said before this process they were homeless and didn’t have any hope for living. However, after rehearsing this music and being amongst such positivity in this process, they found a new outlook on life and were excited for their future. These two stories, and others, were a major part of this process for me, and for other chorus members who shared with each other, as well.

Another impactful evening for all of us was when one chorus member shared how much they struggled with suicidal thoughts and didn't see a purpose in living. They had dealt with this challenge prior to participating in this production, but felt inspired after rehearsing with their new community of singers and making new connections with this community to share with us that suicide was a "real thing and people deal with it every day" (personal communication, August 29, 2018). Their feeling of empowerment to share this with us created an open forum that allowed many other topics of a sensitive nature to be shared and created a new outlook on many of the chorus members' lives.

In regard to impact from this process, Melissa shared that this production completely changed her thinking. Meghan spoke to the transformation not only through the music, but also in actions and relationships through her offers of mentorship. She realized she possessed the personal strength, wisdom, patience, and communication skills to mentor others. She drew from her life experiences of motherhood, social work, community engagement, and social activism to create a platform to help others.

Mitchell, in his last quote, commented on the impact of this production on him and observed impact on the audience as well. In a private conversation he shared how powerful this music was for him and washed over his spirit in a way that created courage to speak publicly, which he did not have before, and also gave him the courage to share about things he had not expressed publicly. These few examples from this production have shown me that this work is important.

The music of *Antigone in Ferguson* also invites new and different audience members who connect strongly to music who might not otherwise attend theatrical

productions. Many stood during our post-performance conversations and said this was their first theater experience, giving insightful comments about how the show affected them and gave them insight on a multitude of serious topics. Through the transformative power of music, these new theater goers, along with the variety of musicians performing in this production, have created an example of open dialogue in a safe environment being used to promote change in our society. Many stories shared in this research project support the notion that music can be transformative and have a lasting effect on members of the choir and as well as the audiences.

Additional Findings

There were several topics that emerged from this process that were unexpected and not addressed by the research questions. It seems important to describe these, however, to capture more of the impact of this musical.

This production was a springboard for discussions about broader issues of systemic inequalities such as access to quality education. This topic came up in the focus group, in several interviews and also was brought up by audience members in the discussions. Most of the comments were negative. For instance, one of the focus group members shared a powerful story about the challenges in a struggling school she witnessed on the East Coast:

...a group that went to my high school started this organization up, non-profit, where they send these teachers into failing arts programs and this is where I learned that teaching is not my ministry. I got placed, I think I went in one day and they escorted me into the school. I sit through a full day of classes and watch

all the kids. It's Pre-K-8th grade and the teacher barely had a handle on just the behavioral issues. I was like, "Oh wow, so I'm going to teach these kids" and they were like "Yeah, don't say anything to the guy, we are firing him at 4 pm and hiring you at 4:30 pm." And I was like "Excuse me, I thought he would still be the teacher and I would assist him" and they were like "[No] we are firing him at 4:00 pm and hiring you at 4:30 pm . . . you start in the morning." So that is what I did, I lasted seven weeks. (FGM4)

However, one other participant shared a different experience with the educational system. This person had a positive teaching outlook, stating that, "I took a break for three years. I was teaching special education and started in early childhood and then went into elementary and it was awesome. And I loved it" (FGM3).

The conversations addressed the need for youth to have access to better education and also exposure in schools to social justice conversations such as those associated with this show. Based on my review of literature about social justice and the Civil Rights Movement, it is clear how strongly the arts, and specifically music, can open dialogue, express points of view, take up others' perspectives, change minds, question revisionist histories of society about Black culture, racism, slavery and other issues throughout history (Rakaba, 2016; Trecek-King, 2016).

One of the main topics of discussion during rehearsals and audience discussions had to do with discrimination and race relations. This project gave people of color a voice in a time when there were renewed racial tensions in American society. During the focus group, one of the members shared their thoughts on how White Americans don't

understand the struggles of Black Americans, stating, “I have come across too many non-people of color who just don’t get it” (FGM4). Transformation happened for this participant as they realized their role in changing peoples’ heart and minds about biases and prejudices that still exist in today’s society. This project also gave them a platform to begin conversations with those who might not understand the challenges of racism, classism, and other disparities people confront today.

During the interviews, participants shared words like “family”, “sisters and brother”, “team”, “new friends”, and terms that show their respect and new-found love for their colleagues in the chorus. For example, Michael stated “. . . I love working with all my brothers and sisters” (Interview Q2, RSQ1). I am a strong believer in process, and believe that any choral or musical experience will provide a lasting impact for the participants, not just the final product (Nimmo, 1997; Tunstall, 2012). This is evident in the research from the intergenerational choirs and the homeless choirs as well, which reports that the singers looked forward not only to performances, but also to rehearsals and choir events (Darrow et al., 2001; Rehwald, 2019). These organizations provide a social environment for the members, as well as a learning environment through the music.

One unexpected source of information was the chorus members being asked to sit on the panel throughout the run of the show. From my understanding of the original model, four community members would be invited to the show each night who did not have any knowledge of the production, to share their initial reactions to the show with the audience. Through the planned diversity of this model, these people came from diverse

life experiences and had different perspectives to add to the conversation. Early in the show's run, a panelist canceled and a chorus member served as the replacement, which created a new perspective for the panel and the discussion because they were able to include interactions and relationships amongst the members of the creative team and staff. When chorus members served on the panel, I was able to hear additional information from the research participants, as well as from the chorus members who might not have shared much during rehearsals or other talking opportunities.

One of the most powerful moments in this process was listening to Maxwell speak about how fearful he was as a Black young man in today's society, with the possibility of becoming "the next hashtag or appearing on the front page of someone's newspaper" (Blog). He said that "he was raised to respect everybody," but that it is so hard to navigate these days with what he characterized as "corruption in the police department" and many areas of public service. These words and many of the comments made during the audience discussions can help provide an indication of the perspectives of various members of society, and may help provide insights into ways to help society move forward.

Conclusion

In this study, I sought to investigate several aspects of what participating in this show—which had been designed to elicit the audience's thoughts and conversations about social justice—meant to the chorus members. Their responses provided data indicating that rehearsing for two weeks and performing for five weeks in *Antigone in*

Ferguson at the Off-Broadway theater, the Harlem Stage resulted in transformations attributable, at least in part, to the role and power of the music.

Chapter Five

Summary and Discussion

The findings of this study suggest the transformative power of music was expressed in the responses of the auditioned chorus members performing in the *Antigone in Ferguson* project five-week run at the Off-Broadway theater, Harlem Stage. The complex relationships through the sung texts, the chorus' social and cultural contexts, interactions with audience members, and enhanced self-perception of the performers afford for the potential for positive transformational change in the performer, consistent with the model created by Cohen (2008) in her prison choir research and the theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a). Based on their spoken and written statements, positive change occurred for all participating chorus members related to the music and the processes involved with putting on this show.

The power of music and the text presented in *Antigone in Ferguson* resulted in a range of responses from the audiences, including strong emotional responses to the topics explored in the performance such as suicide, racism, sexism, and classism. The design of the project itself is set up to allow the Greek chorus of the play to respond to the action happening on stage boldly throughout the play. During the rehearsal process, I challenged the chorus to consider themselves ambassadors of the project and agents for social change for the audience members in attendance at each performance. While my responsibility as the choir leader was to inspire the chorus members through this rehearsal process, the chorus' role was to inspire the audiences each night with their interpretation of the music and text. Therefore, this core choir (which I called a "team of ambassadors" for the production) with the director and the creative team to help guide the

sensitive conversations about systemic racism, race relations, police brutality, and political injustices that occurred each night. The core choir took up these leadership roles in order to delve deep into these difficult topics with each other and also to compel audience members to contemplate these topics during post-performance discussion and after the show. This was accomplished during the post-performance conversations when chorus members expressed their own thoughtful views and experiences that the project had impacted. These staged models, along with the moderated post-performance conversations, were used to empower audiences to speak their truths. It took the effort of this entire team to make this process successful each night.

Impact of the Rehearsal Process

After extensive review of the literature of homeless choirs (Bailey & Davidson, 2013), intergenerational choirs (Conway & Hodgman, 2008), and prison choir (Cohen, 2008); I created a rehearsal and show process that allowed for open dialogue with and among the participants in this process from the choir, to the actors, as well as musical and production staff of the project. The transformative power of music provides a positive platform for the musicians and singers in the show to express themselves through the music and to protest social injustices such as issues in present society. Many people shared with me and others in the *Antigone in Ferguson* staff that they were honored to participate in something that was so meaningful and allowed them to express themselves so strongly in an artistic way. Furthermore, there was a high level of anticipation to share about difficult issues in a safe space that gave them the courage to be open and honest.

After trying many formats for starting this rehearsal process over the past four years and based on my analysis of this focus group and the structure, I have concluded

that beginning with a conversation to introduce the topics in the show and help us get to know the participants with the chorus members contributed to the success of this project. Furthermore, during the rehearsal process, allowing time for discussing music and reactions allowed for the performers to process their feelings about the music and the issues the show addresses. In addition to the hour and fifteen-minute focus group, I made sure to have multiple check-ins with the chorus members (formal and informal) to continue the conversation throughout the rehearsal process. The models these conversations provided serves as practice that allowed the individuals to informally continue the conversations on breaks before and after rehearsal. Furthermore, this allowed for a deeper connection between the chorus members and a feeling of safety as chorus members navigated portions of the conversation that might be more sensitive or problematic.

Everyone who attended the focus group interview was open and honest in this setting and had no problem sharing their opinions with the group. It is always important to remember that in life, as with musical performance, people will not always agree, but need to find a way to cohabitate and cooperate. This project serves as a model to bring people from diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives together to discuss sensitive issues that will result in new ideas for moving forward from productive conversation to social action. Through this conversation, many people felt encouraged that we would take the time to get to know each other in this way and to start with an understanding of each other's stories. As the director, it was important for me to know the initial perspective of each chorus member. Teaching music is only a part of what is needed for an experience such as this to be successful. Transformation happens when

chorus members are engaged in a musical process that has meaning to their lives on a deeper level than just dynamics, tempos, and lyrics.

When dealing with matters that are potentially emotionally charged as those addressed in this show, it is necessary for the facilitator to be educated on the matters at hand and fully prepared to manage sensitive topics and challenging conversation moments. While each conversation and process of this magnitude is unique to the set of participants, using this structure can serve as a guide for a productive way to manage these topics to keep discussions generative rather than descending into complaining without actionable solutions. The use of relationship-building activities such as this pre-rehearsal conversation model, also provides for a productive music rehearsal process, which, in this case, appeared to contribute to the positive social cohesion of the chorus members.

Impact of the Show Process

Throughout the past four years, *Antigone in Ferguson* has provided a valuable tool and resource for struggling communities and marginalized people to have a voice, as well as provide a place to begin a much-needed catharsis for many traumatic experiences. Through the work of Theater of War Productions, we have created a specific model that creates a space for many moving parts to be working simultaneously to create this artistic expression and experience for audiences across the country. First, through the support of many funding organizations, hundreds of thousands of people have been able to participate in Theater of War Productions' events for free in the United States and Europe. With the model of Theater of War Productions, those audience members who are formerly incarcerated, homeless, former gang members, and other members of

marginalized communities are invited to the shows and receive transportation, dinner, and front row seating to the performances. In the Theater of War Productions model, these individuals who may be marginalized in other settings are the “VIPs” and are treated with respect and dignity. These VIP guests of *Antigone in Ferguson* are empowered during this experience because they are given a voice, not marginalized in this setting and able to be themselves.

One key feature of the *Antigone in Ferguson* production is the music selections sung by the chorus prior to the top of the show. I decided at the inception of this process that the production would start with a few gospel songs to invite the audience into an experience, rather than have them wondering what they were attending. The gospel music was an outlet for the singers to connect with one another, and an invitation to the audiences of *Antigone in Ferguson* to enter an inviting space where art was actively being presented as they were finding their seats. This decision was affirmed by some audience members who shared that they heard the gospel music from the street, wanted to know what was happening inside, and therefore came in to find out. During the run at the St. Ann and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, New York, a man shared the following comments in the discussion session:

I didn't get to see the entire show, but I was walking down the street and heard this voice singing the last song and I was just drawn in here to see what was going on. I had a stroke a while back and haven't spoken publicly since, but had to come in here to see what was going on and tell you all this story.

This is one of many stories and experiences during this process was a direct confirmation to me that the music and its performance creates a power that gives a voice to the silenced and the soft spoken.

During the planning phase of each production or show run, a creative team member collaborates with me to find a community choir to participate in each week of the production during a run or find a choir to participate in a weekend run in a specific city. Therefore, for the five-week run at the Harlem Stage we located five community-based choirs (community or church choirs) to be a part of this process. Once these choirs were identified and agreed to work with us, choir leaders worked with their individual choirs on the music of *Antigone in Ferguson* as well as the three to five gospel pieces that were sung prior to the production.

We then invited all the community-based choirs to participate in a Community Music Day, held at the Harlem Stage right before tech week. At this event I invited the *Antigone in Ferguson* core choir to join with all the new singers in order to model the various nuances of the music. This provides an opportunity for all participants not only to sing together, but also to have a brief conversation about the specific elements of this process that are unique to Theater of War Productions' events and especially *Antigone in Ferguson*. This is another opportunity to demonstrate the transformative power of music and use the music as a platform for healthy conversation. Furthermore, this is an informal opportunity for the core choir to share with the additional community singers the structure and process of *Antigone in Ferguson*, while practicing being good listeners and ambassadors of the project with the community choir members. This provided an outlet for the community-based choir to share personal stories or emotions that may have arisen

during brief discussions on the community day, or the singing of the music during rehearsals.

Discussion of Research Questions

The findings reported in Chapter Four provide insights into the responses to the *Antigone in Ferguson* process for the auditioned chorus members in the five-week run at the Harlem Stage. The sections that follow provide further discussion related to the original research questions. The implications from this research project and suggestions for future research will also be included.

The primary research question guiding this study was: **How does performing in the chorus of a theatrical musical performance designed to elicit conversations concerning social justice issues affect the chorus members throughout this process?**

It appears that the *Antigone in Ferguson* project positively affected the members of the chorus throughout the two-week rehearsal and five-week run. Support for this conclusion is based on the findings related to the four sub-questions presented in the sections that follow.

Research Sub-Question 1: What did participation in this experience mean to the performers?

