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Counterspaces in band programs: experiences of African American female band directors at the secondary level

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**COUNTERSPACES IN BAND PROGRAMS:
EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE BAND DIRECTORS
AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL**

by

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of Floretta P. Carson. My passion and drive to become a professional pianist and music educator came from you. In my eyes, you were definitely the greatest music teacher to ever live on this earth. Without a great teacher like you, I would have never had the opportunity to make it to this point.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how African American female band directors create and utilize counterspaces for African American female musicians to share collective and individual experiences, maintain involvement, form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to counter intersecting forms of oppression in bands. In this study, I also examined the African American female band directors' perceptions about counterspaces in bands. To illuminate the experiences of the 17 African American female band directors who participated in this study and their use of counterspaces as an activist response to resist intersecting forms of oppression perpetuated within the band world, Black feminist thought (BFT) as a framework was employed. The following research questions guided this study: (1) What are the African American female band directors' perceptions and knowledge about counterspaces, and how do they utilize counterspaces to counter intersecting forms of oppression that African American female musicians face in bands?; (2) How do the African American female band directors utilize counterspaces to help the African American female band students form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to share their individual and collective experiences of

involvement in bands?; and (3) How do counterspaces help African American female band directors understand common themes in the lives of African American female musicians that contribute to their sustained involvement in bands? The findings of this study revealed that counterspaces are essential for countering the perpetuation of intersecting forms of oppression and negative stereotypical images of African American females. This study further revealed that counterspaces functions as a mechanism where African American female band directors are able to foster the interconnected dimensions of self-definitions, collective and self-empowerment, and oppositional consciousness among their respective African American female band students. This study also provided insight into the current status of African American females within the field of instrumental music education in the U.S and dimensions of power structures that are continuously perpetuated to negate African American female's equal stance within the field.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Secondary school bands in the U.S. — large ensembles comprising brass, woodwind and percussion — in many ways, are unique performing ensembles that have captured the hearts of thousands across the country. In fact, school bands are the most popular school music ensembles in the U.S. (Elpus & Abril, 2019). They are not only considered as an integral part of the community, but also the music profession—where they play a critical role in the development of young musicians and their emergence as professional musicians and music teachers. Despite the popular nature of secondary school bands, I have personally observed racial and gender imbalances in participation and among their leaders. Moreover, I am one of three African American women band directors in District I of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). Based on school data obtained from the MCPSS District I Fine and Performing Arts Supervisor, African American females hold only 8% of secondary level (middle and high school) band director positions in the district compared to White males (50%), White females (22%), and Black males (19%) (MCPSS, 2020). Contrastingly, minorities are more than 57% of the student population (majority Black), which is more than the Alabama public school average of 45% (majority Black) (Public School Review, 2020). Despite of the diverse student population, less than 8% of African American females participate in instrumental music education programs such as band (MCPSS, 2020).

The underrepresentation and absence of African American women in the band profession led me to engage in deep thought about the perpetuation of oppressive powers

such as racism, discrimination, marginalization, and other forms of subordination; historical contexts of White supremacy and male dominance; inequities as they relate to school curricula, educational experiences, gender, race, and cultural expectations between Black and White students; the representation of African American females' voices, experiences, and cultural/musical traditions; historical efforts toward inclusiveness, equality and justice; and existing mechanisms designed to resist and dismantle oppressive powers. My thoughts about the current status of African American females in band programs constituted a rationale for further investigation into the lived experiences of African American female band directors as role models and their capacity to encourage African American female musicians to participate and continue involvement in band programs at the secondary level and beyond.

Current research about the experiences of women as band directors primarily focuses on White women (Sears, 2018), and is not representative of the experiences of African American women nor other marginalized groups of women in society. Through this study I aim to contribute and make a difference in the field of instrumental music education through an examination of band programs as they relate to the experiences of African American female band directors at the secondary level. Because African American women represent a small percentage of band directors in the field of instrumental music education (Gould, 2001), a rationale for further investigation is necessary to understand how the African American female band directors in this study became empowered to not only stay within the field, but to refashion their own ideas of "self" while actively engaging in activist responses to resist oppressive powers that are

prominent within the field (Collins, 2002). For so many years, African American females have been invisible, underrepresented, and silenced within the field of instrumental music education (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012; Wooten, 2017). Understanding the current status of African American women in instrumental music education programs requires that they are made visible, and their voices are heard and shared with the world. This study provides further data and strengthens the limited research about the experiences of African American female band directors in the U.S.

Historical Contexts of Bands

Before embarking on a journey to examine the experiences of African American female band directors, I share some truths about political forces and ideologies that are grounded in the historical contexts of the band profession. To some educators, the implication that the practices, ideals, and nature of the band profession are closely representative of control, power, and domination of the White male population might seem absurd. In fact, the militaristic ideals that are practiced in the band profession reinforces patterns of White male domination and the ideals of White supremacy (Allsup & Benedict, 2008). That is, the culturalist ideals and beliefs of the dominant culture are accentuated within the field, while others are marginalized (Kallio & Partti, 2013). Although somewhat implausible, African American females and other marginalized groups' voices, experiences, and creative ideals were never meant to be included in band curricula or practices. Through an understanding of the historical and social constructs of bands within society, educators and others within the band profession might be mobilized and compelled to challenge the perpetuation of dominant ideologies within the field and

work towards creating a more inclusive band experience for African American females and other marginalized groups within society.

As a long-standing tradition of uniformity and demonstrations of civic pride and patriotism, bands, in particularly marching bands within the U.S., directly derived from early European military bands (Talusán, 2004). During times of war, military bands played an integral part in the recruitment of soldiers to the daily routine of the reveille (Wilson, 1990). Military bands have undeniably functioned as a vital part of the development of militia units in North America. When war erupted, members of military bands played musical selections to “console the dying and [to] uplift the morale of the defeated” (p. 31). During less serious moments of war, military bands were used as a source of entertainment for troops and officers (Wilson, 1990). The distinctive qualities of order, precision, and discipline of military bands on the surface may be representative of modernity, nationhood, and sovereignty, but when viewed through the lens of colonialism, military bands were symbolic objects that projected White supremacy (Talusán, 2004). In other words, military bands served to project the ideals of authority, power, and control over non-White cultural groups. This symbolism of power and control was strongly evident during the horrific period of the transatlantic slave trade (16th to 19th centuries) that enslaved millions of Africans (Clark, 2019; Malone, 1996). Similar to the gruesome truths of slavery, one of the main objectives of the military was to bind non-White cultural groups to the inferior end of the status continuum, which advanced the ideals of White supremacy (Talusán, 2004).

The projection and reproduction of the developing structures of White supremacy

were evident during the passage of the Virginia Legislature in 1738, which enabled freed mulattos, African Americans, and Native Americans to avail themselves to the militias without the right to train or carry a weapon because of the fear of retaliation for the enslavement and brutal treatment encountered for years by social actors who upheld the ideals of White supremacy (Malone, 1996). Instead of serving in combat, the military allowed African Americans and other marginalized groups to serve as musicians for purposes of projecting the ideals of authority and imperial rule of the military (Talusán, 2004). Allowing African Americans and other marginalized groups to only serve in certain capacities within the military can be seen as a “a successful effort to construct an image of the ideal colonized person, one who embodied an identity characterized by passivity, obedience, and perhaps gratitude through the convergence of military and musical performance” (Talusán, 2004, p. 505). When examined through the lens of colonialism, military bands of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries undoubtedly “reveal[ed] the complex and contradictory fabric of American racism” (Talusán, 2004, p. 504).

Although military bands were used to perpetuate the ideals of White supremacy, White military officers did not always succeed in binding African American military bandsmen to the inferior end of the status continuum. African American bandsmen engaged in activist responses of resistance to the cultural hegemony of White military officers (Talusán, 2004). Often, African American bandsmen were urged to adopt the musical heritage of Euro-Americans because White officers believed that the spontaneity, emotionalism, and rhythmical style of African Americans’ musical heritage was nothing

more than an “audible expression of the degrading impact of slavery” (Wilson, 1990, p. 32). In short, African American slave musicians were required to become disciplined and obedient bandsmen, who fulfilled and perpetuated the cultural and musical traditions of Euro-Americans (Wilson, 1990). Although African American bandsmen did not accept the cultural hegemony of the abolitionist officers, they also did not spurn their musical instruction for it is reported that many realized that learning to play drums, fifes, and brass instruments enriched their cultural heritage (Wilson, 1990). In essence, the cultural and musical heritage of African American military bandsmen could not be contained or bound (Wilson, 1990). African American bandsmen used Westernized instruments as a mechanism to accentuate their own musical heritage. Although unrecognized by some racist and abolitionist military officers, African American military bandsmen often included melodies and tunes of their cultural heritage in the repertoire of military bands (Wilson, 1990).

The musical heritage of military bandsmen, especially African American bandsmen was certainly heightened at the close of the Civil War, which marked the beginning of ex-military bandsmen’s return to civilian life (Clark, 2019), and played a significant role in the establishment of professional and amateur bands across the country (Clark, 2019; Gould, 2012). Professional and amateur bands were popular among Americans because they provided local communities with live entertainment (Clark, 2019; Howe, 2016). As a result of the deeply segregated society during the mid to late nineteenth century, bands across the country were separated by racial groups (Clark, 2019). Thereby, ex-military bandsmen formed bands that were composed of and directed

by members of their own cultural group (Clark, 2019). Among the most popular all-Black bands during this time included Matt Black's "All Negro Marching Band" of Philadelphia and Dixon's Brass Band of Newburgh, New York (White, 1944). Members of the all-Black bands toured and performed at events that ranged from parades to ballroom dances (Clark, 2019). Despite the excitement of bringing joy to various communities across America, members of all-Black brass bands regularly faced racial discrimination (Watkins, 1975). Francis ("Frank") Johnson, who was considered one of the most popular brass band leaders of the early nineteenth century, reported on multiple occasions of all-White brass bands refusing to perform at the same events with all-Black brass bands (Watkins, 1975). The division of all-Black and all-White bands was not the result of the surface composition or function of the band, but rather the complex construction of racial ideologies (Clark, 2019).