Each singer who participated in this research project provided an individual reaction to the performance and what this experience meant to them. One story that serves as an example was from Melissa, who initially wasn't able to connect with the gravity of the issues of racism, classism, and inequalities and how they were affecting society as a whole. This apparent naivety of people in today's society was brought up during the focus group by a member who expressed frustration at seeing so many non-

people of color who were not directly affected by police brutality in their communities ignore the tragic situations and even try to shield their young children to the news to make sure they were protected from the awareness of systemic racism and police brutality to maintain their naivety of the harsh realities and inequities of a racist society. Her biggest frustration was why non-people of color continued to say they do not understand why people of color feel so frustrated and defeated all the time. She would hear non-people of color saying things along the lines of, “Look at all of the progress we have made on social justice issues.” Melissa was not as lost as the people discussed in the focus group but admitted that she was not aware of how bad things still were. I admired Melissa’s commitment to figuring out how she fit in during this process. Melissa experienced transformation by becoming more aware of the harsh realities of the inequalities inherent in a racist society and increase her willingness to speak out and by an ally for the Black community.

Testimonies like Melissa’s shared in the focus group and semi-structured interviews have been inspiring and helpful to me. Making connections with each chorus member and having them discover new things about each other in this process has provided a valuable outlet for all of us to learn about one another on a deeper level and make strong connections with the music and each other during the rehearsal process and performances. The work in the focus groups and semi-structured interviews seemed to allow for a rich conversation during the post-performance conversations amongst the chorus members, and also as the chorus members interacted with audience members. Additional one-on-one conversations among audience members or with staff members

were facilitated and encouraged by providing a reception with refreshments in the lobby after the show.

Research Sub-Question 2: What role did the music play in the experience for the performers during the run of the show?

The members of the auditioned chorus all had interesting things to say about the music and how they were personally transformed. The most insightful comment was how the music tells its own story in this process. One of the participants said without the music the story would not be complete nor make sense. It is powerful to think of the music as the glue that holds this project together as well as a transformative agent for audiences. In her interview, Melissa shared how important this music was to her understanding of the play, “When I read the text for *Antigone*, it made sense, especially since it was an adaptation. But what really helped me grasp the concepts and meanings behind the story was the music” (Melissa, Interview, Q5).

Research Sub-Question 3: How did the post-performance discussion contribute to the experience of the performers?

Doerries shared in his many keynote presentations how he “stumbled onto something great” in his first translated work for Theater of War Productions which was performed over 10 years ago, performed on a military base for military officials and their wives. Following the dramatic reading, service members and their family members were invited and empowered to speak their truths in a very real way without feeling judged or a need to share only partial truths about where they were in life. From this first post-performance discussion after some excerpts from the Greek play *Ajax* by Sophocles (441

B.C.E./ 2000), Doerries recalls that he knew that this was “something special” that might work in multiple settings.

Antigone in Ferguson was born in 2016, amid discussions about police brutality toward citizens of color. This issue, as well as many others, arose during the post-performance discussions, providing a rich conversation following all performances. The chorus was a bit skeptical about participating in thirty post-performance discussions during this five-week run, in fear of boredom from listening to what they expected would be the same conversation repeatedly. But to everyone’s surprise, including mine, every discussion was unique. There was always a person in each audience who boldly spoke to a different perspective. There were many nights when people experienced major breakthroughs with a long-term or deeply rooted struggle, while others who had never been to the theater before made profound statements. Children as young as eight years old would share thoughts that seemed to move the entire audience. One evening a young lady no more than 10 years old had been raising her hand all night and when she got up and retold the story of Antigone in her words and finished with we all need to love one another.

The nightly discussions gave the chorus members more insight regarding our status as a nation in terms of race relations, but also educated them about specific issues such as police brutality, racism, and inequality that they might not have been aware of prior to the show. Still, some chorus members did not see the benefit of participating in this process every night. Toward the end of the fourth week, chorus members were getting restless and started excusing themselves from the discussion, even though they were being paid to participate in the discussion and final song. For future productions, we

have learned to use language in the contracts to make it explicit that the show doesn't end when the final song of the play has been sung.

Research Sub-Question 4: In what ways, if any, has the music changed the performer's way of thinking about social justice?

As stated in the literature, music is us an agent for change in many social justice efforts found throughout history in the United States and other countries (Rickwood, 2017). With respect to race relations, music was pivotal during the Civil Rights Movement to give encouragement and provide emotional, spiritual, and psychological healing for those who were hurting (Rosenthal, 2001). The theory of transformation (Cohen, 2007a) has provided a platform for me to blend the work needed in social justice and the transformative power of music (Clements-Cortés, 2012) into a powerful musical experience for chorus members and audiences in the *Antigone in Ferguson* project.

The most convincing comments surrounding the change in perspectives about social justice issues comes from the chorus members who expressed that performing in this production was their way of giving back to their community and as a form of arts activism (Mitchell, Focus Group). Furthermore, several people said that this production heightened their awareness about race issues. Some said they would not be the ones on the front lines of a protest, but using the arts as protest is where they fit more comfortably. Mark commented how these social justice issues affected him through the lens of *Antigone in Ferguson*:

Antigone in Ferguson opened my eyes to the misconceptions that are often carried when considering race and society. *Antigone in Ferguson* definitely explores another reality of the privilege some people carry in society. My thinking moving

forward is that equal treatment is something that can never be counted on or trusted. Depending on or trusting others to treat people equally can let you down and is proven in the injustice of both Antigone and Mike Brown's death in Ferguson. (Blog)

Working with a chorus composed primarily of Black Americans likely provided a different lens for the project than if there had been a more diverse choir demographic. The one White woman in the chorus actually used this as an opportunity to educate herself on the issues discussed in this production and learn how she could be an ally to the Black community and other communities of color. It was interesting that even chorus members of color who disclosed their own individual testimonies of impact needed education in certain areas as well. This project provided a platform for education on many different topics. As Michael wrote:

I've learned a lot about myself, my views have changed on things I was doing out of habit and not realizing how offensive it could be to other people who don't think like me. My perception has been changed in a good way. (Blog)

Implications

Findings presented in this study support the conclusion that the music and process of *Antigone in Ferguson* were transformative for seven of the auditioned chorus members of the five-week run at the Harlem Stage. The model and process used should be considered and encouraged for similar projects, such as artistic presentations surrounding sensitive issues. Bringing together people around challenging issues must be done carefully to provide a safe platform for conversations. During these conversations,

the emotional journey of the individual and respect for their position and place on that journey must be considered.

Antigone in Ferguson was the first project of Theater of War Productions that involved music as an accompaniment to an artistic reading to help support the text. The music of *Antigone in Ferguson* quickly became a highlight of show, which has turned it into one of the Theater of War Productions' largest and most successful projects.

As a result of the many performances of *Antigone in Ferguson* in different cities, venues, and settings, along with the research conducted on this project, a model to support this experience has been developed. Specifically, this includes engaging the chorus in this process of examining issues of racism, even when rehearsal time is limited. I view this rehearsal process as a training time for the chorus as much as a music rehearsing, providing an opportunity for them to observe and understand the *Antigone in Ferguson* model and the importance of being mentally present during this process. This model also allows me to help the chorus adopt a mindset toward change, personal growth, openness to diverse perspectives, and demonstrate and talk about democracy. Additionally, I am able to facilitate thoughtful conversation along with music making.

The *Antigone in Ferguson* project serves as a choral/musical example that adds to the body of literature about transformative music organizations, such as intergenerational choirs, prison choirs, and homeless choirs. Thus, this theatrical production model can now be included as an exemplar of this potential of transformation, and be employed by choral organizations across the country.

Limitations of the Study

In my design, heuristic phenomenological inquiry (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Patton, 2015) was used to provide insight into how the music and process of *Antigone in Ferguson* was transformative for seven of the chorus members in the auditioned chorus of the show at the Harlem Stage. Given my direct tie to this production and process, it would be informative to get a view from another qualified director and/or research observer who could go through this process with a group of singers but who is not directly tied to the music and project creation.

Although I felt that these seven people provided sufficient evidence and reactions to the show and the process to explore this topic, it is possible that a larger group of singers from different backgrounds or different versions of this production would have provided additional and/or differing data. Furthermore, with only seven responses that occurred in a specific period of time, answers may have been shaped by the current events and context of society during that time frame. A research project such as this that occurred at different periods of time might provide different perspectives.

For this study, each of the seven chorus members were asked to participate in a focus group (which was a part of the rehearsal process), a semi-structured interview (which was individually scheduled outside of the constraints of the rehearsal schedule), and blogged about their experience in the show on their own time. Thus, participants were asked to give several additional hours of their time to complete the research activities, which in a few cases seemed to diminish the quality and quantity of the responses. In fact, a few chorus members told me that they did not have the time to provide thorough responses to certain portions of the process, but they still wanted to

participate. I had to make a special effort to follow up with two participants to obtain their final reflections and make sure they had filled in all the requested information in the blog section. Three of the seven members completed the bare minimum with a few other additional responses, while two of the seven provided large testimonials about their experience and a wealth of information. Therefore, responses spanned the spectrum of minimal detail to extensive responses. Having more time built into this process would have allowed participants to provide quality responses more consistently, and perhaps encourage more participants in the study itself. This could entail providing additional staffing during rehearsals so each chorus member could step out over the course of the first week for their semi-formal interview, also providing or encouraging chorus members to bring technology with them (laptops, iPad, cell phones) to rehearsals and performances in order to blog, or provide voice recordings, about reactions and post-concert reflections throughout the process. This could encourage chorus members to be more thoughtful in their responses and reactions during the rehearsal process and describe different responses as a result of the very specific conversations that happen each night after the show.

As described previously, I found the semi-formal interviews along with the focus group interview in the beginning to be a valuable way to begin this process and engage the chorus members in deeper-level thinking about the social issues being addressed. However, the final reflections were not as thoughtful or engaging as I had hoped, because time was limited and the chorus members seemed to rush and finish this process. For future projects, a post-show discussion/focus group would help the chorus to debrief as a team on how they were affected by the process and the show. It also is likely that a semi-

structured one-on-one interview would be the best way to sit and debrief with each of the chorus members, asking them to answer the same questions as in the initial interview, as well as follow-up questions to see how their answers might have changed and allowing them to describe the impact of the process.

Future Research

There are several suggestions for future research relative to the findings of this study. Research should first extend to chorus members from different treatments of this process in different cities and at different times of the year. Current issues such as the political climate, headline news involving mass shootings, police brutality, major rulings in court cases and other civil events that spark emotionally-charged reactions can shift people's mood and perspectives at any given time. During a run we conducted at the St. Ann and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, New York, for example, we were struck with several of these moments— a husband and wife who came and shared on our panel, revealed they were parents of a child who was killed in a mass shooting. In another example, the mother of a man who was murdered by what she described as “police brutality” came to the show twice, once with her staff and the second time with 30 mothers who had children who were killed by police. These moments, and many others, are the reason I work so hard to make sure this project keeps running throughout the year.

Research is not only needed to examine the transformative power of the arts for the performers, but also for the audience. Audience members should be given the opportunity to provide their reactions and responses to their experience in a thoughtful way that could be documented for further analysis, perhaps via a questionnaire or through

recordings. This could help with an assessment of impact, as well as guide future audience conversations.

The transformative power of music in the choral setting, classroom, or community group, is a common theme in research. However, the use of musical theater and accompanying discussion as a transformative experience has rarely been addressed. This model creates an important opportunity for communities to have a safe space to talk and create productive dialogues that might not happen otherwise.

Having performed this project on university campuses, different demographically diverse communities, churches, and many other venues, the choirs we have worked with span many different backgrounds and diverse perspectives. Therefore, as *Antigone in Ferguson* moves around the country and even other countries, this model can be used to gather data on how the music impacts different communities over a period of time.

This study focused on seven chorus members who completed all aspects of the data collection. To create a better-informed perspective on the impact of this work, a larger number of chorus members from different versions of this production would need to be interviewed and observed. Furthermore, with the model of the community choirs joining the process, whose members have less knowledge than the core choir, studying their viewpoints and the manner in which they are impacted would be informative, as well.

There was much discussion around the topic of education during this process, as the education system is often regarded as another system of oppression against children of color. It would be beneficial to bring this project to educators to allow them to experience the work and perhaps share it with their students and other educators.

Antigone in Ferguson may help educators illuminate challenges in the education system. Research with educators and the education system through the lens of *Antigone in Ferguson* could be beneficial to this body of research.

Summary Remarks

Antigone in Ferguson is a provocative show that often elicits strong emotional responses to the topics covered through the art of musical theater. The structure of the performances provides a platform for people working through many critical societal issues to find a voice in the post-production conversation that is held each night with hundreds of people in attendance. Working through this research project has allowed me to gain further insights into what worked well during the rehearsal process, and how that might be refined to provide a more effective process for the chorus.

This research project has provided insight into how the chorus members were affected by not only the show, but the process as well. I spent many hours creating a model for the chorus with the goal of acknowledging their emotional responses to these very sensitive issues, while preparing them to be the team of singers/ambassadors throughout the run of this production. There is so much to digest and process in this show for the audience who is experiencing this for the first time, that having these ambassadors helps me as the director to be available to audience members who feel the need to have one-on-one conversations following the post-show group discussion. This also allows for those people who are nervous to speak publicly during the discussion the opportunity to flesh out their thoughts with a member of the team in a thoughtful way.

The arts have a history of providing healing and positivity in many places of pain and hurt for people (Horowitz, 2013; Lewis, 1993; Oswald, 1997). Learning from the

chorus members about the ways their lives have been changed through this project and its music contributes to the body of knowledge about the power of the arts, and how they can inspire positive attitudes and changes in people's lives.

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APPENDIX A
RESEARCH FORMS

1. Research Participant Informed Consent
2. Recruitment Script

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant,

My name is Phil Woodmore and I am a PhD candidate in Music Education at the University of Missouri. For my dissertation, I am working on a research study to demonstrate the transformative power of music called “Antigone in Ferguson: An analytical look at the democratic ‘chorus’ and how the members are affected through the process of rehearsal and performances over the course of seven weeks.”

My study involves interviewing, journaling, and observing the participants of this study. The interviews will focus on the participant’s life experiences prior to the run at the show and will document the participant’s thoughts throughout the process.