Although the majority of professional and amateur bands that emerged during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries were essentially civilian organizations composed of and directed by men, a large number of female bands also existed during this period (Handy, 1998). Prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century, women's musical participation was to remain in the home (Handy, 1998). Undeterred by systematic discrimination, women, specifically African American women not only began to participate in musical ensembles outside of the home, but they formed and directed their own ensembles (Gould, 2012; Handy, 1998; Howe, 2016). Several popular bands composed of and directed by African American women that emerged during the 1930s included The Vampires, the Chicago Colored Women's Band, and the Twelve Spirits of

Rhythm (Handy, 1998). By the 1940s, African American women were leading all-male bands (Handy, 1998). A few of the most popular African American women band leaders who led all-male bands during this time period included Georgia-born accordionist Edith Curry (Gentlemen of Swing), Louisiana native Bernice Rouse (Chicago's Paradise Syncopators), Joan Lunceford (Her Dukes of Rhythm), Una Mae Carlisle (Her Jam Band), and Valaida Snow (The Sunset Royal Band of Apollo Theatre) (Handy, 1998).

Despite the popularity of professional and amateur bands in the late 1800s to early 1900s, they began to disappear around the 1920s because of the increased popularity of radios, phonographs, and motion pictures as sources of entertainment (Camus, 2013; Gould, 2012). As professional and amateur bands disappeared, communities across the U.S. became interested in forming band programs in schools (Mast, 2000). The primary focus of the formation of bands in American schools was not for their educational value, but rather to entertain the public (Mast, 2000). That is, school bands were not only modeled after the uninformative and disciplined nature of military bands, but also the performance and entertainment nature of professional and amateur bands (Fonder, 1983). School bands regularly performed at parades, civic events, and sporting events (Groulx, 2016). By 1929, more than 15,000 school bands existed across the United States (Fonder 1983). This surge of growth among band programs within schools was not only a product of interest, but also the backing of instrument manufacturers, which began marketing directly to schools as professional and amateur bands disappeared (Whitehill, 1969).

Similar to military bands, the vast majority of school bands at the secondary and postsecondary level were conducted by men—particularly White men (Keene, 1982).

Prior to the 1940s, band programs at predominantly Black schools were nonexistent (Groulx, 2016). Schools with a high proportion of Black students typically did not have the funds to establish a band program or to hire an ex-military musician to lead the band program (Groulx, 2016). The lack of funding seen at Black schools was the result of segregation, which left schools not only separate, but unequal (Groulx, 2016). After the passage of the Second Morrill Act (1890)¹, predominantly Black colleges and universities received more funds, of which a portion was utilized to establish band programs (Clark, 2019). Through the establishment of school band programs, demand for trained Black military bandsmen was at an all-time high (Clark, 2019). As band directors, the ex-military bandsmen at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) began to form organizations to help create band programs at surrounding Black secondary level schools (Groulx, 2016). Band programs at the middle and high school level were important for the development of university level band programs and the training of beginner musicians (Groulx, 2016).

Although African American men were able to participate and lead band programs at the secondary and postsecondary level, women, in particularly African American women were usually excluded from participating or leading institutionalized band programs because of their unmasculine nature, which did not represent the values and ideals of the U.S. military (Gould, 2012). As agents of resistance to systematic and institutionalized discrimination, women of all races engaged in activist responses to

¹ The Morrill Act of 1890, also known as the Second Morrill Act, provided annual appropriations to each state to support land grant colleges. This act further led to the establishment of numerous land grant institutions for African Americans.

obtain the same rights as men. These activist responses led to the passage of Title IX of the US Education Amendments (1972) and enforcement of affirmative action laws passed around the beginning of the twentieth century, which provided women with the opportunity to become educated within the same spaces as men (Gould, 2012). As a result, the number of women, specifically White women in band, often exceeded the participation rate of men (Gould, 2012; Howe, 2016). By contrast, the participation rate of African American women in band programs at the institutional level never exceeded the participation rate of White men, White women, or African American men (Handy, 1998; Howe, 2016). The enforcement of affirmative action laws was not enough to protect African American women from the complex nature of racism, marginalization, and other forms of subordination perpetuated by social actors within society and the band profession. In fact, the deep-rooted militaristic history of White supremacy within the band profession made it difficult for African American women to participate and thrive as band musicians and directors (Fiske, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Nationwide, fewer African American females participate in band programs than their White counterparts (Palmer, 2011; Wheelhouse, 2009). According to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), only 29% of African Americans ages 18-24 surveyed in 2008 participated in an instrumental music education program in comparison to 59% of Whites (Wright et al., 2008). More specifically, Elpus and Abril (2019) found that only 11% of African American students surveyed in 2013 participated in band programs compared to 62% for White students (Elpus & Abril, 2019). Researchers indicated that

the real ugly reason for the low participation rate among African Americans in instrumental music education programs is the intentional underrepresentation of African Americans' experiences, voices, cultural/musical traditions (Lundquist & Sims, 1996) and the pervasive nature of racism that still plagues our society (Funes, 1991).

African Americans' experiences, voices, and cultural/musical contributions are continuously excluded from schooling discourses (Bradley, 2007). The cultural disconnect between schooling and African American students is among the reasons why African American females do not elect to participate in instrumental music education programs (Lundquist & Sims, 1996). "When black women do not see themselves represented within the institutional structure or classroom environment...there is a loss of individualism as well as gender and cultural constructs" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, pp. 20-21). The exclusion of African Americans' experiences, voices, and cultural/musical traditions is the result of the domination of White supremacist social actors who want to uphold oppressive powers in society. Social actors want to maintain their dominance and superiority within society, and therefore they exclude the voices, experiences, and cultural/musical traditions of marginalized groups at the institutional, social, and political level through the perpetuation of racism and other forms of subordination.

Despite the intentional underrepresentation of African American females in instrumental music education programs, researchers indicated that the strongest influence on African American females' choice to participate in an instrumental music education program was the support of music teacher role models who look like them (DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016; Sheldon & Hartley, 2012). African American music teacher role models

offer social perspectives arising from common experiences of marginalization (Solomon, 1997). For years, the dominant group of society has perpetuated the idea that African American females are unintelligent, incapable, and inferior human beings (Cooper, 2018). Through the continuous normalization of negative perceptions and images, African American females can develop ideas that collude with systemic oppression (Bivens, 2005). The negative stereotypical ideas of oppressive powers can unknowingly shape the identities of African American females, which has been a determinative influence over their potential, success, and decision to actively participate in society (Collins, 2002). African American female role models offer African American females a realistic view on how to replace negative stereotypical images and ideas with positive ones (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999; Collins, 2002). Within the context of instrumental music education, African American female role models are able to show by example positive images and ideas that provides African American females with a realistic view that they are capable and intelligent enough to become successful within a field dominated by racist Whiteness. That is, African American female role models are able to shape the identities of other African American females through their own conduct (Brown and Treviño, 2014).

Although African American female role models are the strongest influence on African American females' choice to participate in instrumental music education programs, African American students at low-income schools or schools that have a higher enrollment of students of color have fewer African American music teacher role models compared to schools with a lower percentage of African American students

(DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016). Nationwide, there is a limited and declining number of African American teachers, especially in music education as compared to the expanding population of minority students (DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016). The absence of African American female teachers provides a distorted reflection of our society and deprives African American female students of experiences that help them to understand that they are capable of becoming successful within a society that views them as incapable, invisible, and unintelligent (Graham, 1987; Hamann & Walker, 1993; Waters, 1989). Similarly, African American females' understanding about the nature of activism and dimensions of resistance towards oppressive powers is not possible without visible models of educators who understand and have experienced various forms of oppression.

Significance of African American Female Role Models

African American females can “derive great benefit from having access to role models who (a) understand their home cultures, (b) understand the education system and have succeeded in it, (c) are interested in the students' educational progress, and (d) will challenge students academically” (Bond et al., 2015, p. 7). The lack of visible role models is the most important obstacle for African American females deciding to participate or continue involvement in instrumental music education programs such as band (Gould, 2001). Thereby, African American female band directors can positively influence African American females' perceptions of music and their decisions to participate in band programs at the secondary level (Williams, 2013). That is, representative role models take more interest in mentoring minority students and have more credibility with those students. According to Zirkel (2002), role models in

instrumental music education can enable young people to “construct their own images of themselves in similar contexts, helping them to generate not only the thought ‘if he (or she) can do that, maybe I can too,’ but also ‘if he (or she) can do that,’ maybe people like me can do any number of different things” (p. 359).

African American role models are critically important because of other roles, perspectives, and practices that they bring to their pedagogy (Solomon, 1997). As noted in Griffin and Tackie’s (2016) study, African American role models’ experiences are similar to those of their African American students; therefore, African American teachers are able to share the “ways in which they have...experienced life challenges and obstacles in order to...inspire...and show” African American students that it is possible to become successful (p. 2). Rather than using pedagogical or teaching practices that blindly force students to accept or embrace hierarchical powers that negate and oppress African American people, African American role models engages African American students in critical reflection about the realities of social injustices and ways to resist powers of oppression (King, 1991; King 1993). Therefore, African American role models can provide African American students with perspectives that are pertinent to their own group that other role models are unlikely to provide (Zirkel, 2002). Most importantly, African American role models help African American students to focus on the future and suggest opportunities in which the role model engages (Zirkel, 2002). As noted by Griffin and Tackie (2016), a teacher expressed how African American teachers can make a difference in African American students’ future success:

‘The difference I would like to make is a difference that my fifth-grade teacher, an African American woman, made [for] me,’ says an elementary teacher from

Oakland, California, who is also a Black woman. She credits that teacher with instilling in her a love of math, but also with fostering the self-confidence that would buoy her when other teachers doubted her ability. Now, she tries to give all her students—and especially her Black students—that same assurance. ‘I make sure I get to know each and every one of my kids, and let them know that they can do it.’ (p. 1).