Data will be collected throughout the run, but will start with a focus group discussion, approximately 95 minutes long, followed by a semi-structured interview at a time and location convenient for you. Interview questions will be listed in a Google document journal that will be shared with each participant for response and reflection prior to their interview. Participants will also write a reflection in the google document about the process after it has concluded. Later, I will ask the participant to review the transcript of the interview to be sure it captures the thoughts and meanings of the participant accurately. Should you participate, you may be contacted after the initial interview for follow up questions that might arise.

Transcripts from interviews and Google document journal entry files will be stored on password-protected devices. The responses will remain strictly confidential throughout the research and any publications or presentations I may make about it.

I hope that the findings of this study will help further the profession’s understanding of the transformative power of music. An expected benefit associated with your participation is the opportunity for reflection on the transformative power of music. I will be happy to share my findings with the participant after the research is completed. Furthermore, research could be published or presented in future journals or conferences.

You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the University of Missouri. Potential risks will be the time given up by the interviewees and personal reflection time, but there will be no other risks outside of what is encountered in normal daily life.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@missouri.edu or by phone at (573) 882-3181. Feel free to contact me, or my advisor Dr. Wendy Sims (xxxxx@xxxxxxxx), if you have any questions about this research project.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study,

Philip A. Woodmore
PhD Candidate in Music Education, University of Missouri

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello, my name is Phil Woodmore and I am a PhD candidate in Music Education at the University of Missouri.

For my dissertation, I am working on a research study to demonstrate the transformative power of music called “Antigone in Ferguson: An analytical look at the democratic ‘chorus’ and how the members are affected through the process of rehearsal and performances over the course of seven weeks.”

I hope you will consider participating in my research. I will be focusing on the chorus member’s life experiences prior to the run at the Harlem Stage and will document their thoughts throughout the process. We will start with a focus group, a small-group discussion, approximately 95 minutes long, followed by an individual semi-structured interview at a time and location convenient for you. Interview questions will be listed in a google document that you and I will share, for response and reflection prior to their interview. I will also ask you to write a reflection in the google document about the process after the show’s run has concluded. Later, I will ask you to review the transcript of your interview to be sure it captures your thoughts and meanings accurately. I may contact you after the initial interview for follow up questions that might arise.

Notes from interviews and journal entry files will be stored on a password-protected device. Your responses will remain strictly confidential throughout the research and any publications or presentations I make about it.

I hope that the findings of this study will help further the profession’s understanding of the transformative power of music. I also hope you will benefit from the opportunity for your own reflection on the transformative power of music. I will be happy to share my findings with you after the research is completed.

You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with me or the University of Missouri. The only potential risks will be the time you spend with the interviews and reflections, but there will be no other risks outside of what is encountered in normal daily life.

APPENDIX B INTERVIEWS

1. Google Document Letter and Instructions
2. Pre-Interview Questions
3. Interview Transcription One: Melody
4. Interview Transcription Two: Mark
5. Interview Transcription Three: Mitchell
6. Interview Transcription Four: Michael
7. Interview Transcription Five: Meghan
8. Interview Transcription Six: Maxwell
9. Interview Transcription Seven: Melissa

GOOGLE DOCUMENT LETTER AND INSTRUCTIONS

Hello-

Thank you for agreeing to be a potential participant in my dissertation work with the Antigone in Ferguson project.

This document will be a running log of your thoughts throughout the duration of the rehearsal process and the shows. I want to remind you that all of your comments are kept private and any information I use in my dissertation will be anonymous. Thank you in advance for your candor in sharing about your experiences and how Antigone in Ferguson informs your thinking.

Looking forward to this collaboration.

Respectfully,

Phil Woodmore
MU PhD Candidate

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Antigone in Ferguson NYC
Pre-Project Questionnaire
Dissertation Project
(Impact of Antigone in Ferguson Chorus)
Philip Woodmore, PhD Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia
August, 16, 2018**

Please answer the following questions with as little or as much depth as you deem necessary to show your investment in the project and process.

Thank you for your help and support,
Phil

Question 1: Your Journey-How did you arrive at the audition for Antigone in Ferguson?
What interested you in this process?

Questions 2: The Impact- How do you think AIF will inform your thinking moving forward?

Questions 3: Your Opinion-Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

Anything else that you think is relevant that you want to share?

THANK YOU!

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview with Melody

Interviewer: Anything you would like to add to your google doc responses?

Melody: Not really, this has been an amazing experience and I am so appreciative to be a part of this. It was not too long ago that I had given up on music and this process gave me my mojo back. It gave me the courage to keep going and confidence in my singing.

Interviewer: Wow, what about this process gave you that confidence?

Melody: Being chosen! It was an honor to be selected for this group and to get PAID! Yes Lord! I was working temp jobs and trying to make it before this process and this gave me the courage to go back to singing full time and put myself out there again.

Interviewer: What do you think about the process so far?

Melody: The process is amazing! It is so much fun learning the music and you sir are a great teacher. I have had a blast working with everyone and getting to know my new family. The music is incredible and I am so excited to keep working on it with everyone. This is an amazing opportunity and I am happy to be apart.

Interviewer: Tell me more about the music and how it has impacted you?

Melody: The music is amazing. Some of it is hard but I have enjoyed working on it. It is great to be working on music and a show that has such a powerful meaning and is for such a good purpose. I think the biggest impact so far is working with my alto sisters. Getting to know the choir members has meant a lot to me during this process.

Interviewer: What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?

Melody: I hope that the performance and the music will speak to the audience in a mighty way. I hope that lives are changed and people are able to work together in our failing society.

Interviewer: Last Question, what was your experience learning the music of Antigone in Ferguson and how has the music informed the play Antigone for you?

Melody: Learning the music was, I don't know a lot about music and don't know a lot of gospel songs. And then having to listen to the alto part and learn that rather than soprano was a challenge to me. The type of music that you wrote was not the usual type of music that I listen to and sing but I did enjoy learning with people who do not read music. It encouraged me that so many people had a mixture of talent. And the gospel music was refreshing because we didn't really need to read the music we could just listen to and it helps to train my ear. It was refreshing to be able to do both. It was great to learn and start remembering my music theory. The music helps me to understand the play. It is much easier for me to communicate through music and for me to understand someone through music. The music helps me to be engaged. Reading something like Sophocles or Shakespeare the music helped me to understand what was going on. If I had to read it without the music I wouldn't have understood what was going on.

Google Document Responses (Melody)

Question 1: Your Journey-How did you arrive at the audition for Antigone in Ferguson? What interested you in this process?

I found out about the audition through my friend. I was interested in auditioning because I like the concept of the show and I wanted to explore singing in a Broadway setting as

well. Most of all, I wanted to use my gift to impact the world positively and do something meaningful like highlighting social injustice.

Question 2: The Impact- How do you think *Antigone in Ferguson* will inform your thinking moving forward?

Moving forward, I believe I will be more conscious of how attentively I listen to people and what I say to them. I will be more direct when I address my concerns of different issues with people and/or when they seek my advice/opinion. I will stop being afraid to express thoughts on my mind.

Question 3: Your Opinion-Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

I have never felt uncomfortable or intimidated by the police but I have never communicated with them either. I do not dislike the police because I am aware that each person is different. Some policemen may be wicked people and some cops may be wonderful people.

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

As a performer: I expect to grow in my confidence and joy of performing About the project: I expect

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

A few weeks ago, I would have said we were lost as a society and helpless, especially with the culture we live in. Those of us who are young are filled with arrogance and are not able to listen to others to our elders. They fill they know a better way, but I think there is a little bit of hope. Doing programs like this and meeting other young activists

who want to move forward. There are older people who want to listen and encourage younger people, so there is hope!

Final Reflection

Antigone in Ferguson has inspired me to continue a full-time career as a singer, it has shown me that anything is possible. I am going to exercise my boldness and stop hiding in the shadows. If I see something I am going to say something and not wait on someone else to say something. I will work on not judging people so quickly and also encourage those who are doing something right. I won't be so concerned about people's opinions and do what is right. I will support more black owned businesses. The friendships that were established and being around people who are so strong in their faith and leadership will stay with me forever. Meeting a mother who had a son killed by police brutality had a large effect on me, it helped me to be more aware in my own neighborhood and stop being content living in a bubble.

Interview with Mark

Interviewer: Anything you would like to add to your google doc responses?

Mark: Antigone opened my eyes to the work that still needs to be done in our community in regards to equality. I think Antigone is a great way to start this conversation.

Interviewer: What do you think about the process so far?

Mark: I am so excited to be a part of something this large. I have never been involved in such a major production like this and I think it is going very well and is well organized.

Interviewer: How do you think rehearsals are going so far?

Rehearsals are so much fun! It is nice to get to collaborate with such talented singers. I have enjoyed learning the Antigone music, it takes me back to my days in college. I think this music has helped me grow as a musician.

Interviewer: What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?

Mark: This show was very eye opening for me as I was learning about this unique process and set up and I hope that the audience will be educated and inspired as well by the show.

Interviewer: Last Question, what was your experience learning the music of Antigone in Ferguson and how has the music informed the play Antigone for you?

Mark: I enjoyed learning the music of Antigone, reliving my college music experience was a joy. It was nice collaborating with such great musicians. I also learned from the process and watching how you did things as I grow as a conductor and music leader. This was a great experience.

Google Document Responses (Mark)

Question 1: Your Journey-How did you arrive at the audition for Antigone in Ferguson? I arrived for this audition from a flyer I received and decided to try and audition. When analyzing my musical career felt like I wasn't making forward progression. When I heard of this project and opportunity I jumped at it with the hope that I could get through to an audition panel. What interested you in this process? The idea of the work being a theatre project strongly interested me because for some time I have been auditioning for different shows trying to find my footing in the professional performing arts. In addition to that I had not been involved in a theater work or any work at this structure and magnitude ever.

Question 2: The Impact- How do you think AIF will inform your thinking moving forward?

Antigone in Ferguson opened my eyes to the misconceptions that are often carried when considering race and society. *Antigone in Ferguson* definitely explores another reality of the privilege some people carry in society. My thinking moving forward is that equal treatment is something that can never be counted on or trusted. The only way to know that equal treatment exist is if I treat someone as they should be treated. Depending/ trusting others on to treat people equally can let you down and is proven in the injustice of both Antigone and Mike Brown's death in Ferguson.

Question 3: Your Opinion-Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

I have no issue with police because our present world needs the enforcing of law and order. What I don't stand by is the unnecessary use of the badge and the wrongful judgment of a man/woman of color.

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

My expectations of this project is that it presents a topic to a group of people that is very unsettling. Musically I expect this project to captivate the listeners with a flow of different styles of music. I also feel that the community/audience will feel a part of the show rather than feeling like we are presenting something to them.

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

I feel like society is repeating itself on a base level but with the infiltration of modern technology we are headed for a reality we have no control over. We are losing control on

a lot of things we could manage. Education, whether as a student or an educator has changed dramatically due to the need of modern tools/approaches.

Final Reflection

Antigone in Ferguson had a large impact on my perception of my own race. After going through the show, I realized a bias I had to my own race. I followed society in categorizing the image of the black man. I placed a cause behind police shootings rather than actually believing that white police officers were shooting based off of their own bias. I witnessed the power of art and saw its impact on many ideologies that filled the room each night. I think most if not all people left with a new way of thinking about a bias that they may have.

Interview with Mitchell

Interviewer: Anything you would like to add to your google doc responses?

Mitchell: No, I think I covered everything in the google doc- I am just happy to represent St. Louis and honor the life and legacy of Michael Brown in such a powerful way.

Interviewer: What do you think about the process so far?

Mitchell: Excited to perform this show, the music is great and the people are fun to work with! Looking forward to performing.

Interviewer: What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?

Mitchell: Lives will be changed!

Interviewer: Last Question, what was your experience learning the music of Antigone in Ferguson and how has the music informed the play Antigone for you?

Mitchell: Like the story and history behind the culture of Greek theater, the music behind Antigone reinforced my understanding of why composers include the contemporary understanding of the musical definition of ‘gospel’ being “the good word,” gospel usually proclaims the word of Christ, but the ‘gospel’ of the Greeks proclaims the word of what we can do as humans “before it’s too late”; before human tragedy befalls us and we repeat things that other generations might not have to fix. This is where the song “I’m covered” hits hard for me.

The song creatively brings a resolve in the experience though it doesn’t necessarily “solve” any of the events in the tragedy. Through the idea of being “covered” by grace, power, faithfulness, mercy, and love, the poetry expresses what life CAN be inspired by human failure. Though we choose sometimes to let others fail, or die, or shun, or buy into a belief that certain people are better than others, we are still a people, a race of humans who, because we are alive, we have a spiritual connection to the greater power who is the Creator. And while some may not ascribe to the religious contexts of the poetry, it’s hard not to FEEL the “knowingness” or conviction within the music. I, myself, have struggled with the Christianity, not because of the allegory or archaic scripture, but because I have seen some of the same people who hold these same beliefs act not in accordance to the gospel. I think the song IS the good word because it’s a message of love and helps the viewer/ participant understand that the food in the story is that because they exist, that is reason enough to tell the story to someone else, interrogate their own feelings and actions and make better choices than our ancient brothers and sisters.

I am particularly blessed when in “I’m Covered” there is a vamp where the lyrics “in the precious blood of the lamb”. This cyclical repetition was a idea to me that the story isn’t over, and the goodness in the tragedy still continues. That’s it’s not too late to get it right, and that humanity can continue. But also, it’s rather haunting because the themes in Antigone can be repeated, just as they were on August 9, 2014 with the death of Michael Brown.

Google Document Responses (Mitchell)

Question 1: Your Journey - How did you arrive at the audition for Antigone in Ferguson? What interested you in this process?

In St. Louis, I was asked to come view this show called *Antigone in Ferguson* at the Center of Creative Arts. I witnessed the show and noticed how similar it was to Stravinsky’s oratorio “Oedipus Rex” and the musical “The Gospel at Colonus” and loved it! I was unfamiliar with this particular Greek tragedy but could understand from the play before it and plays like it.

Two years later, when I asked a mentor of mine to suggest a vocal coach, he mentioned the interviewer. After going to interviewer for several weeks of vocal coaching, I mentioned that I was moving to New York for a period to be around other performers and have more audition opportunities. He then told me he was also moving to direct the show in New York and encouraged me to audition as well. Timing could not have been more advantageous; I moved to New York, auditioned for the show and landed the gig, with his encouragement and aid, of course.

Question 2: The Impact - How do you think AIF will inform your thinking moving forward?

Antigone will allow me to be submerged in the story of the storytellers. I hope to gain a sense of understanding from the loyalty of Antigone, the choices of her cousin, and the arrogance of the King surrounding the social upheaval of the city. I hope to draw parallels to the events in Ferguson and understand what I as an artist, Black man, and American could and should do to process these themes in history and act on preventative and restorative measures.

Question 3: Your Opinion - Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

Since I have graduated from an HBCU, I am pro Black (not anti-white) but am more supportive of Black culture and experience in America. If there are White people out there who benefit from the generations of Black exploitation, KNOW IT, and DO/ SAY/ ACT ON NOTHING when they witness injustice, AND that white person happens to be in law enforcement, then they are a problem. Police are here to serve, and if you're not serving justly, then I, as a citizen, must vote/ speak/ act against your injustice to replace your spot with a human more competent - preferably people who mirror the community they serve for balanced representation.

As an educator, I want to instill in the minds of youth that they can go into whatever profession they want. But I would also stress the importance of following your passion, knowing your personality type, and educate them on the DISPARITIES in various careers as a means to pursue them to fill in more professional careers with competent, knowledgeable Black people attuned to their community's needs.

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

I am expected to know the story (all of them in the trilogy...is it a trilogy? I guess I have to find out because I would expect the other performers to know). I am also expected to hype up the performances, tell the community about this old story that reflected human life then and now. I am expected to make connections, uplift hearts, and help the audience (our community) understand why this story must be told so that history does not repeat itself. Theater of War Productions has done a great job with its outreach choosing who gets priority to see some of the productions as well.

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

I feel like I'm in a damn fantasy novel: A nation with two ways of thinking, one more empowered by the propaganda of an idiot who is in a leadership position. Some are afraid to tell the emperor he has no clothes, and those who know the truth don't really have power/ have forgotten they have power as a people but are distracted by the demands of life. I feel like Americans are in the matrix and only a few recognize it. We aren't necessarily regressing, but just stagnant. Other "developed" countries reduce, reuse, recycle, have plant-based medicines that are non-addictive and do not cost an arm and a leg. They have universal health care, accessible ways to higher education, and are not blinded by the idea of capitalism. I feel today is a mixture of the novels "Fahrenheit 451", "Invisible Man", "The Wizard of Oz", "Native Son", and the freaking "Salem Witch Trials", among others.

Anything else that you think is relevant that you want to share?

Keep reading! Keep Writing! Keep teaching and inspiring!

Final Reflection

Through the Antigone experience as a performer, I was pleasantly surprised by the impact it had on me and how those same feelings seemed to have been communal during the discussion.

My thoughts on the show are nothing different than what I think about with all art: what is literally happening? Who are the characters and simply “what’s going on here?”.

Growing up in a Christian household with a college education, I was able to understand the connection between the Greek’s gospel, or “good word/ news/ story” with the understanding of the Greco-Roman history of the gospel of Christ, and how, regardless of religious contexts, a story can be used to express topological or moral meanings on how to live life. For any story, i try to answer these things.

Regarding the process as a chorus member, the process is fun work! I am a performer and in college I was a music major, so the process of rehearsing, performing, and continually trying to “get it right” for “the big day” made everything worthwhile. It wasn’t until opening day - not even during dress rehearsal - when the lights, actors, music, actions and reactions began to unfold a plot where one could feel the struggle in the room. The angst of this tragedy can leave a person shook; unsure of how to help keep Antigone from being sent to her death. Or maybe audiences were left astounded that there were actions that COULD have taken place to present the tragedy in the first place, yet time was to no avail.

The music became the driving force behind the story. It enhanced the experience as participants and propelled the story further. The interviewer did a marvelous job of

incorporating the musical traditions of Black Americans by including blues, jazz, and gospel, including anthem and rock-ballad. Interviewer's use of these styles, to the learned musician, is not nearly for the sake of being an eclecticism, but is intelligently used to reflect the mood at certain points in the story. For example, in the opening, the chorus sings of the "light of the sun that graces the seven gated cities". The anthem-like chorus is setting the scene while adding an assertive-review of what lead to the events in this story through melody and rhythm.

Interview with Michael

Interviewer: Anything you would like to add to your google doc responses?

Michael: I have enjoyed this process and I can't believe you have me on this piano. This is fun though, I am so thankful to be here.

Interviewer: What do you think about the process so far?

Michael: I haven't sung like this ever! You wrote some crazy music-I like it though. The music sounds great, and I love working with all my brothers and sisters.

Interviewer: What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?

Michael: Lives are changed, people are healed, hope is given to the community. As a police officer it is hard to wear so many different hats in life, police, pastor, father, community member and I hope that this process will help everyone to see that I am not just a police officer- I do so much more.

Interviewer: Last Question, what was your experience learning the music of Antigone in Ferguson and how has the music informed the play Antigone for you?

Michael: The music is hard and it is HIGH, I don't know who you thought was singing all of this! It has been challenging but I have enjoyed it- the music speaks volumes to the play. The music is actually better than the play, but it really helps to tell the story.

Google Document Responses (Michael)

Question 1: Your Journey-How did you arrive at the audition for *Antigone in Ferguson*?
What interested you in this process?

I arrived at the audition through my position with the New York public service, and am the music Director for a gospel choir. The thing that interested me in this process was the mindset of this project. Using the universal language of music / theater to bring people together to think /self-reflect, speak / think out loud and prepare to be better people.

Question 2: The Impact- How do you think AIF will inform your thinking moving forward?

I've learned a lot about myself, my views have changed on things I was doing out of habit and not realizing how offensive it could be to other people who don't think like me. My perception has been changed in a good way

Question 3: Your Opinion-Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

I am a public service worker, so I think overall law enforcement is doing a great job, but there needs to be change, we need to improve in areas of engagement. My opinion varies because it's on an individual basis, because all cops are not the same.

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

I expect to engage the audience, get their attention and do my part to offer a different perception of what's going on in our city/country today. I expect to offer a different perception of what we are doing or not doing to make a difference in our city/country.

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

I think we are stuck in reverse and we are slowly self-destructing. I think we are playing the blame game and we are busy with the big cover up and its stopping us from raising up.

Final Reflection

Question 6: After the show ended what was your take away from the experience?

The music was amazing; the story was so in tune with the current state of affairs in the world today. My takeaway was things are not always what they appear to be, and sometimes what's right by law isn't always the right thing to do

Question 7: How has this experience impacted your day to day life?

I'm impacted by the fact that we have to exercise grace with other people, and not to react without knowing all the facts, and even then, to weigh out the long-term consequences of being right. (Is it worth it?)

Interview with Meghan

Interviewer: Anything you would like to add to your google doc responses?

Meghan: I am happy to be working with you again and be a part of this amazing experience.

Interviewer: What do you think about the process so far?

Meghan: Things are going so well, it was fun to be a part of the audience process- these people can sing! My GOD! I am happy to be more active with the creative team this time and also to have my children participating with me. It is going to be a great run!

Interviewer: What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?

Meghan: Conversation will be had that will impact change, we will be better and do better.

Interviewer: Last Question, what was your experience learning the music of Antigone in Ferguson and how has the music informed the play Antigone for you?

Meghan: Well you know I can't read a note of this stuff and this stuff is hard, but I love it and I love you! It was challenging remembering all these notes, but we are going to get it done. The music tells a whole other story that the play doesn't share. It gives the audience more information and helps them to understand the story.

Google Document Responses (Meghan)

Question 1: Your Journey-How did you arrive at the audition for Antigone in Ferguson?

What interested you in this process?

I did not audition for Antigone in Ferguson initially. My choir was commissioned to collaborate for the first time the piece was performed in NYC I'm 2016. It was a match made in heaven ever since. I am a singer songwriter in addition to a licensed social worker, the daughter and granddaughter of Liberian Pentecostal missionaries so social justice has been my life.

Question 2: The Impact- How do you think AIF will inform your thinking moving forward?

When I came to the process, police officers were the professionals that I despised most due to a history of abuse of power and the slaughter of Black men and women since forever. I fell in love with the officers that performed in Antigone in Ferguson and my heart has been forever changed. I've traded compassion for disdain thanks to this body of work.

Question 3: Your Opinion-Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

I feel compassion for the officers that have kept their oath to serve and protect. I feel sympathy for the officers that walk working in their fears and prejudices and in turn taking the lives of those they swore to protect.

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

I look forward to the constant growth and changing of my mind as I listen to many perspectives. I pray that the community can find it in ourselves to realize that we are more alike than we are different and we need to accept each other on our own terms. I am delighted that the conversation is taking place. It is certainly a beginning.

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

God help us all. We are more divided than we've ever been. We have a world leader that isn't helping to build understanding and acceptance of others. His posture has allowed for more public display of hatred, prejudice and no tolerance for one another. It's frightening to watch.

Final Reflection

Question 6: After the show ended what was your take away from the experience?

I am better than when I came. I hope to continue to grow and walk through life with my heart and eyes open.

Question 7: How has this experience impacted your day to day life?

The police are not the enemy. I am a work in progress.

Interview with Maxwell

Interviewer: Anything you would like to add to your google doc responses?

Maxwell: Nope, I'm good.

Interviewer: What do you think about the process so far?

Maxwell: I enjoyed the process. It was very laid back, which allowed for creativity. It felt really organic in the sense that anything could happen? And we would still go with the flow. It went by much faster than I thought, but I feel we accomplished a lot with our time

Interviewer: What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?

Maxwell: I think Antigone is such a groundbreaking show. I think Antigone in Ferguson is necessary. It is more so an "experience" than a show. I hope that the show will very deliberately tackle themes that people struggle to openly talk about today. Most importantly, it leaves people feeling first, and thinking second - and I think all art serves to provoke thought & feeling.

Interviewer: Last Question, what was your experience learning the music of Antigone in Ferguson and how has the music informed the play Antigone for you?

Maxwell: I really enjoy learning the music. Growing up in a predominantly Christian home, gospel music was the root and all I listened to! So, anytime I can sing anything with a gospel feel it's exciting. I think the music added great depth to the play! I was

familiar with the play, but I don't think the message would have had the same impact had it not been for the music

Google Document Responses (Maxwell)

Question 1: Your Journey-How did you arrive at the audition for Antigone in Ferguson? What interested you in this process?

I had been following the show for quite some time. Since the beginning actually! I got to see a performance of the show, and hear one of my former mentors, Reybren Fitch, speak after and hold a conversation about what race meant to him. I was very interested in helping to tell the story of my community. Having lived my life in the Ferguson-Florissant community, I feel like I have so much to offer in this process.

Question 2: The Impact- How do you think AIF will inform your thinking moving forward?

After completing this process, I think that AIF will inform my thinking in a much deeper way. It will cause me to analyze things deeper, and I will be able to hear so many different perspectives in the moderated discussion following the performances.

Question 3: Your Opinion-Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

I have never had a problem with the police, but as of the past few years I feel that I have become much more aware of their presence. I can't help but think that I could end up the next hashtag or on the front of someone's newspaper. I try to generally avoid problems at all costs, and I was raised to treat EVERYONE, especially my elders with respect. I know that ALL cops aren't the same, and it'd be unwise of me to make a blanket statement. I don't personally think that the police are doing enough, especially in African American

communities, to bridge the disconnect between the two. To me, it doesn't seem like they are trying at all. I know that seems harsh, and honestly, I am not sure what it's going to take, or if it will ever happen at all.

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

I expect to leave my all on the stage every night. It is my firm belief that the arts are transformative, and someone could be seeing their first OR last show in the audience, and it's important to always tell a story. I hope the audience connects with us, and they share the word. 5 weeks is a perfect amount of time to do a run, and i know we can tell this story to so many people. As I mentioned before, one of my main hope is that this performance can spark an important conversation that needs to happen within our community.

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

I personally feel that as a country, we aren't in the best place. We have made major strides, and we have made some progress, but I think that most people lack education and therefore we can't just quite yet have the important conversations that need to take place. Also, with the new president in place, that has caused us to step back quite a bit.

Final Reflection

I'd say that overall, I have a much better relationship with law enforcement. Prior to the show, I had little to no respect for cops. But after working alongside cops and hearing stories and creating close relationships I have a much better outlook.

Interview with Melissa

Interviewer: Anything you would like to add to your google doc responses?

Melissa: No, I put all my thoughts on the google doc.

Interviewer: What do you think about the process so far?

Melissa: The process is going well, I am enjoying getting to know the choir. There is one choir member who seems to not like me though...not sure what is going on there.

Interviewer: Anything you want to share about that?

Melissa: Not really, it is just strange that she is singling me out. I am already the only white person in the show, I didn't do anything to her.

Interviewer: What do you hope will be an outcome of the performances?

Melissa: That people will be open about their feelings, and hopefully find some common ground...I hope that can happen in my situation as well.

Interviewer: Last Question, what was your experience learning the music of Antigone in Ferguson and how has the music informed the play Antigone for you?

Melissa: Learning the music for Antigone in Ferguson was so fun for me! I consider myself a good reader of music and am good at being able to hear and hold harmonies. So, learning the music used in the show wasn't too challenging for me. Once I learned the few spots that were giving me trouble, I was set. To be totally honest, what gave me more trouble was learning the pre-show music we used. Because it was more of a cultural aspect and as someone who did not grow up going to church often and hasn't been to church in years, learning the "gospel" music proved to be the most challenging of the show. The preshow music was more about feeling and being in the moment than structure and singing what was written on the page, which is something I've always struggled with. But it was such a fun challenge and learning both the preshow music and the music used

in the show has absolutely made me a stronger singer and music reader and is something I'll always be grateful for.

I am definitely a visual person. So, when I read a story, I have to picture it in my head to be able to understand it. What really helps me is putting a story to music, which is what we did for Antigone. When I read the text for Antigone, it made sense, especially since it was an adaptation. But what really helped me grasp the concepts and meanings behind the story was the music. Singing the music every night made me fully understand the story in a way I could have never gotten myself by just reading it.

Google Document Responses (Melissa)

Question 1: Your Journey-How did you arrive at the audition for Antigone in Ferguson?

What interested you in this process?

I was informed of auditions for Antigone in Ferguson by my friend and composer, the interviewer. I have followed this project from its beginning stages and have always wanted to get involved, but the timing never worked out. Being from Missouri and being so close to Ferguson, I felt it was important for me to get involved. I've wanted to be involved in this movement, but never really knew how. Antigone in Ferguson is giving me the chance to do just that. I am getting to sing beautiful music and be involved in something meaningful.

Question 2: The Impact- How do you think AIF will inform your thinking moving forward?

I completely think AIF will change the way I think and after completing the run of the show, I know AIF has changed me.