Based on their experiences as teachers, African American role models are able to build positive relationships with African American students by communicating the “personal value, the collective power, and the political consequences of schooling and academic achievement” (Foster, 1990, p. 15). Therefore, African American role models have the ability to empower African American students to become more involved in their own education for the success of the community and themselves (Foster, 1990).

Although African American females can benefit from exposure to Euro-American role models, some dominant-group music teachers often give preferential treatment to students of their own race, have lower expectations, and are more likely to confuse cultural difference for cultural or intellectual disadvantage—whether intentional or not, this is the work of White supremacy (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Bond et al., 2015). In a recent study, researchers Gershenson et al. (2016) found that non-Black teachers had significantly lower expectations for Black students than Black teachers. In other words, African American students are more likely to be viewed unfavorably when paired with a teacher not of their own race (Bond et al., 2015). Because it is well documented that some dominant-group teachers have negative perceptions and expectations of African American female students, African American female role models have struggled to correct the negative stereotypes and misinformation that exist in schools about minorities (Solomon, 1997). Therefore, this study can be utilized to expand understanding and open

up dialogue around how African American band directors as role models offer social perspectives arising from common experiences of marginalization and normalization of negative perceptions and expectations (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

Counterspaces: An Activist Response

Challenging negative perceptions and expectations of African American females goes beyond negating negative perceptions and expectations practiced by teachers of the dominant group of society. It requires efforts of participating in social justice projects that demand a complete transformation of schooling; however, a complete transformation of schooling cannot happen until African American females are able to freely examine the issues that they face as a group. Through an examination of issues as a collective, African American females are able to listen to the stories of others, listen to how arguments of resistance are framed, and learn to make arguments themselves (Solórzano et al., 2000). Sharing experiences among and between each other empowers African American females to become activists within their schools and communities. “When the ideology of racism is examined and racist injuries are named, victims of racism can find their voice. Further, those injured by racism discover that they are not alone in their marginality” (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 64). The dimensions of collective sharing among and between African American females are a primary emphasis of counterspaces (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Counterspaces are basically supportive and validating shelters for African American females (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Within counterspaces, African American females become sheltered from the daily torrents of racism and other forms of subordination that are perpetuated in society. Counterspaces are not a way of life, but rather a mechanism

designed to foster Black women's empowerment and resistance towards oppressive powers (Collins, 2002). In other words, counterspaces are designed to empower Black women to take a stance on creating a socially just world (Collins, 2002).

As role models, African American female band directors can create racial and gender counterspaces for African American female students to share their experiences among people like themselves who understand the difficulties that they face in an unjust society (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Counterspaces are comfortable, supportive, validating spaces such as a predominantly African American female music organization or cultural center with participants who have Afrocentric values (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). African American female band directors are able to utilize counterspaces to negate negative perceptions and expectations that African American female students face within the band world and other racialized spaces characterized by oppressive powers. Negating negative perceptions and expectations in society can reframe African American female students' states of mind to define themselves individually and as a collective (Collins, 2002). As an activist response, counterspaces are also vitally important for developing strategies to resist and dismantle negative controlling images of African American females within society (Collins, 2002). Within counterspaces, African American female band students are able to freely examine racial and social issues that not only plague their daily lives, but the communities in which they live (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Counterspaces: Addressing Dimensions of Intersectionality

When creating counterspaces, role models must take into account that African American females' multiple social identities intersect in ways that shape the form and

extent of racism and other forms of subordination they encounter (Crenshaw, 1989). The central idea of intersectionality is not only about the multifaceted range of Black women's identities—gender, race, language, culture, sexuality, or ability—but rather that Black women are vulnerable to multiple forms of oppression, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation (Collins, 2002; Love, 2019). Intersectional paradigms not only remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, but they work together to systemically suppress African American women (Collins, 2002). In other words, African American females' experiences within band programs cannot be captured wholly by looking at only the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately, but rather as intersecting dimensions (Crenshaw, 1991). This view of intersectionality colludes with the notion that multiple oppressions reinforce each other to create new categories of suffering (Taylor, 2017). Therefore, it is an undeniable fact that African American women are not equally vulnerable to the same forms of oppressive powers as Black men, White women, or other races of men and women; likewise, African American women's experiences are different than the experiences of Black men and other races of men and women within society (Carbado & Gulati, 2013).

Understanding the dimensions of intersectionality is necessary to effectively utilize counterspaces as a mechanism that actively dismantles intersecting forms of oppression that plague the lives of African American females within the realm of instrumental music education. As an analytical tool, intersectionality reveals the complex reality of intersecting forms of oppression and how they intersect with Black women's identity (Love, 2019). When African American females view encounters of oppression

through the lens of intersectionality, they are able to “make sense of their interrelated spheres of existence” and ways of knowing, which is not only essential for surviving and thriving within racialized spaces but also the resistance of oppressive powers (Underwood & Hutchinson, 2020, p. 8). “Black women’s activism requires understanding not only the need to address more than one form of oppression, but the significance of how singular and multiple forms of oppression are organized” (Collins, 2002, p. 202). Without the resistance of intersecting paradigms of oppression, struggles to transform the band profession, and ultimately society, cannot be sustained.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how African American female band directors create and utilize counterspaces for African American female musicians to share collective and individual experiences, maintain involvement, form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to counter intersecting forms of oppression in bands. In this study, I also examined the participants’ perceptions about counterspaces in bands.

Research Questions

1. What are the African American female band directors’ perceptions and knowledge about counterspaces, and how do they utilize counterspaces to counter intersecting forms of oppression that African American female musicians face in bands?
2. How do the African American female band directors utilize counterspaces to help the African American female band students form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to share their individual and collective experiences of

involvement in bands?

3. How do counterspaces help African American female band directors understand common themes in the lives of African American female musicians that contribute to their sustained involvement in bands?

Theoretical Framework

Historically, Black feminist activists have challenged the ways in which Black women have been placed on the inferior end of the status continuum (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 22). Black feminist thought encourages Black women to share their experiences of womanhood among and between each other for purposes of finding common ground to resist racial, social, and political powers of society. The overarching purpose of Black feminist thought is not only to empower Black women to resist all forms of oppression, but to illuminate the voices of Black women who have been silenced by oppressive powers. For many years, African American women's identities have been shaped and defined by "erroneous and stereotypical images" that are advanced by the dominant group of society (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 21). As victims of oppression, Black feminist activists began the work toward dismantling forms of oppression, "both its practices and the ideas that justify it," (Collins, 2002, p. 22). The creation of Black feminist thought evolved from the activist responses of Black women who wanted an equal place within society (Collins, 2002). In response to Black women's historical experiences of oppression and suppression of their intellectual and emotional state of mind, Black feminist thought fosters empowerment among and between Black women to define themselves and to engage in dimensions of resistance (Collins, 2002). "As long as

Black women's subordination within intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation persists, Black feminism as an activist response to that oppression will remain needed" (Collins, 2002, p. 22).

Considering the fact that "race and racism are central, endemic, permanent and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how US society functions" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73), African American females must learn to move in and out of dominant and non-dominant worlds to survive and thrive in an unjust society. Because oppressive powers are a central part of society, African American females can dialogue among each other about race and racism and strategize ways to form positive relationships and maneuver around the norms, values, and practices in band settings. For example, African American female band directors can create counterspaces within and outside of the band program for African American female students to engage in conversations as a collective about the resistance of intersecting paradigms of oppression such as race, racism, discrimination, marginalization, and other forms of subordination that are evident within the band world. Although African American female students may not experience intersecting forms of oppression in the same way as their respective African American female teachers because of constant changing social conditions, the differences among their experiences "produce different patterns of experiential knowledge that in turn shape" a collective, self-defined standpoint among them that actively challenges forms of subordination faced within music settings (Collins, 2002, p. 27). Through a conscious understanding about various forms of oppression, African American female students are able to use their ways of knowing to strategically navigate through racialized spaces for survival purposes

(Collins, 2002). According to Solórzano and Villalpando (as cited in Yosso, 2005), African Americans have utilized ‘critical navigational skills’ for centuries to maneuver through unsupportive environments (p. 80). By utilizing Black feminist thought as a framework for this study, scholars can learn about the manifestation as well as various forms of racism that plague communities of color and gather information on how African American female music students and teachers utilize their abilities, skills, and stories to navigate oppressive forces at the institutional level and establish positive relationships that are key for flourishing academically and socially.

Guiding Definitions

Band Director

A band director is the head figure of a band program. Band directors oversee rehearsals, performances, budgeting, and recruiting for all bands within a school setting. More specifically, the band director directs and manages all bands within the school of employment.

African American/Black Women

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), African American women are individuals who have origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa, including those who identify as Black, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian. Thereby, the terms African American and Black are used synonymously in this study to refer to American women with Afrocentric values and African ancestry.

Female/Woman/Girl

For this study, I use the terms female and woman synonymously to refer to an

adult human being who is biologically female. Furthermore, the term girl refers to a young female child or female adolescent who has not reached adulthood.

Counterspaces

For African American females, counterspaces are considered as spaces to share the collective and individual experiences of womanhood and a shelter from the daily torrents of microaggressions and other forms of subordination (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Counterspaces may be in a physical structure such as a classroom or simply the presence of African American women of an organization (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Within counterspaces, African American females can speak freely amongst each other, which is necessary to resist dominant ideologies (Collins, 2002).

Self-Definitions

To reject externally defined negative images and conceptions of Black women that are advanced by the dominant group of society, Black women as a collective can define and “fashion” their own realities and truths of “self,” in which Collins (2002) describes as Black women’s self-definitions (p. 9). Therefore, Black women’s self-definitions are based on the collective experiences of Black women, rather than the experiences of an individual Black woman.