Questions 3: Your Opinion-Opinion of the police (What is your present attitude toward the police)?

I personally do not have a problem with law enforcement. I believe, like with any profession, there are certain police officers who use their power in an unlawful way. I believe there are good cops and bad cops and blanketing them all into one category and saying all cops are bad is unfair. I also think cops are in the spotlight more, so it is easier to generalize and say all cops are bad. I also understand that as a white woman, I have never been racially profiled by the police, so it is easier for me to not have a problem with law enforcement.

Question 4: Your Expectation- What are your expectations as a performer, about the project, the audience, the community?

Question 5: Where do you think we are today as a country/society?

Anything else that you think is relevant that you want to share?

I am originally from a small farming town in Missouri about an hour outside of St. Louis, MO. Growing up in my town was, and still is, a predominantly white town. That's all I knew growing up. It wasn't until I went to college and St. Louis University, and then later moving to New York City, that I was really exposed to any type of diversity. So, when Michael Brown was murdered and the Black Lives Matter movement started in Ferguson, to be completely honest, I was one of those people who didn't understand it. I didn't understand the anger or the passion behind the movement.

The same year Michael Brown was killed, my mom took a job working for an urban public-school district. So, she was teaching inner city kids and was right in the thick of the protesting happening in the city. It was through my mom and the stories she would

tell me about her kids and co-workers that really opened my eyes to the injustice happening around the world. The story that sticks out to me the most is one my mom told me about her principal. The principal was a tall African-American man. She told me every day he was dressed to the nines in his suits. She and her principal were talking about the movement one day and my mom mentioned that she didn't totally understand it either. He said, "Imagine this...image that I go to the grocery store dress how I'm dressed, in my suit and tie. No one bothers me. But image if I changed into gym shorts and a hoodie before I go to the grocery store. If I do that, I am followed around the store because it's assumed by how I'm dressed and the color of my skin, that I'm going to steal." That was the story that really made me take a step back and think, whoa, this is messed up. Something as small as grocery shopping can be an issue and it's something that I take for granted every day. I go to the grocery store with no makeup, my hair in a braid, and sweatpants on all the time and no one bothers me. I can't imagine someone living their life in fear simply because they don't look like me.

When I was offered a spot in the AIF choir, I was ecstatic. The chance to be a part of something so important was the best part of the opportunity. Although the show did end up being a life changing experience that I will forever be grateful for, I was met with some negativity along the way from a cast member. Being the minority for an extended period of time is something I've never experienced before. However, when I knew I would be the minority in AIF, it was never something that worried me or made me nervous. It was the opposite actually. I openly welcomed the experience. From day one, I felt tension from one cast member. What started off as what I thought were playful jabs to get to know me, quickly turned in to something that felt more like an attack on me. On

the first day of rehearsal, after introducing myself, this cast member turned to me and said, “I wasn’t sure about you, but I guess you’re ok.” I thought that meant she was accepting me and realizing I was part of this show for the right reasons. Every day after that, she constantly made comments to me about being white. Every day I would hear things like, “I know you don’t understand this because you’re white” or “I know your whiteness won’t understand this” or she would make comments about white people and white privilege and then turn to me and say “no offense” or “this is music of your people.” The comments went on and on and progressively got worse. I was always about my whiteness not being able to understand something. It seemed like she was making it a point to bad mouth other races, specifically white people, around me. The pivotal day was at the beginning of the second week of performances. I had made the decision to ignore this particular cast member and just be myself instead of trying so hard to make her like me and see me for the person I really am. I had only been in the dressing room a few minutes when the jabs started. This cast member made a general remark about something and everyone laughed. She was quoting a movie. She then turned to me and said, “I know you don’t understand that because you’re white.” When I didn’t say anything she continued saying, “It’s a movie quote from.... Do you know that movie?” When I responded no, she then said, “Why are you are looking at me with a side eye like you know what I’m talking about.” After a moment of pause she said, “Don’t worry, I only say things like this because you haven’t broken down and cried yet, but once you do, I’ll just make these comments behind your back.” I am not a confrontational person. This cast member had completely broken my spirit and made me feel like I had no business being there or being a part of this show. I had broken down in the weeks prior in the

privacy of my own home over comments she had made to me, but made it a point to put on a strong face in front of her. But after that day, I couldn't put on a strong face anymore. I broke down. But to be completely honest, as embarrassed as I was to be crying in front of my other cast members, I think it was the best thing that could have happened at that moment. Multiple cast members came to my side and calmed me down. One cast member actually spoke up for me and told this specific cast member to essentially back off and apologize. As we walked up the stairs to go out on stage, I heard this cast member say to her friend, "I'm not going to apologize, I'm not even sorry for what I said!" So, it was very apparent to me at that moment, she would never be able to see past the color of my skin and get to know me as a person. That was upsetting to me. I had put so much time and effort into trying to get to know everyone in that cast, especially her, because I could tell she was hesitant toward me. Isn't that what this show is about? To come together, regardless of skin color, and fight this fight together? If I didn't believe in the cause, I wouldn't have been there. I wasn't the only one this cast member was affecting negatively, but I just happened to be an easy target. The remaining three weeks were very hard for me. Every time I walked into the building, I instantly got a pit in my stomach not knowing what she would say. For the remainder of the weeks, she would ignore me and never make remarks directly to me. Although she never spoke directly to me again, that didn't stop her making negative comments about white people every night. One comment that will always stand out to me the most was after our second week of performances. For our second week of performances, all of our amazing principal cast members were actors of color. At the beginning of the third week, someone mentioned to this cast member that one of our principal cast members from the previous

week was married to a white woman. She responded, knowingly I was within ear shot, by saying “I know! He is literally sleeping with the enemy!” It was constant comments like this during the discussions or backstage that really allowed me to see who she was. Even though I had a horrible experience with one cast member, the rest of the cast are some of the kindest, most talented, and genuine people I have ever met. When I was hurting, every single one of them made it a point to seek me out and say something kind to me and made me feel like I did belong. Knowing I had such amazing people standing up for me gave me the confidence to finish out the show. I will forever be grateful to the rest of the cast.

Final Reflection

Overall, AIF has been, and will continue to be a life changing experience. It was one of the most emotionally draining and powerful things I’ve ever been a part of. It changed the way I had been thinking. Yes, I had a huge set back and negative experience with one cast member, but thinking back on it now, I feel sorry for her. I went into AIF with an open mind and open heart, and I learned so much and have gotten so much out of this show. She went into this experience with a closed mind and closed heart, and because of that, she will never grow or be able to see through someone else’s eyes. Living in a constant state of anger and hatred will never allow for change. Only when we begin to understand each other and accept each other and be able to work together, despite our differences, is when we can move forward.

APPENDIX C DIRECTOR'S JOURNAL

REHEARSAL DAY 1- Monday, August 13th

We gathered for a welcome and introduction from the creative team at 5 PM. The team took care of housekeeping needs, restrooms at the Harlem Stage, calendars, contact information, etc.

Following the welcome and opening remarks from the creative team, I shared a brief statement about my dissertation and what participating in this focus group would entail. Following these brief remarks, I got verbal permission from each member to record the interview and we began a conversation about this process and how each person fits into that with their own individual views on social justice and the knowledge/impact on the murder of Michael Brown in their personal lives and in their communities.

Rehearsal began at 6:30 PM, with a warm-up and Purify the City-the final number in the show.

Rehearsal attendance - (9 members in attendance, 4 missing)

Rehearsal PLAN- Warm-up, Purify, Meeting, "Get to know you", Oh Light, Destiny, I'm Covered.

Rehearsal went well, great conversation with all members involved. Pre-interview will be distributed Thursday!

One person arrived late in the rehearsal during the final hour.

Need to create a google sheet for each member to track experience.

REHEARSAL DAY 2-Wednesday, August 15th

Rehearsal began at 5 PM, with a warm-up and Oh Light of the Sun- the opening number in the show.

Rehearsal attendance- 9 attended rehearsal

Rehearsal PLAN- Warm-Up Oh Light of the Sun, Destiny BREAK (20 Minutes for small group conversation and an interview or two with chorus members), Warm-Up Music (Total Praise, The Blood Still Works)

Rehearsal went well- the 20-minute break was useful to start more casual conversations with chorus members about opinions on the show and social justice in general- no one schedule a one-on-one interview during this time.

REHEARSAL DAY 3- Thursday, August 16th

Rehearsal began at 5 PM, with a warm-up and Oh Love Invincible- Number 4 in the show.

Rehearsal attendance - All in attendance

Rehearsal PLAN- Warm-up, run show music (BREAK) 20 minutes, Run Pre-show music

Rehearsal was AWESOME- choirs sounds great, they are very engaged in the music and are excited about this process. Looking forward to working with this group

Spoke with a chorus member tonight about how the music has been working on their spirit- they were homeless and had falling into a state of deep depression and was feeling like they were coming back to “the light” because of being around the choir and singing the music.

REHEARSAL DAY 4- Friday, August 17th

Rehearsal began at 5:10- I started rehearsal with a short one-on one interview for my dissertation work.

Rehearsal attendance - All in Attendance

Rehearsal PLAN- Warm-up, Run Show music (work on Oh Light of the Sun technique- diction, vowel shape, and a cappella section!) Run Pre-Show Music (work Psalms 23 and Jesus Promised)

Rehearsal went well- we are ready for the STL people to join us in a week to put all of this together. I think the New York core group is excited about the music and the project. There seems to be a little tension with FGM2- after finding out that FGM4 could no longer be a part of the project because of their equity status- They seemed put off by the creative team. Not sure what is up with that. Also, they are asking for more money since I asked them to sing a solo in Thank You- I kind of wish I hadn't asked them now that they are making such a big deal about it. The Office said they would work it out.

August 18-23- Community Choir Work

During the course of the audition process, the production team (The Office) was solidifying rehearsals for all 5 community choirs. One of the community choirs is Meghan's group, Voices of Hope which I have worked with in the past so I do not need to meet with them. The other groups were First AME Church Choir, Riverside Inspirational Singers, Bethel Gospel Assembly, and R. Evolucion Latina.

REHEARSAL DAY 5- Monday, August 27th

Band 2-5pm

Teese (music supervisor) worked with the Band for me to give me some more time before I arrived. I worked with the band from 4-5pm on music- started putting things together in the space and started doing sound checks for the instruments- Musicians for the show: Jason Davis (organ) Ja'Mes Davis (Saxophone), Willie Woodmore (Guitar) Etienne Lashley (Drums) Phil Woodmore (lead keyboard).

Choir 5:30-9

First rehearsal with FULL chorus (St. Louis people and New York people) and the band- what a GREAT rehearsal. Lots of kinks to work out- seating is the main issue. There was not enough space on stage for the number of singers we had for the show so we had to do some adjusting. Also, people's physical issues had to be considered as well (back issues, knee issues-climbing steps) This took a large portion of the beginning of rehearsal. I used 45 minutes of the time for the St. Louis team to give reflections on the experiences we have had thus far and then do some break out groups with the New York people during rehearsal. Music sounded great- only issues were updates to the music that the St. Louis people had not learned and had to be retaught, this took some time but we got there.

REHEARSAL DAY 6- Tuesday, August 28th

Band 2-5 This was a repeat of Day 5- I spent 3-5 with the band this day to go over all the preshow music and make sure we had the show music locked down. Band is doing well and will not need an extra rehearsal tomorrow!

Choir 5:30-9 This was also a repeat of Day 5- choir arrived at 5:30, I did a group warm-up and ran pre-show music first. We took a long break for casual conversation and I did a one-on-one interview for my dissertation. After the break we ran the Antigone music a few times to get it as clean as possible.

REHEARSAL DAY 7- Wednesday, August 29th

2-5- Band showed up at 4:30 for sound check

5:30-9- Choir ran show TWICE with stand in actors to cover lines and for them to get comfortable with their lines as well. A part of this process for Bryan was including the chorus members as the Greek chorus in the actual play so several of the chorus members had lines in the show.

REHEARSAL DAY 8- Thursday, August 30th

Community Day! All guest-choirs get together with the AIF Core Choir to work on the Antigone music as a full group. SO MUCH FUN! This was a great evening; met a lot of cool people and excited to jump into this process. We were expecting 100 singers for the community and wound up with about 70- not a bad turn out! Loved seeing people's excitement and joy for the music and the process. Rewarding to watch during rehearsal. I began rehearsal with an overview of the process and why we are here- introduced the creative team and Harlem stage staff and then started with Total Praise, after Total Praise I went into the Blood Still Works and then Psalms 23 (which needed some help). We then took a break and I had the Core choir meet in small groups with the guest choirs and talk with them about the show in a more intimate setting- these small group conversations

were an amazing addition to the process and will be a part of every community day from now on. After the break we came back and sang through the show!

TECH DAY 1- Tuesday, September 4th

Tech went well- just working out issues with lighting and sound- choir did a nice job and is very prepared. Each night of Tech we had a different guest choir join us so they had a shot in singing through the show with actors before their performance week.

TECH DAY 2-Wednesday, September 5th

Tech went well-we had a new guest choir attend rehearsal. This guest choir didn't really know the music well, but we were able to get through it. Tonight, we had to work out a lot of lighting issues during the show.

TECH DAY 3-Thursday, September 6th

New guest choir, music rehearsal again. Lots of issues with seating- large choir tonight.

TECH DAY 4- Friday, September 7th

Last guest choir, finalizing details. Entrances and exits, bows. Sounds issues- making sure the music wasn't too loud. Dressing room and holding room for choir is small space, not enough room for everyone but this also allowed for a lot of great conversation.

Dress Rehearsal 1- Saturday, September 8th

It's our first dress rehearsal, things are going very well- everyone is EXTREMELY tired. We gave the chorus the morning to rest and then Meghan performed at a community sing

event at 3 PM at the Harlem Stage (it was Harlem's stage's open house). Following all the festivities we had our first Dress Rehearsal- the tech team at the Harlem Stage was pretty stressed out but the rehearsal went well. Dress started at 7:30 and ended at 9:30 PM, we ran the show once and worked out some issues with lighting and a few things in the music.

DRESS REHEARSAL 2- Tuesday, September 11th

7:30-9:45 PM

PREVIEW PERFORMANCE- Wednesday, September 12th

I'M SICK!!!!!! This is not good, I am trying to make it to the show but I am feeling terrible.

OPENING NIGHT- Thursday, September 13th

Still ill, but able to make it through entire show. Performance went well. Great feedback from the audience. Choirs seemed to enjoy the post-discussion.

PERFORMANCE REFLECTION- Thursday, September 27th

It has been an interesting process thus far, from being sick for the first several performances to dealing with day-to-day of the theater house we are working in, to managing all the different personalities and drama of the choir; this has been a great experience.

The performance tonight was AWESOME! Best for the run so far- hands down. It has been interesting to see how many people immediately connect this form to gospel because we start with gospel songs. I think in the next version of the show we need to start changing the narrative to call this a gospel oratorio- to give life to the many forms of music used in this piece. However, with the spirit and passion of “I’m Covered” at the end of the show- a true worship experience was had by the chorus and this audience! It was refreshing to see how the tradition of the black church and the spirit of God could create the space to have worship even in a theatrical experience.

The musicians I am working with in this run are PHENOMENAL! Their approach to the improvisatory elements of this show are best in the business and their ability to add so much to the production provides us with support that is so needed to create the space with need for the project to evolve in the way that it is doing.

I think that having guest choirs has been a great addition to the process of building this community! The first week we had Meghan’s group, United Voices of Hope, last week we had the singers for Bethel Gospel Assembly, and this week we have the singers from First AME Church and I have to say that these people can SANG! This music has been so inspiring this week with such great musicians and a great leader such as choir director.

END OF RUN REFLECTION-

This was a good time to call it quits- there were a lot of amazing things that came from the show but some of the choir members are getting a little stir crazy.

Specifically, there was a young lady who did not click with the facilitator, Bryan Doerries- her main issue was that he was a white man.

Also, it was a little frustrating to see one of my chorus members being bullied by this other young lady. It was so sad to see this going on in a project where we are promoting peace and unity.

The choir was STELLAR, they were all great musicians and did a wonderful job throughout the process. I got lots of compliments on the music and how well it complimented the story of Antigone.

De-Rance was a HOMERUN, as usual, did a phenomenal job EVERY night. I was so impressed she pulled off singing I'm Covered all 30 shows!!!!

There were a lot of interesting comments from the audience that are worth noting- one audience member shamed us and the show for having police officers on stage, she shared that she was an activist and was on the front line in St. Louis after the murder of Mike Brown and was tear-gassed and treated terribly by the police and could not enjoy the performance because there were officers in the show.

Another gentleman stood up and said this was blasphemy to God and we should have not used gospel music to be a part of this presentation.

Another story came from a woman who had been afraid to speak about her family's situation because she thought her brother would be killed if she talked about what was going on and this show gave her the courage to speak out on the injustice happening in her family.

We had a survivor of the genocide that happened in Haiti who talked about the amazing connection Antigone the character had with her story and how much she enjoyed the show reflecting on her struggle.

One of the most special moments was having Mike Brown Sr. in the room to see the show and sit on the panel, he congratulated us and thanked us for continuing his son's legacy.

Meghan was a major help throughout the process- she jumped in when FGM2 was out to sing "Thank You" and KILLED IT, and she was a great buffer for many situations with the choir. Thinking about giving her a leadership role for the next run to be a bigger part of the team.

I really enjoyed the Harlem Stage- the history and story of the space was the perfect connection to the Antigone experience, I just wished it held more people- we turned away A LOT of people for this production because of limited seating.

I was so inspired to be in New York with a production that I breathed life into just a few years ago and see so many people connect with my music. This has been a life changing experience for me and I am thankful to now add composer to my list of talents.

APPENDIX D
FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT

Focus Group Transcript
Antigone in Ferguson Auditioned Core Choir
August, 13, 2018

FGM1: Hi everyone my name is FGM1 and I am 21 years old, I am a full-time singer. I've been singing full-time for a whole year. I work at a Baptist Church in East New York where I teach children and young adults' music and direct choirs. And I gig on the side all the time. I am excited to be a part of this experience. I have previously done this show before, so I have some knowledge.

Facilitator: Why don't you share what you thought about that the first time you did the show, that would be kind of cool. When you first met me, how crazy I was.

FGM1: So, when I first came into it I didn't know what to expect. You get a call and say, "Okay, cool" and show up. Then I found out what it was about and the community singers and the amount of people that were involved and non-professionals, Oh, it was very interesting. It was very cool to see how they were so influenced by this movement and how it impacted [them] and meant so much to them all. It's not just a thing where he's passionate about it, everybody was passionate about it. It affected everyone, you can feel it in a good way though. From that first experience that's what I mostly took from it. The sense of community, the sense of family, everybody feeling each other's pain and emotion, and connecting with each other. People that you have never even met before, which was even cooler. This time I hope to take that and more. Actually, stopping and feeling [the emotions] too. If I lived in St Louis.

Facilitator: Very good, what a good way to start! Thank you

FGM2: I'm 28 years old. I'm originally from a county in Maryland. Which is a suburb outside of Washington D.C. I moved to New York two years ago. I studied classical voice and sociology at a college in Ohio and then after that I did an opera through my college in Italy and then decided that I did not want to sing opera. [laughs]. Then I went on a gospel tour with a gospel group for three months touring in Germany, Italy, and Austria. And then I decided that I did not want to be touring [laughs].

Facilitator: Okay, knocking things off the list. Don't want to do that.

FGM2: Yea! Then I took a break for three years and was teaching special education. I started in early childhood and then went into elementary and it was awesome. I loved it, but when it was time to move, it was time to move. Then I came here to bring my mom to see the Color Purple on Broadway, and somehow that weekend it just seemed like the universe was conspiring for everybody I came in contact with to tell me to move here, including my friend FGM3. And they all promised me that if I came that they would do everything in their power to help make me successful. And I'm still here! So that year I moved here, that was summer 2016 and within three months I was able to work full time as a singer.

Facilitator: Wow!

FGM2: Not after I handed out flyers on the street corner.

Other: Yes, you did!

FGM2: I did whatever it took! You know, with the help of lots of friends, I was able to get church gigs, and word of mouth singing for whomever, and through social media, and through a lot of other things, I've been able to work pretty consistently. I sing in a

wedding band to pay my bills some on the weekends. Good fun shucking' and jiving' but, I'm in a place now where I'm ready to kind of, I've been spending the past few years trying a little bit more of everything to just figure it out. I didn't grow up around women who were full-time musicians, so I didn't know that was a possibility for me. So, I moved here to kind of explore that. I gave my wedding band a two-year commitment, so I'm finishing that two-year commitment this year and I'm ready to jump back into theater because this is what I really love to do. So, this was an opportunity I was happy to jump on. I'll also be doing a reading of the Preacher's Wife next month.

Facilitator: Cool!

FGM2: Shameless plug, after you all get out of rehearsal on Wednesday, I'm doing a solo set at [VENUE]. I'm also an artist at a music company, so if you all free or whatever.

Facilitator: Cool!

FGM2: So yeah that me.

Facilitator: What are you hoping to take out of this experience since you [are] fresh?

FGM2: So, part of that exploration process [has been] a decision for me, has been that when it comes to theater for me I'm not necessarily interested in getting a seat at the table. I am more interested in doing work that either empowers my community as a black woman, or is something creative, or is something used to make an impact on the world. I didn't know anything about what this was about, but I saw Ferguson and said I want to be a part of it. So, I am just kind of here with an open mind. I don't know, full transparency. I do have personal feelings about law-enforcement, but I'm keeping an open mind

because I think that's what we all have to do and if that's the expectations, then I'm willing to put myself in that position.

Facilitator: Thank you for putting that on the table right off the bat because I feel that's one of the things people avoid talking about. Meghan's coming up next and she was the first one in the room in our first meeting to stand up and say that and start conversations because that's a necessary conversation. And I'll add on to your story and I'm not asking you to share anything anymore, but I had no respect for law enforcement throughout all of my schooling. I had no respect for law enforcement throughout all of my schooling through high school. I was taunted by the police: I was a black man in a white Community, um pulled over for being black, I asked where I was going all of the time, followed in stores; so that was all of my mindset. Even in my undergraduate years, I was in a private Catholic college but the school was planted in St. Louis City, and so I thought that would be a different experience-not at all. Same exact experience, so it wasn't until I became an adult and had a direct connection with this police department that it totally changed my point of view. So absolutely you putting out how you think right now is so important because it's how you think and it's how you experience life. I'm hoping through this process we'll get to the end of this and you'll have a story to share about that.

Meghan: So, I'm Meghan. Don't worry about my age, chile, I'm 54 [laughs] I have a child your age.

FGM2: I know I've seen you on Instagram somewhere [laughs]

Meghan: I've been a singer all my life. Attended music and arts school across the street. On that castle on a hill. Been choir director for as long as I can remember. Child soloist

since I was 5. My parents are West African, Liberian, Sierra Lyonia, and when I grew up, I ended up coming to this work. Was born and raised in Brooklyn. The only singer baby, 1 of 7. Nobody else makes music but me. I can not stand the police. The only cop I love is this man sitting right next to me. I ended up coming to this work because of a mutual friend. I've been a New York City mainstage musician all of my life. And I've had real jobs so my West African parents have gone - I have a masters and a bachelors in social work and I'm going to be starting a PhD in 2019. And I love academics, as does the facilitator. I've done Social Work for the schools - I'm 54 I've been living a ginormous very long big life. I was a political activist in school, and was the president of the President's Council for 26 years, and so my children were involved. I almost became a city council woman. Thank God I didn't do that! I also do a lot of active work in the community. All of my children are also musicians and artists. Because of this work, [my daughter] who happens to be related to me, is [in the show] [laughs]. I've been touring for five years with Robert Wilson's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*. And I left the tour.

FGM2: If I was getting paid more it'd probably be different.

Meghan: And Dr. [NAME], founder of Sweet Honey and the Rock actually wrote the score, so it was an incredible experience to do that work and see her write for that particular 18th century documentary. I've had the real great fortune of being the only singer for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* last summer in Central Park for Shakespeare in the Park. I came to this because a friend of mine said there's a St. Louis team who is doing *Antigone in Ferguson* and they need a choir. And we know that you are the choir girl. I had worked with this particular woman for myself and Brooklyn work and at Prospect Park for many years. I've been on their stage in several capacities and also from

doing Central Park center stage. So, we brought a choir to meet this crazy man in a studio in Manhattan. It was love at first sight! I walked in the door and a police officer, whom you will meet, said to me, “I heard you are the boss” [laughs]. “They told me the boss had a bald head”, that's the way she talks from St. Louis and that police officer has become one of my dearest and closest friends in the last two years. I adore her from this work and with this work my choir will be doing the first week of this run, as a collaborative choir still. I'll also be doing at the same time simultaneously into October, The Mile-Long Opera.

Facilitator: So, you're doing it?

Meghan: So, I get to do this Ferguson work which is really near and dear to my heart. My oldest nephew was killed, not by a police man, but was murdered in Brooklyn. I was 25 and he was 20, so my passion about black men being slaughtered in our streets is something that brings tears to my eyes. And I vowed, after losing my nephew, that not another one on my watch was gonna' ever see that as an end. I have two sons and a daughter. And I've always wanted to have sons because I wanted to have black men so I can raise them right. And lay my body to protect them here in this world. And they are amazing, those two guys, so I know it can happen. But even with that, there's probably no one that despises police more than me. I'm bothered that the one thing that I still have to tell my grown men children is that if there is an altercation with the police, say “yes sir” and memorize the badge number. And then your mother, who is a barracuda, will write a letter and they won't have a job by nightfall. Because I know how to write politically and academically and I'm really good at that. And I literally have destroyed the careers of the city council people in New York, and I'm not ashamed. You work in our community, you

will represent our community, you will represent the voice of the people or you won't work for us if I have anything to do with it. I'm happy now to be a part of this! Bryan called me in and there was a meeting here with the Facilitator on the phone in June that called me in from an administrative kind-of standpoint. So, it's really nice. I also worked in this house quite a bit over the past 20 years. It's nice to see a theater staff member, who's now the head of house. She used to run the central park summer stage. And it's nice to be in this place administratively in addition to as an artist. You know what they say about us singers. They don't think we are very smart. They think we wake up and do this without any work, and I get all kinds of crazy questions in interviews like, "Oh it's so easy, you just wake up and just start singing.", child bye! [Laughs]

Meghan: You go to different work, depending on what your skill set is. If you read or you do not read, depending on what they are looking for, you have to create from a page what this person has in their head. That's a crazy task, but all of us sitting here manage to pull it off. So, it's nice to be in this capacity administratively and artistically as a vocalist. And I'm just happy to meet all of you. I was delighted to be on the other side of that table. To see all of you that are sitting here and I'm excited that I got to be one of the people that chose all of you because you nailed it to the cross! Oh, you gave me chills. Every single one of you in this room, yea just delicious to see the skill set and variety of talent and to be heard and present. And this young man is brave and big and bold and I'm really excited to work with him again for this length of time as well. To be able to do this meaningful and extremely meaningful work.

Facilitator: Beautiful.

Michael: Well she already gave it away; my name is Michael. I've been in the New York City Police Department for the last 25 years. Coming at the end of this month it would be 25 years complete with the police dept. I wasn't going to start there, but I'll start there. I've been in the police department for 25 years, but I've been a Black man for 48 years. The reason I say that is because I've been a Black man a long time before I was a police officer. I remember that and know that what happens is God has a destiny. He does things for a reason. I started out, I grew up the first 10 years of my life in the projects down in an area of New York. And when the job offers came it was in housing and a lot of guys didn't want housing. I went to housing, being in the projects and growing up in the projects, I understood. Also being a black man. I had a choir in Coney Island houses, and in Brooklyn South. We had this group called The Explorers. They are children up to the age of 15. And before I got promoted to Sergeant, I had 89 of them. We started a choir and the looks on the parents' faces! If a kid got a flat tire when I was around and I showed them how to fix the flat on their bike, I had this one kid, I remember this particularly because he said, "Ma, I have a friend here, can he come in? We need to put the tube under some water cause it's leaking." His mother was on the phone because I could hear her saying it's okay. I said ask her again, she "No, no no, tell your friend he can come in. So, I went in, and she said what happened! Girl I got to go!" And we started talking. Then I ended up going to community affairs. And I say all that to say with the police department, we like to act like all police are great- no they're not. I did three years in enteral affairs and I had locked up cops.

FGM2: Thank you for saying that.