Marginalization

As the most concise definition for this study, UNESCO (2010) defines marginalization in education as “a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities. It represents a stark example of ‘clearly remediable injustice.’” Therefore, marginalization is a process that prevents certain groups from

making decisions or voicing their opinions and needs at the social and institutional level.

Racism

For the purposes of this study, Marable's (1992) definition of racism is most salient and concise: "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans...and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5). Furthermore, Lorde (1992) describes racism as a "belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (p. 496). Based on Marable and Lorde's definitions, racism in this study refers to a system upheld at the institutional level that benefits Whites and disadvantages other ethnic groups such as African Americans.

Delimitations

Through the theoretical lens of Black feminist thought, I sought to understand the experiences of 17 African American female band directors at the secondary level, and how they created counterspaces to foster African American female musicians' collective and individual experiences, self-definitions, and consciousness of resistance toward oppressive powers as it relates to their sustained involvement in band programs. In addition, this study not only provided an in-depth view into how intersecting forms of oppression are organized within the band world, but also revealed the complex reality of how they intersect with the participants' identities. This study also illuminated the participants' individual and collective experiences.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Throughout history there has been a continuous lack of participation of African American females in band programs at the secondary level (DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016; Elpus & Abril, 2019). The lack of African American females in instrumental music education programs has resulted in few African American females pursuing a career as a band director (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012; Wooten, 2017). In a field that is male dominated, African American females are the most underrepresented group in the band profession (Wooten, 2017). Although scholars understand the dearth of African American females participating in instrumental music education programs such as band, researchers remain in the infancy stage of finding ways to break the barriers that have caused the continuous paucity of African American females participating in instrumental music education programs.

In an effort to situate the present research within its context, I begin this chapter with a discussion about women band directors, retention and recruitment of African American females, challenges that African American females face in music education programs, and inequities in music education. Secondly, I provide a discussion of Collins' (2002) critical social theory, Black feminist thought (BFT), which is a theoretical framework for the collective experiences and stories of African American females. Through the lens of Black feminist thought (BFT), I discuss the constructs of empowerment of Black women in society, conceptualizations of navigating academic spaces, and the importance of engaging in meaningful conversations about race in music

education.

Female Band Directors

Historically, there have been a low number of female band directors in society, especially females of color (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012; Wooten, 2017). In Sheldon and Hartley's (2012) study of participants in conducting workshops or symposia from 1996-2008 at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, males greatly outnumbered females in categories of wind-band conducting majors, conducting ensembles at the Midwest clinic, and conducting workshops or symposia. Although there are no significant numbers of females in the band conducting profession, White females have had more opportunities to conduct in highly acclaimed venues and secondary school settings than females of color (Wooten, 2017).

Black females have long struggled with finding and claiming a space within the field of instrumental music education (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012). Although Black females are visible within the field of instrumental music education, the visibility and behavioral expectations of the White male population continue to dominate the field (Sears, 2018; Sheldon & Hartley, 2012). The domination of White males within the field of instrumental music education is the result of the perpetuation of dominant discourses within society (Sears, 2018), which places females, especially Black females, in a state of stagnation. While stagnant, females continue to struggle for position and acceptance within the field (Brenneman, 2007; Zervoudakes & Tanur, 1994). Black females' experiences, musical/cultural traditions, and expression of emotions and caring for others are criticized and rejected (Efthim, et al., 2001; Sears, 2018). Through rejection, Black

females face various challenges with race and gender discrimination, isolation, and stereotyping in the field (Sears, 2018). The continuous rejection and absence of Black females as band directors functions to limit mentorship of students of like gender and race/ethnicity and constitutes a rationale for further investigation (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012).

Strategies of Retention and Recruitment

For so many years, African American females have been invisible within the field of instrumental music education (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012). The low participation of African American females ought to be of great concern for researchers, educators, and others within and outside of the field of music education. To find solutions for retaining and recruiting of African American females for band programs, I reviewed studies where researchers explored cultural dissonances between teachers and students of different races, culturally responsive teaching, and role models.

Cultural Dissonances

Despite the growing number of students from diverse backgrounds in North American secondary schools, the majority of the teachers are White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Similarly, many of the music teachers in North American schools are also White (Hewitt & Thompson, 2006). The cultural backgrounds of a teacher force that is predominately White are very different than those of the diverse population of students who they teach (Gay, 2010). Substantial scholarly evidence indicates that White teachers who uphold racial stereotypes evaluate Black students' intelligence, capabilities, and behaviors more negatively than those of White students

(Ehrenberg et al., 1995; Morris, 2005; Sbarra & Pianta, 2001). Similarly, White teachers often equate Whiteness with greater potential, intellect, and good behaviors (Morris, 2005). Hamann & Walker (1993) argue that teachers who assume that diverse students are intellectually and socially limited, have lower expectations and are known to create fewer opportunities for participation in qualitative interactions. White teachers' negative views of Black students are a result of the racial inequalities within schooling discourses (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). That is, the effects of cultural mismatch between White teachers and Black students arises from the negative and racial stereotypical behaviors, ideas, and images that are maintained at the institutional, social, cultural, and political level within society (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). The effects of cultural mismatch can contribute to the reproduction of inequalities across generations (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013).

When White teachers rely on the emotional, ideological, and performative tools of Whiteness, they are protecting and maintaining negative stereotypical ideas and behaviors about diversity and race (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Picower, 2009). White teachers must understand that they are a part of a system that is set up to benefit “the [dominant] group, mystify the system, remove the agents of actions from discourse, and when interrogated about it, stifle the discussion with inane comments about the “reality” of the charges being made” (Leonardo, 2004, p. 148). Teachers who do not interrogate their own attitudes and assumptions toward students with diverse backgrounds create barriers to learning in the classroom (Butler et al., 2007). Therefore, it is imperative that White teachers become aware and develop a critical consciousness about privilege, race,

and oppression among diverse members of society in order to begin the work towards equality.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

As a continuous effort to increase the number of African American females participating in band programs, teachers must minimize cultural disconnects in curricula to effectively instruct students from diverse cultures (Cannon, 2009). In various cases, “students from ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds are alienated from the curriculum due to the lack of background knowledge that makes the curriculum and content of curriculum relevant to them” (p. 4). In other words, curriculum and school culture in U.S. schools often mirror the cultural traditions and values of the dominant group of society (Ware, 2006). “This mismatch between school culture and the culture of the students creates the potential for misunderstanding of actions and misinterpretation of communication between teacher and student” (Ware, 2006, p. 429). The dominant interpretations of instructional practices within schooling can reinforce biased attitudes and beliefs that a teacher may have about diverse cultures (Lind & McKoy, 2016). Teachers must challenge and recognize their own attitudes and beliefs about diverse cultures to create a culturally relevant learning environment (Lind & McKoy, 2016). Recognizing and challenging beliefs and attitudes can only happen when teachers are able to engage in self-reflection and self-assessment (Lind & McKoy, 2016). To create classrooms that reflect the cultural traditions and experiences of students, teachers must understand that diverse students’ cultural traditions are not of lesser quality, but of equal quality to those of the dominant group of society. That is, teachers must challenge the

dominant interpretations of teaching by “considering different ways of knowing and learning as ‘different from’ but not deficient to others” (Lind & McKoy, 2016, p. 44).

To develop an understanding of diverse cultures, teachers must learn about students’ cultural traditions and individual/collective experiences. A culturally responsive teacher seeks to include students’ “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles...to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Kelly-Jackson, 2008, p. 83). Teachers who have implemented culturally responsive teaching in music classrooms “use[s] models of minority culture’s oratory, literature or song and other related audiovisuals and resource materials to enhance the lesson” (Carlyle, 2008, p. 46). However, culturally relevant teaching is not only about including aspects of “ethnic education in the curriculum;” it also involves changing teachers’ attitudes toward “marginalized cultures” (Cannon, 2009, p. 4). That is, teachers with positive attitudes toward diverse students are able to build positive relationships with those students and are more willing to incorporate diverse cultural traditions into lesson activities. Culturally responsive teachers (a) are socially conscious about the realities of students’ upbringing, (b) are aware of students’ cultural backgrounds and traditions, (c) have taken personal responsibility for changing curricula to mirror the cultural traditions and cultural values of diverse students, and (d) embrace students’ diverse backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive teachers must also challenge attitudes that collude with the idea that there is a single right way of teaching and understanding of the world. By rejecting White supremacy, teachers can create a classroom learning environment where students of diverse cultures are

recognized and embraced. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), teaching through the lens of pedagogy that embraces diverse cultural traditions empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically (pp. 17-18).

When students feel that they belong within a classroom setting, they believe that the teacher cares about them and want them to have a chance to become successful. According to Irvine (1990), the act of caring characterizes the interpersonal connection that must exist between teachers and diverse students. Although teachers must operate within the ethics of caring to consider culturally responsive teaching, justice must also be paired with caring to eliminate racialized barriers within the educational system (Parsons, 2005). When the ethics of caring and justice is paired, teachers are able to broaden their perspectives about social inequalities within schooling discourses and the importance of the inclusion of diverse cultural traditions and experiences within the learning environment. By recognizing and understanding the inequalities in schooling discourses, teachers are able to dismantle dominant interpretations of schooling and create a space where diverse students can flourish academically and socially (Parsons, 2005).

Role Models

Through a pragmatic view of music education, music teachers and researchers should not only base their discussions on the relevance, quality, absence, and presence of music instruction in U.S. schools, but also on the presence and absence of role models in the field of music education. Based on Zirkel's (2002) findings, the presence of race and gender matched role models was more important than the quality of the role model. In Zirkel's (2002) study, the relationships between race- and gender-matched role models

were stronger for Black students than White students. As Hamann and Walker (1993) explained, the relationships that African American female students have with race and gender-matched role models are strong because those teachers understand the challenges that those students face. In other words, an African American female teacher can provide African American female students with information that teachers of other race-gender identities will not be able to talk about since they have not experienced similar challenges (Zirkel, 2002).