Michael: Yeah, still as a black supervisor working for one of the chief's downtown. I still wanted people to know who I am. I still run into uncomfortable situations sometimes. Now I'm in uniform, walking around I make sure to clip my shield next to my gun because if they see my gun and they don't see my shield, I don't know what could happen. So that's real! But on the other side of it, I have also been in church all my life. I have been a minister of music for a few churches, I was a youth pastor for many years and now I pastor a church. So, I look at that dynamic, when I say this. When I first walked up in uniform- they didn't know all of that. They don't know that I love music, they don't know that I love helping people out and live a life of service. But every cop that walks up to you is not going to be a pastor that used to be a youth pastor who is also a Minister of Music.

Facilitator: Amen.

Marcus: So, there is a downside far as that aspect of it. As far as the music, I thought I was giving up on music when I took on a career at the police department. My mother was like listen, you are getting a real job. That was her way of saying, because she knew a lot of musicians who would go out there, you know, musicians in the 90s were a little different. They weren't as educated as the musicians now. They would buy Benzs, let me do this, let me do that. [They would] spend all of their money [and] not invest anything. She didn't want that for me. She sang with the Proverb Mass Choir, which all of y'all have probably not heard of because you guys are too young, but it was one of James Cleveland's choirs - Gospel Music Workshop of America. With that, when Hezekiah Walker started Love Fellowship, they started it Proverb Mass Choir would be in the sanctuary with Pleasant Grove with Bishop Jamison, pastors and Hezekiah was in the

back room rehearsing when they first started. Him, Stanley Brown, all of them. I was one of the groupies back there watching and if one of the musicians wasn't there I was in there. I say that because I thought I was giving up my career in music to take on the police department job and it turns out now years later the police department is allowing me the opportunity. I have worked with Tony Danza with the PAO, we did a songwriting project with some children, and wrote a musical called The Coda. I got to play on the stage of Carnegie Hall because of the police department and it was just how it came full circle, just having a heart to help. We went in to teach some kids some music, to show some kids that listen- you have to judge each person by their actions, not by what they are wearing and what they look like and it turned out to be something great. I have talked enough, I'm Michael and I sing a little bit, I play keyboard, I play drums and I love music.

Mitchell: Good evening, I am Mitchell, from Missouri and I am a graduate of a college in the South in 2016. I know about this project...

Facilitator: Where did you go to high school?

Mitchell: I went to the high school where Michael Brown went to high school and I saw Antigone in St. Louis at an arts center one time because my teacher was talking about it. One of the soloists is my teacher from high school, and my mentor, he went to the same college I did and he is one of the people responsible for me getting scholarships and stuff, I look up to him. I went and saw it and I loved it because of the creativity and what is said about society. I will get to that, I'm a teacher, two years I have been a teacher.

Elementary school music teacher for two years in the [SCHOOL NAME], so after I

graduated, I was fortunate to get a job teaching. I found out that elementary music is not what I want to do.

Facilitator: Amen, it wasn't for me either

FGM2: Middle school is the worst.

Facilitator: I love middle school, I can't take kids to the bathroom and make sure they don't pee on themselves, I can't do all that.

Mitchell: It is a lot, I believe where we are, little black kids in school right now, kids that don't understand things like this that happen in society. I found out about this seeing that and then my teacher who is in the show. I do opera, study voice, I was like okay I'm trying to do this scholarship do you know anybody I can go coach with for a little while before I sing in this scholarship, he mentioned the facilitator. I went to the facilitator's place and had a few coaching sessions, got the scholarship and I was like okay this feels good. I'm getting back in my voice and getting out of that whole teaching voice type thing. Went to the facilitator's house some more just over and over and was just wanting to move to New York. I moved here Tuesday. Wanted to move to New York because I love music.

Facilitator: Who moves to New York, gets an apartment and gets a job in less than a week- Mitchell.

Mitchell: Thank God for all of that! Got here, I love musical theater so I am here to really jump out and do something different. Get out of St. Louis and follow my passion because I know with this music degree I don't want to teach, but I know I want to perform and I know I want to go back to school. Anyway, [sigh] this sounded better in my head.

Facilitator: It's sounding good so far- it's sounding great!

Mitchell: I'm grateful for all of the things that God and the universe has transpired and has happened. It was weird, we had our last little coaching and I was like oh, I gotta' tell you something. I'm trying to move to New York and he said, "Oh I'm trying to move to New York too." And then I said, "Well I think I'm only going to be there four months because I have saved up this much to at least afford an apartment on my own for four months," he was like, "I'm going to be there for four months too." I was like okay, "Well what are you going there for?" He was like, "Antigone" or whatever. And I was like--Oh! Well hey I (laughter), so this just happened and I am grateful to be sitting here with you all right now. But as far as the show and the story, I'm really attracted to stories. My favorite musical is Aida because of the story. But this one obviously as life reflects art- excuse me-art reflects life, I still haven't understood all of Ferguson yet because I was in school while it was happening. I was down in the South calling my momma- hey are yall okay? What's going on up there? What is all of this? Is grandma okay? Because she's the one that lives in Ferguson. All this destruction, is she okay? Yeah she's fine and all of that. And she was explaining to me what was really going on, I was finding out from the news and things like that. I'm worried about my brother as a Black man in America who lived in St. Louis and just really, tell me what's going on. I was trying to find out if I could go up there. I would have, but this was in the midst of school work and things like that so I couldn't go home. So, I'm trying to, through the show, learn a little bit more about society. I do understand, what is Antigone's brother's name? The one who died. I understand how that kind of reflects Michael Brown. I'm also trying to see through the

lens of the other characters things that happen and transpire and how that is like St. Louis and how that is like America. So, I'm grateful to be here, I'm here to tell the story, I'm here to live my life, I'm here to grow, I'm to change someone else's life with you all. Thank you for your service and thank you all for your stories. I can't wait!

FGM3: Hi my name is FGM3, and I've lived here in New York since 2003 and I have been working as a musician for most of my life. Even as a professional. I was a kid, around 11 or 12 years old, working at jobs playing and directing choirs, church choirs, is how I started off. One of my early teachers was the late Glen Burleigh and through that I met a lot of people, actually through great musicians in St. Louis who were very inspirational like Jerry Gallager and Dello Thedford who I worked with closely when I was very young. But I will say that once I went to high school, I went to a performing arts high school, a boarding school. It's pretty much all white school, I mean they have black people there but they focus on the arts in a very classical way. It was kind of my upbringing, so once I moved into that realm, I became very focused on classical music and I didn't have a lot of connection to the black community. But as I got older and went to college, I met FGM2 and FGM4, things shifted- there was a shifting definitely taking place. And that shift happened when I got to New York, I started to work with more Black organizations and Black people. Those opportunities just didn't exist really before I hadn't seen Black people who were in charge of anything, it was all White. That's just what it was, I at this point in my life, was certainly affected by Michael Brown and Ferguson. That story, as well as the Trayvon Martin story initially, with Trayvon for me, was such an easy call for the decent people to make. But the Ferguson story, it calls people to dig more deeply. To do soul searching, grapple with some issues that may be

uncomfortable. I cannot deal with Black people having to be perfect in a situation just to live. Because you don't have a perfect background, you haven't done all the perfect things, it doesn't mean that someone can leave you to lay in the street for a day like you're an animal. Without the dignity that is worthy of any citizen of this country, so like you said earlier, if we pay the salary of the public servants, it's not too much to ask that you treat us with dignity. I found Ferguson, I found with African Americas, with Black people that they were saying things that I didn't really agree with. They were like, oh he did this, I don't care, some of these things I did myself. Are you going to say that someone can shoot me if I stole something? You 're gonna' take their life because they stole a package of cigarettes? Are you out of your mind? Only in America would that be acceptable. So, I hope to have a cathartic experience a lot of this during this process. Like I said, with the new president in this country, I think that this is quite relevant- there is a shift taking place. And I think all who want to be reasonable who have something of value to offer, they need to speak up and do so loudly and clearly. And this is one of those things that as soon as I was given the chance to do it, I want my name on the roll.

FGM4: Hi, I'm FGM4. A little bit about myself, I'm from a little town in Maryland. It is not as little as it was when I left it, it's not because everyone keeps moving there, but it's about 15 minutes south of Baltimore which was also very connected with Freddie Gray and the Black Lives Matter movement. So I kind of felt that way Mitchell did, I was here in New York watching my city on TV and seeing the mother was beating up her son and I used to work like right there where she was beating him. And I was like YES, that is where I used to work, you know I was like that is my city. I remember I was like dang, I wish I was home, but then I was like no, I'm glad I'm not because there is too much

going on. So that is where I am from. I also went to a college conservatory. FGM2 and FGM3's alma mater and their coming into being. I have always been blicky blicky blicky Black, but my blackness as a musician and what does it mean for a Black woman to step out and choose to not sing jazz or gospel but to sing classical music. And using that also as a form of activism and trying to come into that. So that's what I really feel about this piece, we have these gifts and are we merely going to use them for entertainment purposes or are we going to say something with them? What are we doing with it? I understand that sometimes we shuck and jive for a coin, but to say something and to have an audience and to cause change and effect. I have come across so many non-people of color who just don't get it. Literally, I just don't understand why you're mad? But why are you mad- that was so long ago? But why are you still mad? I mean he was a criminal- why are you mad? It's almost like, we are not hanging y'all from trees and murdering in the streets and you all commit crimes. Petty crimes that most of you all don't even go to jail for, when our brothers and sisters are locked up in mass incarceration for petty crimes. And the new Jim Crow, the new form of slavery, all these things that make you say-hey, this is kind of f-ed up. So, I'm very excited about this. I don't know enough about the piece so I'm excited to jump in and learn.

Facilitator: Well the cool things about that, as I taught the first choir the new music of *Antigone in Ferguson*, for them to have that experience because the choir didn't really know that these A-list actors were coming in to read. We were just getting it done and the actors didn't know that there was a choir there with all of this music. So, I love this experience for you, for you to have that exposure and learn the story and to see how it all fits together. Now you will be the one that I will be watching to see how you are reacting.

Meghan: I remember when we first did it at a center in New York and all these people just came in with the television and news people and they were like, oh my god it's so and so, and I don't watch a whole lot of television so I was like who were you talking. I mean famous people, and I was like can you all come here and meet my choir, they were all like on my god. I just had no idea, but they were just the kindest, normal famous actors.

FGM4: Well that will be really cool, so I'm excited about that part. So, let's see, after going to college I took some time off and moved back home. And thought it would be smart with my performance degree to go try to teach in one of the poorest communities in Baltimore. If you've ever been to Baltimore, there's Baltimore city on this side of the highway. So a group that went to my high school started this organization up, non-profit, where they sent these teachers into these failing arts programs. This is where I learned that teaching is not my ministry. [laughter] I got placed, I think I went in one day and they escorted me into the school, I sat through a full day of classes and watched all the kids, its Pre-K-8th grade and the teacher barely had a handle on just the behavioral issues. I was like, oh wow, so I'm going to teach these kids and they were like yeah. Don't say anything to the guy, we are firing him at 4 and hiring you at 4:30. And I was like excuse me, I thought he would still be the teacher and I would assist him. They said no, we are firing him at 4 and hiring you at 4:30 and you can clean out all of his stuff when he leaves and start in the morning. So that is what I did and I lasted seven weeks, and 30 days of that seven weeks was my 30 days notice because they gave me the entire gamut of all the kids- special needs, then the other special needs which just tell me to just pick this music

stand up and throw it at you, and the kids who have IEPs and they had the chaperons with them, but the chaperons never do anything

Mitchell: Never.

FGM4: So, I'm hiding behind a desk and the guy is like I can't do anything, this is recess for us. So, once I realized I would never get past what's a quarter note with these kids- I was like y'all. No, I spent three weeks on "what's a quarter note?", that's not even a joke. And I should have made a diary of all the things kids would say to me and the things that I heard. So, I had to leave. Really it was between the kids and me losing my voice. One day I was teaching a class and just like it came back in, so I was like "oh no no". So I quit that and I spent the better half of 2013 getting my voice back. Um, and then the first time I opened my mouth was to do grad school auditions. So, then I moved here to New York to go to a school of music, and I did two years of my Master's program which was cool...was cool, I'd love my money back.

[laughter, undetectable chatter]

FGM4: But you know, it was what it was. And I appreciate my education and my teachers and coaches. I got a really great experience out of that. And then after my master's program, I had no contracts lined up. Nothing like before auditions I could get in that season. So then just serendipitously ended up meeting a family friend of mine that worked at a music group, and so the past three years I've been working there supporting reception and executives in the office and that's been really cool too. Also, freelance as a musician and work on the industry side and see how that...

Voice: Wait...

FGM4: So that's been cool. A couple years ago I made my Off-Broadway debut in Cabin in the Sky at City Center and that experience kind-of taught me that I was not supposed to be behind a desk. So, working with more theater-oriented performers and working that side of the business has really opened my eyes to just being a performer and not boxing myself into one specific genre which I think conservatory training does. And so you sing this music only, these five arias, these are your roles and that's it.

FGM5: And that is not the real-world training

FGM4: Well, because your teachers had careers in the 70s, and then I would meet you know, these working musicians and actors in the theater-world and they're like, "Oh no honey, we do film and TV, we do this and do that gig out here, we create our own opportunities", which a lot of schools don't really teach you how to do. So that was 2016, in the last two years I've been trying to implement that. So it's been a ride. But I've been just opening my mind up to anything God sees fit for me.

Facilitator: Um ok we're gonna take a pause for our creative staff announcement so she can go home. Can we all go home [Laughs]

FGM5: I'm FGM5. I just recently turned 30, embracing it. I did the whole music education thing. Went to an arts school in D.C. for high school, and a university in Chicago for undergrad, bachelors in voice, and masters in voice here in New York at a school of music. Then miraculously I went straight from grad school to an opera company for three years for their resident artist program. It was wonderful and then equally life-stunting in the way that I felt like I became an adult at 27. So, it was like everything was delayed in terms of my mental development in terms of being in the real-world and making life happen. And then after that I moved back to the city and I've been

back for three-ish years now. I had to get my first day-job and that was a trial. I sat behind a desk. Which was nice to see the business behind the scenes and see what people are making and see what somebody gets for a show.

FGM5: Thought that's the check that maybe I'll get, no guarantee. And when I took 5 weeks off last year to do a show that they were very gracious to give me, I quickly realized that they could survive without me because they were just paying me to watch Netflix all day and I didn't do anything I just say there. [laughter] So it was a good job! But, they found me out. And I hated it! I wanted to quit and I was never going to quit so it was like the universe was like, 'Be free, FGM5, figure it out.' So, I've been a full-time freelancer for the past year and some change, and I'm still not sure entirely what that means, but I don't go anywhere from 9-5 every day. Same as you. On the other side of things, I am increasingly excited about this for several reasons because free-lance life is so hard. And in my own brain I forget the joy of performance when I'm not doing it. So it's easy to unknowingly retreat and not seek those opportunities. So, I'm just excited!