The need for more African American role models is to do with more than modeling behavior for African American pupils to emulate, it is also about African American teachers being activists and challenging educational inequality (Maylor, 2009). Activism among African American teachers has occurred in two primary dimensions (Collins, 2002). In the first dimension, African Americans create “spheres of influence within existing social structures” (Collins, 2002). Within the sphere of influence, African Americans are able to recognize individual and collective empowerment to reject oppressive powers (Collins, 2002). As such, they are able to embrace a worldview that sees all African Americans living within a space of equality (Collins, 2002). The second dimension of African Americans activism consists of making efforts to dismantle racism, discrimination, marginalization and other forms of subordination within social institutions like schools (Collins, 2002). Just as school’s are essential for the survival of dominant interpretations of the world and various forms of inequalities, they can also be frontline spaces for illuminating equality among all members of society (Collins, 2009).

Barriers within Instrumental Music Education Programs

Although researchers have noted that culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Kelly-Jackson, 2008; Lind & McKoy, 2016), same race and gender teachers (Hewitt & Thompson, 2006; Ware, 2006), and same race and gender role models (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Zirkel, 2002) play a significant role in African American females' choice to participate within instrumental music education programs, a more complex view that involves the challenges faced by African American females must be considered to more fully understand their experiences within instrumental music education programs. Based on existing research (Palmer, 2011; Wheelhouse, 2009), African Americans and other diverse students face numerous challenges while enrolled and when trying to gain access to music education programs at the secondary level. Disparities in socioeconomic status, educational experiences, standardized testing, grade point average, admission policies, school curriculum and gender, race, and cultural expectations between Black and White students have played a significant role in the participation of African Americans in instrumental music education programs at the secondary level (DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016; Koza, 2009; Palmer 2011). The absence of African American musical contributions in school music programs is also among the reasons for why African Americans do not participate in music classes (Lundquist & Sims, 1996), which is a result of oppressive powers' rejection of African Americans embodied musical culture (Gustafson, 2009). White rejection of African Americans and other diverse cultures music traditions keeps the dominant culture and musical values at the forefront of school music programs. In today's society, music programs and curricula must be transformed to

include the cultural and musical traditions of African Americans and other diverse groups within society. According to Lundquist & Sims (1996), programs that reflect students' cultural backgrounds motivate students to continue studies in music (Lundquist & Sims, 1996). Identifying notions to capitalize on students' socio-cultural background in music allows students to understand how their musical heritage is important and part of a rich tapestry of music history. Music teachers must work equitably to develop students' capabilities without asking them to leave their heritage at the door when they enter the classroom (Lundquist and Sims, 1996). Further, African American female music teachers and others within the field must not only understand that the use of traditional paradigms of music curricula heavily focuses on the Euro-American canon, but also that the traditional use of instructional practices that requires students to sit still while sight reading a musical score or to make no unnecessary movements while performing at a concert, and so on, clearly perpetuates ideals of White supremacy (Bradley, 2015). Although African American female music teachers and others within the field may not be attempting to colonize students in music settings, the result of "infusing pedagogical environments with colonial attitudes about cultural superiority" leads to an understanding that traditional music ensembles are spaces created only for members of the White culture (Bradley, 2015, p. 199). Therefore, African American females and others within the field must free themselves from a colonial brainwashing in order to disrupt the continuous perpetuation of White supremacy within instrumental music settings.

The current dynamics of schooling at the secondary level have resulted in the continuous absence of Black females in instrumental music education programs (Hewitt

and Thompson, 2006). With such a small number of Black students participating in instrumental music education programs at the secondary and collegiate level, social justice educators must work to create a solution. Understanding various barriers that Black students face while enrolled and when trying to gain access to music education programs is critical for creating inclusive music programs. No student, regardless of ability, culture, status, or school level should be denied the opportunity to participate or to illuminate their cultural/musical traditions and voices in instrumental music education programs (Johnson, 2004). According to Frierson-Campbell (2007), music teachers' ideas about equitable distribution of a socially just music education should be communicated with decision makers, political agents, and be representative of the entire music education community. In an effort to break social and institutional barriers, Palmer (2011) suggested that leaders in higher education provide diversity training and multicultural music education courses in instrumental music education programs and increase access to Black students. The inequities of schooling discourses should lead administrators, teachers, parents, and policy makers to dialogue about changing the current paths of music education programs to include all students, regardless of cultural background or socioeconomic status. Researchers must also continue to define actions and examine conditions that can lead to changes in the status quo for the field of instrumental music education (Frierson-Campbell, 2007).

Summary: Strategies of Retention and Recruitment

African American students face multiple challenges while enrolled and when trying to gain access to secondary and collegiate instrumental music education programs.

When instrumental music education programs are not easily accessible and students face various challenges while enrolled, regardless of cultural background or socioeconomic status, students are deprived of having the opportunity to become lifelong music learners and future instrumental music leaders. In other words, institutionalized oppressive powers have created school curricula and policies to dehumanize and marginalize students with diverse backgrounds. To resist powers of oppression upheld in social institutions and recruit/retain African American students in instrumental music education programs, music educators must teach through a culturally responsive lens to include the ideals and traditions of students in the curriculum and become positive role models to help students to achieve goals.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought, constructed by Collins (2002), is a theory that encompasses individual and collective experiences of Black women in the U.S. (Collins, 2002, p. 9). Due to the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, and sexuality, Black feminist thought is an activist response to combat oppressive forces that plague the nation's educational, political, and social systems (Collins, 2002). Black feminist thought is a set of practices that encourage Black women to strategize ways to resist discriminatory social powers and to share their experiences between and among each other within a society that derogates women of African descent (Collins, 2002). As a critical social theory, BFT encompasses bodies of knowledge from multiple Black feminist critical thinkers and intellectuals who are deeply concerned about the Black community as a collective body. Without Black women's voices in "written work and in

oral presentations there will be no articulation” of their concerns and activist responses (bell hooks, 1994, p. 105).

Black feminist thought has six distinguishable features that clarify a standpoint for Black women; therefore, this section of the study is a discussion of (a) the dialectical relationships between oppression and activism, (b) differences between and among the experiences of Black women, (c) the heterogeneous collectivity of Black women’s experiences, (d) Black women as intellectuals, (e) the significance of change, and (f) Black women’s contributions to other social projects.

Dialectical Relationship Between Oppression and Activism

As Collins (2002) explained, there is a “dialectical relationship linking African American women’s oppression and activism” (p. 22). That is, if intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, or sexuality did not exist, activist responses and critical social theories like Black feminist thought that aim to empower women would be unnecessary (Collins, 2002). On one hand, Black women must navigate the dominant worlds in order to survive in a society that was created to deny their rights of equality and fair treatment; yet on the other hand, Black women’s experiences of various forms of oppression force them to resist the oppressive powers through activist responses. The dialectical link between oppression and activism creates a sense of survival and resistance of oppressive powers. As bell hooks (1994) stated, Black women who deal with various forms of oppression can develop “strategies for survival and resistance that need to be shared within Black communities, especially since (as they put it) the Black woman who gets past all this and discovers herself ‘holds the key to liberation’” (p. 118).

Differences Between and Among the Experiences of Black Women

Although Black women encounter common challenges, Black women's experiences and interpretations of those experiences are not identical; that is, Black women's collective standpoint is "characterized by the tensions that accrue to different responses to common challenges" (Collins, 2002, p. 28). In other words, Black women's differences of age, class, religion, or sexual orientation do not change the fact that they all encounter some form of oppression that denies their right to a quality education, fair housing, and equal treatment in public spaces (Collins, 2002). The individual experiences of Black women "produce[s] different patterns of experiential knowledge that in turn shape individual reactions to core themes" (Collins, 20002, p. 27). As Collins (2012) explained, Black women, whether young or old, all encounter some form of racism in U.S. society. As the first black student in a new catholic school, Audre Lorde (2007) describes how her White teacher responded when she was laughed at by her White peers for having braided hair: "The nun sends a note home to my mother saying that 'pigtails are not appropriate for school,' and that I should learn to comb my hair in 'a more becoming style'" (p. 148). The type of institutionalized racism that Audre Lorde (2007) experienced as a young child is a testament to the challenges that other Black young children face when they are in a space where the dominant group has assembled.

The Heterogeneous Collectivity of Black Women's Experiences

Despite the fact that White dominant ideologies are used to suppress Black women who take a stand to resist cultural, structural, and institutional powers (Collins, 2002, p. 29), Black women's experiences as a heterogenous collective can challenge the

manifestations of racism and sexism in our society (Collins, 2002). The collective experiences among and between black women can foster a form of activism to resist structural, political, and social powers (Collins, 2002, p. 30). As Audre Lorde (2007) explained in her book, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*:

When Black women in this country come together to examine our sources of strength and support, and to recognize our common social, cultural, emotional, and political interests, it is a development which can only contribute to the power of the Black community as a whole...for it is through the coming together of self-actualized individuals...that any real advances can be made (p. 46).

Lorde (2007) describes how the activist responses of the Black community as a collective entity are more powerful than a few isolated Black feminist voices. The narratives of Black women as a collective entity are so powerful that they reveal an understanding of their roles in “institutional change as well as their analyses of oppression based on race, gender, class, and/sexuality” (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 95).

Black Female Intellectuals

Regardless of age, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, or educational level, Black women intellectuals’ contributions to Black feminist thought constitute an essential part of challenging dominant ideologies upheld at institutional, political, and social levels (Collins, 2002). As social agents, Black female intellectuals must take a stand for all Black women (Collins, 2002). Black women must become agents of change for other Black women in order to dismantle oppressive forces. Although Black women may have individual identities and experiences, Black women can provide scholars with a deeper understanding of the struggles that other Black women face in society because of their membership in an oppressed group (Collins, 2002). When a Black woman is a member of

an oppressed group, they are more likely to have critical insights about the oppressive forces that deny Black women equitable rights than someone who is not Black (Collins, 2002). It is impossible for a White woman, White man, or person of another cultural group to truly understand the challenges that Black women face since they have not experienced racism, marginalization, and other forms of subordination at the level or in the ways that Black women have encountered these oppressive forces (Collins, 2002).

Significance of Change

From the obstructions that African Americans faced in exercising their right to vote to the exclusion of Black women from public offices, the social conditions of the United States have changed over the past decade (Collins, 2009). As social agents, Black women intellectuals must understand that when social conditions change, the knowledge and practices of resistance must also change (Collins, 2002). That is, when oppressive forces take on new forms in our society, the counteractive strategies to resist those powers must also change (Collins, 2002). Without changing the practices of resistance as social conditions change, Black women will not be able to eradicate social, racial, and political powers that have oppressed the Black community for centuries. When efforts of resistance are responsive to the social conditions of our society, Black women are not only able to dismantle racial and social inequalities for Black women, but for women and men of other races who have also experienced similar forms of subordination.

Black Women's Contributions to Other Social Projects

As Black feminist intellectuals, Black women have the knowledge to support other social justice projects (Collins, 2002). According to Shirley Chisholm (1970), as

Black women work towards their own freedom, they can help others to be set free from various social injustices. The knowledge that Black women possess as a collective, can be transferred to other social justice projects for those who are “victimized by sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic policies and attitudes” in the U.S. society (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 96). As activists, Black women intellectuals must commit to empowering others as well as themselves (Collins, 2002). “Only a broad movement for human rights can prevent the Black Revolution from becoming isolated and can [e]nsure ultimate success” (Murray, 1970, p. 102). Therefore, Black women’s resistance of racial, social, and political powers is not only an “aspect of survival” for Black women, but for the men, women, and children who are members of the black community (Rodriguez, 1998).

Summary: Black Feminist Thought

As a set of practices, Black feminist thought is important to this study because it is shaped by the stories and experiences of Black females. More specifically, Black feminist thought provides readers with an understanding of the importance of Black women’s stance for resisting racial, social, and political powers that have plagued communities of color for hundreds of years. Since dominant ideologies are used to suppress Black females, it is crucial that Black women intellectuals continue to take a stance “of and for [all] Black women” (Collins, 2002, p. 468).

Empowerment of Black Women in Academic Spaces

Through the practices of BFT, Black women have demonstrated that “becoming empowered requires more than changing the consciousness of individual Black women via Black community development strategies; empowerment requires transforming unjust

social institutions that African Americans encounter from one generation to the next” (Collins, 2002, p. 273). As Collins (2002) asserts, Black women activists must understand that to bring about change in social institutions, they must “never stop questioning” social injustices and hierarchical powers of oppression (Collins, 2002, p. 273). In other words, “empowerment remains an [e]llusive construct and developing a Black politics of empowerment requires specifying how the domains of power that constrain Black women...can be resisted” (Collins, 2002, p. 19). Therefore, I have devoted this section to a discussion of knowledge systems of resistance that empower Black women.

Black Women’s “Outsider-Within” Status

For centuries, educational practices, policies, and laws set forth by local and federal governing agents have devalued the voice and intellect of Black women (Robinson et al., 2013). As Davis (1999) asserts:

African American women intellectuals have a place but not an importance in academe. While African American women intellectuals in universities are given academic homes from which to, theoretically, obtain mentoring, collaboration, collegiality, and supportive climate, they are often told—by tenure committees and journal editors—that their work and their very existence is not of importance. These gatekeepers of the status quo...pollute the voices, contributions, and participation of Black women (p. 371).

The marginality that is described in the aforementioned statement is “viewed as the ‘outsider-within’ status, in which black women have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 21). Despite Black women’s marginality within academic spaces, Black women’s “outsider-within”

status provides a “distinctive angle of vision” for navigating academic spaces in such a way that their voices can be revealed and understood (Collins, 2002, p. 12).

The Power of Self-Definition Among Black Women

The continuous challenges of devaluation, racism, marginalization, isolation, and questioned credibility that Black women face in social institutions can take a significant and a detrimental toll on Black women’s self-images. Despite the challenges that Black women face in social institutions, Collins (2002) insists that Black women define their own realities and share their own experiences with the world. Through self-definition, Black women are not only empowered to encourage each other, but they are empowered to continue the work of dismantling oppressive forces within society (Collins, 2002). As Collins (2002) asserts:

The insistence on Black women’s self-definitions reframes the entire dialogue from one of protesting the technical accuracy of an image...to one stressing the power dynamics underlying the very process of definition itself. By insisting on self-definition, Black women question not only what has been said about African-American women but the credibility and the intentions of those possessing the power to define. When Black women define ourselves, we clearly reject the assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to interpret our reality are entitled to do so. Regardless of the actual content of Black women’s self-definitions, the act of insisting on Black female self-definition validates Black women’s power as human subjects. (p. 114).

In Collins’s (2002) explanation of Black women’s self-definitions, self is not defined by separating oneself from other Black women, but rather in the connectedness between and among other Black women (Collins, 2002). Through the experiences that Black women gain from the community and their families, Black women are able to construct their own ideas about what it means to be a Black woman (Collins, 2002). Therefore, when Black women’s ideas are “refashioned” in a collective manner, Black women are able to resist

negative images and discriminatory social practices that are advanced by the dominant group of society (Collins, 2002, p. 113), which aligns with the practices of BFT.

Counterspaces for Black Women

To take a stance for Black women and to resist hierarchal powers of oppression in academic spaces, Black teachers must create sites where Black females' experiences are validated and viewed as important (Solórzano et al., 2000). Counterspaces can be used to validate the experiential knowledge of Black females and to challenge dominant ideologies (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Counterspaces are structures that foster social-educational engagement and "emancipate participants for the educational empowerment of students of color" (Hargrave, 2015, p. 365). Although "domination may be inevitable as a social fact, it is unlikely to be hegemonic as an ideology within social spaces where Black women speak freely. This realm of relatively safe discourse, however narrow, is a necessary condition for Black women's resistance" (Collins, 2002, p. 100). As Solórzano et al. (2000) have determined, academic and social counterspaces can serve as "sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (p. 70). In the presence of counterspaces, Black females are able to share their experiences with others and engage in activist responses to resist hierarchical powers that control negative stereotypical images and myths of Black women in society (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). When African American female students within counterspaces hear their own stories of other Black female students and teachers, they understand that their individual struggles are emblematic of Black women's collective struggles, which empowers them to utilize their

voice as a mechanism to speak among each other and against power dynamics that oppresses them (Collins, 2002; Solórzano et al., 2000). By persisting through the journey to resist and dismantle oppressive powers, Black female students and teachers understand that when their individual struggles are linked to group action, they are able to “change the world from one in which...[they] merely exist to one over which...[they] have some control” (Collins, 2002, p. 121). Although counterspaces are designed to empower and foster Black female students’ independent self-definitions, the process of creating a safe space within academic spaces cannot begin until teachers are able to reflect on teaching practices and challenge personal attitudes or biases (Collins, 2009).

Black Women as Othermothers

For hundreds of years, oppressive powers have positioned Black children in educational systems to be underrepresented and dehumanized (Henry, 1992). To dismantle forms of subordination upheld in educational systems, Black educators made the decision to take control of Black children’s education for the empowerment and success of the Black community from one generation to the next (Henry, 1992). Black women educators were encouraged to become “warm demanders” (Ware, 2006) and “intergenerational builders carrying out the mission of the Civil Rights Movement” in academic spaces by acting as othermothers (Loder-Jackson, 2012). As othermothers, Black women are able to “stand between the school and the families to try to broker quality education for students who are unlikely to get it without advocates” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 91). In other words, othermothering for Black educators is based on the notion of caring for others with the intention to empower individuals and communities of

color (Mogadime, 2000). As Collins (2002) asserts:

“Such power is transformative in that Black women’s relationships with children and other vulnerable community members are not intended to dominate or control. Rather, their purpose is to bring people along, to...“uplift the race” so that vulnerable members of the community will be able to attain the self-reliance and independence essential for resistance” (pp. 192-193).

Thereby, when Black educators function as othermothers they have personally taken the role to create safe spaces where Black children and communities are able to share their experiences and resist powers of oppression at the social, cultural, and institutional level.

Summary: Empowerment of Black Women in Academic Spaces

By advancing Black women’s empowerment through self-definition, othermothering, and counterspaces, Black women are able to resist dominant ideologies within academic spaces. Through Black women’s marginality, their “outsider-within” status allows them to gain knowledge about the existence of various forms of oppressive forces at the inner and external levels of academic spaces. Although the empowerment of Black women is vitally important for the development of resistance strategies, the powerful nature of empowerment among Black women is crucial for the upliftment of the Black community. When the Black community is empowered, they are able to collectively rise above the challenges that they face in society to create a socially just world. Thereby, it is through Black women’s actions that members of the Black community are empowered to continue the journey toward changing an unjust society.

Conceptualizations of Navigating Academic Spaces

For centuries, academic spaces in the U.S. have been more than just institutions of learning facts and skills, but rather places that “attempt to control what...[students] think

and say, attach privilege to some and not to others, and, via these activities, perpetuate social inequalities or, on the other hand, foster fairness” (Collins, 2009, p. 4). Academic spaces are frontline social structures through which dominant beliefs and worldviews are able to be passed on from generation to generation (Collins, 2009). Because members of the dominant group hold powerful positions within academic spaces, they are able to make curricular and political decisions that illuminate their voices, ideals, and values. The dominant group uses their power and privilege within academic spaces to keep their dominant stance within society—even if it means devaluing and marginalizing other groups (Collins, 2009). Because of the dominant group’s interest in maintaining the status quo, they use academic spaces as a way to teach society about their superiority over other races and that “social inequalities of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality [are]...natural, normal, and inevitable” (Collins, 2009, p. 7). The voices of African Americans and other marginalized groups are silenced, and their cultural and musical traditions are excluded from curricula and institutional practices within racialized academic spaces.