Meghan: Do your own thing.

FGM5: Yup, yea. Do my own thing, so you've probably seen the meme or quote: "If you've ever wondered what you would've been doing in the 60s or during the Civil Rights Movement, whatever you're doing right now, that's your answer." So, I always felt really bad for not going to the Trayvon rallies and never just like, we can do our social media posts, we can do our re-grams and our retweets and wear our t-shirts and have our social media outrage, but I never had a physical presence. So, I felt like this is my opportunity to do that through an artful way is really exciting. And I don't know if you guys are watching the Trayvon Martin Docu-series right now, but it's just so much. I

think I forgot the energy that the country was going through at that time. So it's all sort of being re-earthed, unearthed. Um, and Javaris, Trayvon's brother, were good friends. And it's like, we don't talk about that stuff so it's just a lot. You have to accept the realities of the harshness of that. Um, and another thought I was having while someone was talking was um, and it's like you have to check yourself. Well I have to check myself. When Ferguson happened, and all of these stories, there were articles about this idea but - people say that if racism were to go away, then the country at least wouldn't change so much because there's still classism. There will always be a class system. And even within all of our factions and races there are class systems. So, I grew up in Virginia right outside of D.C. My town was very white, I thought it was very diverse that I went to a high school that was all-black and then college and grad-school were all-white. So, I think I had a good balance of just being able to move and then yeah.

Voice: Code switch.

FGM5: Code switch, yea, but not really when it's not actually my language and I'm not really changing my speech you know? Like versus code, there are other people who are switching to a different voice almost. Um, but yea, um so when I would see - I had a conversation about it with a friend, and I see the moms on TV, like Mike Brown's mother or Freddy Grey's mother, I would find myself not being able to identify with them. Because we came from different communities, despite our having the shared experience of being Black. And having to be like, "FGM5, that's not ok". And I'm just excited to be in this music and in this space. And it's not just the fact that we're doing this, I mean, we're having conversations and seemingly we will continue to have conversations and not just showing up, like "here's your music" and "alright see you tomorrow" do the

show, go home and sleep and forget about it. Like we think about meatloaf during the show, when is it over, I think this will be a very transformative experience.

Facilitator: You used my word! I didn't even have to say it!

FGM5: [laughter] Is there going to be a prize?!

Facilitator: You do!

FGM5: I mean I do think it's going to be a very interesting, transformative experience.

Facilitator: She said it twice [laughter]

FGM5: That I was not bargaining for, I almost did not audition for this because I had conflicts. I had gigs and I was like, "I can't even do it." They're not gonna' let me do both so what's the point," but then I was like just go and see what it is.

FGM2: She had a little help.

FGM5: Yeah, she, FGM2 made me come. laughs]

Facilitator: [laugh] Yea like, "go ahead".

FGM5: Like here we are and I'm just excited because I didn't realize what I was getting myself into. But I welcome it and I just think it's gonna' be so - I'm excited to talk to you. I have so many thoughts about the police force, and not just purely for judgment. I always see the police, I just want to talk to them. I just wanna' ask. I am a documentary fiend, I eat information. And I always wanted to interview, "How do you feel? Do You agree? O you Identify? Do you feel affected by what's going on?"

Facilitator: You're new BFF!

FGM5: Well you are a star pupil

Michael: But I had to get to this place, it didn't just happen. It didn't just happen.

Meghan: I used to call him crying (whining) Help me!

Michael: I had to go to the precinct and I was always a pastor, we have been there. And had to

deal with some situations

Meghan: He is the real deal!

Marcus: Ask away

FGM5: That's my story!

Melissa: Hi, I'm Melissa, I am from Missouri, right outside of St. Louis actually. This is my third year in New York, actually the opening night of the show will be my third-year anniversary.

Voices: Aww!

Melissa: I've known the facilitator for a while, but we actually never really worked together that

much until I moved to New York and we are in different states and there I saw him all the time.

FGM5: So, do you come in frequently?

Facilitator: Yeah, so basically, I am trying to establish myself. I see myself as a national coach. I'm trying to filter and work across the country. I was trying to get out of St. Louis, so I came and made a home in New York for weeks at a time over the summers and as Melissa said one of the first people that I start working with was Melissa who has known me for years through one of our close friends together who knows all of my work. Who has been to my shows. And she was like I need a coach, you should help me and I was like sign me up. Let's do it!

Melissa: Yeah, I think it's funny that we have lived in Missouri all this time but only when we are in New York we actually work together. I went to school for nursing, so I have a degree in nursing and did the whole nursing thing for a year or so and decided I

didn't like it. Theater was my other passion and I came home one day and sat down and asked my mom, and I was like, I'm moving to New York next month and she was like okay. So I did, and this show has actually come at a really perfect time. Because these past few months have been, I mean the struggle is real for actors in New York. I've done some work here and there. The past few months have been like, I'm over it, I'm going to move home and the facilitator was like my show is coming to New York and you should audition. I almost kind of laughed when he told me and I was like really, you think that I can do this. I didn't ever think that I could be sitting here with you guys and I'm really excited for this experience. But with the whole Ferguson thing, like what you had said earlier about having conversations with people and them saying I don't get it. I don't understand why you are saying that. To be totally honest I was one of those people, I didn't connect with it. I didn't understand and that same year that Michael Brown happened my mom took a teaching position in the St. Louis Public Schools, so she was teaching inner-city kids. In an impoverished community and just really troubled youth. I remember her coming home one day and saying, she told me this story and it finally just clicked in my mind why it was so important. She was having a conversation with her principal and the same conversation, she said, I don't get it- can you explain to me what? He used this as an example, grocery shopping-you go grocery shopping with no trouble. As a principal I wear a suit every single day and if I go to the grocery store and I am wearing my suit, I'm fine. No one bothers me, but if I go home and change into gym shorts and a sweatshirt and a hoodie and I go to the grocery store I'm followed everywhere. Because someone is assuming I'm going to steal, and I was like something so small and silly it's kind of seems that I take for granted every day. It just struck me in

a way, that's so crazy and I go to the store all the time with no bra and sweatpants and people don't say anything to me. [laughter] So, I don't know, that's the moment that I really felt like-just because I'm not a person of color it doesn't make it any less important that I am involved and that my voice is heard. I think that is why I am so excited for this project, because it is something completely new and different for me and I'm just excited to learn and be here.

Facilitator: Thank you Melissa, so are there any retweets, comments, likes, hearts that need to be given. Thoughts about what you heard.

FGM4: I just wanted to say that I think everything you've just said is just the true meaning of being an ally. Moving forward I think this whole thing is a movement, it doesn't just live in this room. The movement that we are going through right now, I truly know that our voices will not be heard unless everybody is on one accord with us and remember when I first moved to New York is when Eric Gardner happened. They were in Central Park interviewing mothers and they went to a black mother who had her young daughter with her playing you and they were like ma'am do you talk to your daughter, she was like four years old, do you talk to your daughter about what's going on in the news about Treyvon Martin? About police brutality and how to interact with police? The mother was like absolutely, I have to prepare her and her brother for the interactions that WILL occur sooner or later in their lives. Then they went to a White mother and she probably had a daughter around the same age and they were like, do you talk to your daughter about what is happening in the news with Eric Gardner and police brutally? She was like no, why would I do that? I want to keep her innocent as long as I can. And I was like what, it is like the level of not understanding. Why would I have those conversations

with a four-year-old and we walk the same streets and go to the same grocery stores and we do the same things. The treatment and outlook on people are completely different based on the color of their skin, so I think it's that understanding that non-people of color can have and if we can all come together I think that is when the real change will happen. So, I'm glad you said that.

Facilitator: And we all very glad that you are here madam Melissa.

[59:22] **FGM2:** I wasn't quite sure at first, I'm going to be honest.

[Laughter]

Meghan: I will say the one thing that I realized in this environment from my first day in the game and then they invited me to be on the panel, my first opening statement was that I cannot stand police officers. I mean they were brave to ask me to sit on the panel. They were like, talk about your feelings and all they knew was the singer me, they didn't know the angry black girl version. There was no judgement in that room, it was just like this, there was complete acceptance in that room of everybody's side and ideals and their experiences and how they felt about the issues. And absolutely no judgement. This is still the safest space to be who you are with all you feel about what we are going to experience in this piece. And I also want to say being the oldest gal in this room, I have got a lot of great contacts. I'm inviting everyone that has ever reviewed me in the New York Times, everybody I have ever worked with, to this 5-week run. I think there is enough life for everybody, hopefully this will yield work for all of us. My daughter will tell you, if I can, I put everyone on that I can.

FGM2: Please put us on.

Meghan: Everybody, the producers from Joe Pub, BAM, every national tour, international tour, the people will be in this room at some point. I've got to do the national anthem several times at Madison Square Garden. You will not be starving for the rest of the year. You are about to get PAID!

Focus Group Member: I've never done anything like this before, I really appreciate this.

Facilitator: This is my favorite, I am a connector of people, I want everyone to be able to get up and give each other a big hug. This is how I start all my classes, this is how I work.

APPENDIX E
HARLEM STAGE SCHEDULE

Date (2018)	Event	Location	Clientele
Wednesday, August 8	Open Call Auditions (2:00-4:00 PM) & (6:00-9:00 PM)	Harlem Stage	47 Auditionees
Thursday, August 9	Call Backs (6-9PM)	Harlem Stage	21 Auditionees
Monday, August 13	First Rehearsal, Focus Group Interview (5-9 PM)	Harlem Stage	13 NYC Choir Members
Wednesday, August 15	Rehearsal #2 (5-9 PM)	Harlem Stage	13 NYC Choir Members
Thursday, August 16	Rehearsal #3 (5-9 PM)	Harlem Stage	13 NYC Choir Members
Monday, August 27	Band Rehearsal (2-5 PM), Choir Rehearsal (5:30-9 PM)	Harlem Stage	STL Choir and Band Members + NYC Choir Members
Tuesday, August 28	Band Rehearsal (2-5 PM), Choir Rehearsal (5:30-9 PM)	Harlem Stage	STL Choir and Band Members + NYC Choir Members
Wednesday, August 29	Band Rehearsal (2-5 PM), Choir Rehearsal (5:30-9 PM)	Harlem Stage	STL Choir and Band Members + NYC Choir Members
Thursday, August 30	Band Rehearsal (2-5 PM), Choir Rehearsal (5:30-9 PM)	Harlem Stage	STL Choir and Band Members + NYC Choir Members + All 5 Guest Choir
Tuesday, September 4	Tech Day 1	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Guest Choir 2

Wednesday, September 5	Tech Day 2	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Guest Choir 3
Thursday, September 6	Tech Day 3	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Guest Choir 4
Friday, September 7	Tech Day 4	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Guest Choir 5
Saturday, September 8	Dress Rehearsal 1 (7:30- 10 PM)	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Guest Choir 1
Tuesday, September 11	Invited Dress Rehearsal 2	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Guest Choir 1
Wednesday, September 12	Preview/VIP Performance	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 1
Thursday, September 13	Opening Night/Performance 2	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 1
Friday, September 14	Performance 3	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 1
Saturday, September 15	Performance 4&5	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 1
Week 2 (9/18-9/22)	Performances 6-11	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 2
Week 3 (9/25-9/29)	Performances 12-17	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 3
Week 4 (10/2-10/6)	Performances 18-23	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 4
Week 5 (10/9-10/13)	Performances 24-29	Harlem Stage	Core Choir, Band, Guest Choir 5

APPENDIX F

GLOSSARY

Alto – the lowest female singing voice; also known as contralto or the highest adult male singing voice; countertenor.

Anthem – a rousing or uplifting song identified with a particular group, body, or cause. 2 - a choral composition based on a biblical passage, for singing by a choir in a church service.

Baritone – an adult male singing voice between tenor and bass.

Bass – the lowest adult male singing voice.

Greek Chorus – a homogeneous, non-individualized group of performers, who comment with a collective voice on the dramatic action in the context of ancient Greek tragedy, comedy, satyr, and modern works inspired by them.

Homophonic – characterized by the movement of accompanying parts in the same rhythm as the melody. Often contrasted with polyphonic.

Mezzo-Soprano – female singer with a voice pitched between soprano and contralto

Rote Music Learning – learning to perform music by mechanical or habitual repetition.

Show Run – the length in days, weeks, months, or years that a theatrical production lasts before closing.

Soprano – highest of the four standard singing voices; a female or boy singer with a soprano voice.

Swing Soloist – member of the company who understudies several chorus and/or dancing roles.

Tenor – a singing voice between baritone and alto or countertenor, the highest of the ordinary adult male range

Tech-Week – the days used to rehearse a theatrical production with most or all of its elements including lighting, sound, scenery and costume.

VITA

Dr. Philip A. Woodmore was born October 19, 1981 in St. Louis, Missouri. Upon graduating from Marquette High School, Chesterfield, Missouri, in 2000. He began studying business marketing at (SLU), St. Louis, Missouri. In 2005, he received a B.S. in business marketing and a B.A. in music vocal performance from St. Louis University. Dr. Woodmore received his master's degree in Music Education from Webster University in 2010. He earned his PhD in Music Education with an Emphasis in Choral Conducting and Voice Pedagogy from the University of Missouri, Columbia, MO in 2020. He taught vocal music at Berkley and Ferguson Middle Schools in the Ferguson-Florissant, Missouri, School District during 2005-2006 school year. In 2006, he joined the Rockwood, Missouri, School District music faculty as the choral director at Crestview Middle School, where he taught for twelve years. Dr. Woodmore served as the Coordinator of Voice at the Center of Creative Arts (COCA) in University City, Missouri (2006-2017), Artist Director of Allegro and Adagio Music Companies (2008-2017), Director of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Choir (2009- 2016), and Minister of Music at Trinity Community Church in St. Peters, Missouri (1992-2018) where his father, Willie Woodmore was the head pastor. During his doctoral studies at the University of Missouri, Dr. Woodmore served as graduate assistant for the vocal and choral departments. Dr. Woodmore is currently touring with *Antigone in Ferguson*, and will begin composing his next project for the state of Virginia this fall on the topic of slavery and equal rights for people of color. He is also coaching students in the greater St. Louis area, New York City, Los Angeles, and Phoenix.