To survive in academic spaces controlled by the dominant group of society, African Americans have learned to draw on various social and psychological navigational skills (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). African Americans have learned to “understand (but not necessarily believe) how the powerful see them, usually as less intelligent, less morally capable, less hardworking, less beautiful, or all of the above” (Collins, 2009, p. 9). In this manner, African Americans adjust and mold their cultural and individual behaviors to the expectations of the dominant group of society (Collins, 2009). African

Americans develop a consciousness about their oppression when they adjust their behaviors to survive within mainstream institutions (Collins, 2009). “Charting this path requires living in this space of double consciousness where one draws both from school-based traditions as well as one’s own experiences (cultural traditions)” (Collins, 2009, p. 10). This space of double consciousness is an internal struggle between self-consciousness—how a person views oneself, and self-realization—how a person is viewed by the dominant group of society (Du Bois, 1903).

Although African Americans have learned to navigate academic spaces for survival purposes, Love (2019) argues that African Americans want to do more than just survive, they “want to matter...[and] thrive” within academic spaces (p. 1). Mattering and thriving within academic spaces means that the cultural traditions, values, and ideals of African Americans are included and acknowledged, and their voices are never silenced. Educational systems in the U.S. were designed to offer “nothing more than survival tactics to children of color” (Love, 2019, p. 10). Within educational systems of survival, African Americans’ voices, cultural traditions, values, and ideals are excluded, which leads to feelings of isolation and underrepresentation, and educational reformers are tasked with designing schools with a higher proportion of students of color to fail (e.g., schools are underfunded, high teacher burnout, and low-quality teachers) (Del Pilar, 2009; Love, 2019). Within this aspect, various forms of oppression such as racism, marginalization, and microaggressions that African Americans face within racialized academic spaces cannot be “eradicated by tweaking the system or making adjustments” (Love, 2019, p. 10). For African Americans to matter and thrive within academic spaces,

African American communities and educational reformers must work together to create new educational systems that are based on “intersectional justice, antiracism, love, healing, and joy” (Love, 2019, p. 11).

Conversations about Race in Music Education

In an effort to combat racial inequalities in school music programs, music educators and scholars alike must dialogue about strategies to create music curricula to meet the needs of all students, regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, or gender. As Elpus and Abril (2019) reported, students who participated in traditional school music ensembles (i.e., band, orchestra, and choir) were mostly White. Music education programs in the U.S. are based on the Western canon, which is constructed by the dominant group of society (Bradley, 2007). Therefore, the participation gap between Black and White students in traditional music ensembles should be alarming to educators across North America.

As Bradley (2007) explained, students who do not possess Eurocentric ideals are usually outcasts in music education programs in North America. In other words, the cultural and musical backgrounds of other diverse groups in U.S. schools are being categorized as inferior or of lesser quality than the traditions of the Western paradigm. As Bradley (2007) noted, “our music education curricula continue to validate and recognize particular (white) bodies, to give passing nods to a token few ‘others,’ and to invalidate many more through omission” (p. 134). The musical and cultural traditions of the dominant group continue to predominate music practices and curricula in North American schools, while others “around the world remain marginalized as curricular add-

ons, if acknowledged at all” (Bradley, 2007, p. 134).

As an African American scholar, McCall (2017) learned firsthand about the visibility and reification of the cultural and musical traditions of the dominant group within music programs:

I, in some way, accepted the fact that I was one of the few African Americans in my band program, but my African-American peers and I couldn’t understand why predominantly Black band programs never participated in the band competitions and festivals in which we participated. I recall asking our White band directors why we never saw those bands at competitions. Their reply was always, ‘Well, their band programs aren’t very good’ or ‘They didn’t have very good teachers.’ At the time, I guess I accepted it. After all, the directors were the experts. I later learned that the predominantly Black bands in my area did participate in competitions, but they were always competitions that only Black bands and Black people attended (p. 17).

According to McCall (2017), “[i]t seemed as though wherever...[she] went, despite...[her] position—student or music professional—the music profession portrayed African Americans as inadequate” (p. 18). McCall (2017) not only learned that the musical and cultural traditions of the dominant group are categorized as superior or of better quality than the traditions of diverse groups, but the voices and perspectives of social actors who uphold oppressive structures are illuminated through music education curricula.

To take a stand and make music education more inclusive, educators, community leaders, and scholars must work to “undermine hierarchies of advantage and disadvantage” that are undeniably present in the structure of music programs in the U.S. (Bradley, 2007, p. 137). Music educators must be willing to deconstruct hierarchies in order to include the musical and cultural traditions of all students. To undermine various racial and social hierarchies, music education programs must be examined through an

anti-racist lens such as Black feminist thought—which “encompasses bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions facing U.S. Black women as a collectivity” (Collins, 2009, p. 9). Through an anti-racist lens, Black feminist thought provides a discursive framework for questioning the roles of social institutions in the U.S. and the reproduction of inequalities (Collins, 2009; Dei, 2000). Through the anti-racist institutional practices of Black feminist thought, social justice activists are not only able to examine various issues of equity, the knowledge and perspectives of the Black culture, or the challenges of diversity, but also the condition of Black women’s resistance (Collins, 2009; Dei, 2000).

Although there is a need for music education programs to be culturally relevant and inclusive for all students, regardless of age, sexual orientation, or gender, there is a great number of White educators who are not ready to talk about race and racism (Bradley, 2007). As Bradley (2007) noted, discussions about race are not only discomfoting for many people of the dominant group of society, but “it raises tacit fears that if we de-center the western canon in music education to acknowledge and engage in forms of music making that are more culturally relevant to our students, our race-based positions of advantage may be compromised” (Bradley, 2007, p. 139). However, White educators’ inability to have meaningful conversations about race is “part of the very process that maintains systems of advantage and disadvantage within music education” (Bradley, 2007, p. 138). As Dei (2006) asserted, “in order for certain issues about the experiences of racism to be accepted in public consciousness, they must be raised by a dominant body” (p. 15).

Despite Dei's (2006) assertion that issues of racism in music education curricula may not be accepted in the public consciousness without White educators speaking out, McCall (2017) argues that "[White educators] are not able to fully articulate the social realities that people of color encounter because of their position of privilege" (p. 16). Therefore, African Americans and other marginalized groups must be placed at the forefront of discussions about race and racism in music education curricula. To give a voice to those who have been silenced by social actors who uphold oppressive forces, African Americans and other marginalized groups must "not wait for permission to [take a stand]...The longer we wait, the more we place our moral compasses and our access to social justice in jeopardy" (McCall, 2016, p. 63). It is through the stories and activist responses of marginalized groups that structures of oppression in the music education profession can be dismantled.

Chapter Summary

From the marginal positions in music education that have been occupied by African American women, to inadequate music resources in public schools that have a higher percentage of diverse students, it is obvious that multiple facets of racial and social inequalities have impacted and continue to impact the lives of many African American women and people of color. The oppressive forces that plague communities of color will not disappear without the work of people who are willing to resist the hierarchy powers of oppression. Therefore, the work to break racial and social barriers, and creating a socially just world begins when the lived experiences of those who are marginalized can be revealed and understood, and dominant and non-dominant groups engage in

meaningful conversations about race, racism, and other forms of subordination.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine how African American female band directors create and utilize counterspaces for African American female musicians to maintain involvement and counter intersecting forms of oppression in bands.

Furthermore, I sought to explore the participants' perceptions about counterspaces in bands. While the experiences of the African American female participants in the selected band programs will necessarily not be the same as those of African American females in other programs or disciplines, common themes derived from their backgrounds and experiences may inform future research and add to a developing understanding of African American women in music education contexts, and in secondary-level instrumental programs in particular. In this section, I discuss the research design, data collection procedures, methods for selecting the sites and individual participants, data analysis, and methods for evaluating the accuracy and validity of findings.

Before proceeding to discussions of each section, I provide a restatement of the research questions that guided this study: (1) What are the African American female band directors' perceptions and knowledge about counterspaces, and how do they utilize counterspaces to counter intersecting forms of oppression that African American female musicians face in bands? (2) How do the African American female band directors utilize counterspaces to help the African American female band students form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to share their individual and collective experiences of involvement in bands? (3) How do counterspaces help African American female band

directors understand common themes in the lives of African American female musicians that contribute to their sustained involvement in bands?

Overview of Research Design

Qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the phenomena being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). That is, qualitative researchers' study "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 56). The meanings that participants bring to a study are interpreted through a constructivist view of the world (Creswell, 2007). In order to interpret a phenomenon, qualitative researchers must become aware of the varying assumptions and beliefs that participants have about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research allows researchers to gain in-depth information about the dimensions of the phenomenon being studied as a means of building knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Furthermore, qualitative research is appropriate for this study because it "empower[s] participants to share their stories and minimize[s] the power relationships that often exist between the researcher and participants in a study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 48)

Method

This qualitative study is informed by Collins's (2002) critical social theory, Black feminist thought (BFT). As a framework for the study, BFT allows "us to place Black women's voices at the center of research to rearticulate subjugated knowledge into specialized knowledge, as well as support epistemologies and theories about Black women" (Robinson et al., 2013, p.58). In other words, BFT is concerned with the

experiences and stories of Black women. Historically, Black women's voices have been silenced; therefore, Black feminist intellectuals seek to share the stories of those who have been silenced in a world that sees Black women as outsiders (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Therefore, embracing BFT as a critical methodology allows Black women's perspectives and stories to be revealed and understood.

Traditional qualitative methodological approaches are based on the values, interests, and views of oppressive powers within society, which can overshadow and discredit Black women's definitions of "self" (Collins, 2002; Lewis, 1997, p. 49). Similarly, methodological approaches based on the positionalities of oppressive powers "assume[s] separation between power-bearing researcher(s) and the objectified individuals being researched...and present[s] results to serve those who author them more so than the people who inform them" (Patterson et al., 2016, p. 59). BFT as a methodology follows a different approach by emphasizing interpretations of the world from Black women positionalities, which is necessary for Black women's truths to be fully shared without being distorted by oppressive powers (Patterson et al., 2016). In other words, BFT allows Black women to reclaim their voices in a society that wants to speak for them. Through shared truths, Black women are able to create their own image, and thus "remove themselves from the marginalized position to which the dominant society has relegated them" (Amoah, 1997, p. 84). Within this context, BFT as the methodology informing this study, not only places Black women's subjectivity in the center of analysis and privileges the embodied, "taken-for-granted knowledge" shared by Black women as a group (Collins, 2002, p. 269), but also "necessitates that truths made

visible by the research process be translated into action, resistance, and/or activism” (Patterson et al., 2016, p. 69).

Participant Selection

As the most appropriate approaches for the selection of participants for this study, I employed homogenous and snowball sampling. I used homogenous sampling to gain in-depth information about the participants’ perceptions and experiences of counterspaces in band programs (Patton, 1990). Homogeneous sampling allowed me to purposefully select African American females with similar backgrounds for the richness of the study. According to Patton (2002), snowball sampling identifies “cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (p. 243). In efforts to acquire participants for this study, I employed one snowball sampling technique where I personally contacted African American female band directors in the district where I am employed and asked them to forward the recruitment script to prospective participants, accompanied by my contact information (see Appendix A). I also asked the individuals to forward both the recruitment script and my contact information to other possible participants. Through the first snowball sampling technique, I was contacted by four African American female band directors who were willing to participate in the study. In an effort to acquire additional prospective participants, I used a second snowballing approach by posting the recruitment script and my contact information to an online social network for African American women band directors. In addition, I sent the recruitment script to each of the members of the Association of Black Women Band Directors Facebook group. Through the second snowball sampling approach, I was contacted by 20

additional African American female band directors. Although most of the participants were acquired through the latter recruitment approach, a total of 24 African American female band directors agreed to participate in this study. For each of the recruitment approaches, I employed the following three criteria:

1. The band director has to be an African American female.
2. The band director teaches at the middle or high school level.
3. The band director has at least one African American female student enrolled in the band program.

After acquiring a list of the participants agreeing to participate in this study, I emailed each participant a link to a survey (see Appendix B), created using Google Forms. I also sent each prospective participant a survey ID code, which is an assigned pseudonym to link participants to their responses. Based on survey responses such as teaching level and demographics of band programs, I sought to identify 17 of the 24 potential participants for this study. I used the following criteria to identify and select participants for the study:

1. The band director must be an African American female.
2. The band director teaches at the middle or high school level.
3. The band director uses *counterspaces* as validating and positive spaces for African American females in their band program.
4. The band director has at least one African American female student in their band program.
5. The band director is willing to share experiences over a series of two in-depth interviews, which consists of one individual and one focus-group interview.

Before conducting interviews, I applied for and received approval from the Boston University institutional review board for research ethics (see Appendix H). I then emailed each of the 17 prospective participants a consent letter detailing the scope of the study and asking if they wish to proceed with the interview process (see Appendix C). After receiving prospective participants' digital written consent, I forwarded each participant an individual and focus group invitation letter asking for their availability for the individual and focus group interviews (see Appendices D and E). All 17 of the respondents participated in the study (see Chapter 4 for a description of each of the participants' experiences).

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2007), data collection is a “series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions” (p. 118). Through the process of data collection, researchers are able to understand the complexities of a study. For this study, data were collected primarily through individual and focus group interviews over a period of two months. This study was constructed through an *interpretivist* lens, where the interview functioned as the primary form of data collection, supplemented with researcher journaling (Glesne, 2016). Each participant took part in a total of two semi-structured interviews, consisting of one individual interview and one focus group interview conducted via Zoom. For each interview, I established a counterspace that allowed the participants to not only speak freely without the surveillance of White supremacists, but to also examine the complexities of oppressive powers perpetuated within the band world that concerned them. In addition, I recorded

informal moments from email correspondence, phone calls, text messaging, and Facebook in my research journal.

Triangulation

This qualitative study uses a variety of methods for data recording. Because qualitative research relies on the shared experiences of others to interpret or make sense of particular phenomena, it is important to *triangulate* data (Gall et al., 2007).

Triangulation is the use of multiple methods to increase the richness and validity of data (Glesne, 2016). *Triangulation* can elicit multiple perspectives on an issue and illuminate limitations or common themes of a study (Glesne, 2016; Gibbs, 2007). For this study, I triangulated data between one semi-structured interview with each participant, the focus group, email correspondence, phone calls, text messaging, and Facebook in my research journal.

Interviews

For this qualitative study, the individual and focus group interviews were semi-structured with a predetermined set of questions (see Appendices F and G). I developed questions about the participants' background and experiences. I also inquired about the participants' overall perceptions and utilization of counterspaces in band programs. In addition, interviewees were given the opportunity to discuss any other pertinent information about their experiences in secondary-level band programs that may have not been raised during the initial interview. I conducted interviews during the month of May 2020. Each participant took part in up to two semi-structured interviews, consisting of one individual interview and one focus group interview, all conducted via Zoom.

Individual interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding about the participants' perspectives about counterspaces and experiences in secondary level band programs. Individuals who participated in the individual interview were invited to participate in a focus group interview at a later date. I chose to intentionally follow individual interviews with the focus group interview to elicit multiple perspectives of counterspaces in the selected band programs because this allowed me "to explore issues that came up only during the analysis of the [individual] interviews" (Morgan, 1997, p. 23). The focus group interviews allowed participants to react to one another's comments and collectively discuss and create solutions for more complex ideas, issues, and topics than individual conversations (Berg, 2007). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the use of collaborative interviewing as described in this study "provides a platform where the interviewer and participant [are] able to approach equality in questioning, interpreting, and reporting" (p. 173). Because the participants lived in different parts of the country, I conducted the individual and focus group interviews using Zoom. The individual interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. Further, the focus group interviews lasted between 120-180 minutes. To give every participant an opportunity to engage in discussions, I divided participants into two groups for the focus group interviews; therefore, I conducted two separate focus group interviews to accommodate all 17 of the participants. The interviews were recorded via Zoom and uploaded locally to a password-protected computer. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, participants are identified with pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

As Creswell (2007) stated, data analysis is a procedure that requires the researcher to organize the collected data. In other words, “Data, so to speak, are the constructions offered by or in the sources; data analysis leads to reconstruction of those constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 332). Thus, “the process of data analysis, then, is essentially a synthetic one, in which the constructions that have emerged (been shaped by) inquirer-source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 333). Therefore, data analysis in this study is “applied to discover and describe issues...in structures [band programs] and processes in practice” (Flick, 2014, p. 5).

Interview Data Analysis

Throughout the research process, I used pseudonyms rather than participants’ legal names. After recording interviews, I imported digital audio recordings into MAXQDA, which is a software designed to assist in analyzation, transcription, and organization of data. I created verbatim transcripts for each interview to ensure that my interpretations were an authentic textual expression of the participants’ voices and experiences. Aligned with the premises of Black feminist thought, the participants of this study were recognized as the main source and experts of their own experiences; therefore, my interpretations of interviews were not dependent on memory or perception (Collins, 2002).

Coding

For this study, I used a preexisting coding scheme. These codes are called *a priori codes* because they were developed at the very beginning of the research process

(Johnson & Christensen, 2020). I used a priori codes that were based on the concepts of Black feminist thought (BFT) and intersectionality. Through a priori coding, I first engaged in the process of creating categories that were based on BFT, which included counterspaces, self-definitions, othermothers, empowerment among and between Black women, and role models. By utilizing concepts of BFT, I was able to keep the study centered on the experiences of Black females and raise questions concerning their positionality within the band world. Aligned with the research questions, BFT allowed me to illuminate the importance of counterspaces as a mechanism designed to foster the conditions for Black females' self-definitions, sense of empowerment to resist intersecting forms of oppression faced within the band world, and how they were able to freely share their experiences among and between each other for purposes of surviving and thriving within the band world. Next, I engaged in the process of creating categories based on the framework of intersectionality, which made three important contributions to this study: (1) intersectional paradigms uncovered the distinctive histories that reflected the participants' unique placement within intersecting oppressions; (2) how they shaped their experiences; and (3) shed light on how intersecting forms of oppression were organized and maintained within the band settings that the participants navigated. Within this context, BFT moved beyond the paradigm of the simple expression of the participants' voices and experiences. In other words, BFT functioned as an activist response of resistance towards common challenges that African American females face within the band world. In addition to a priori coding, I also used *in vivo codes*, which were based on the language and words of the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

For this process, I searched for common words and phrases that occurred across the participants' interviews to generate themes.

Thematic Analysis

To reveal underlying complexities of the settings, individuals, and participants' experiences (Glesne, 2016), I also employed Braun and Clark's (2006) six-step process for thematic analysis. I was thus able to (1) familiarize myself with the participants' data elements (i.e., interviews) by examining interview audio files, transcribed interviews, and notes in my journal, (2) submit interview transcriptions to MAXQDA to create a list of *a priori* and *in vivo* codes, (3) separate data into categories to organize the data, (4) review and refine *a priori* and *in vivo* themes, (5) define and refine *a priori* and *in vivo* themes that were congruent with research questions, and (6) produce a report of common *a priori* and *in vivo* themes that reflected the participants' experiences. Moreover, Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic "analysis is not a *linear* process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Instead, it is [a] more *recursive* process, where movement is back and forth as needed, throughout the phases" (p. 86). The back-and-forth notion of this process allowed me to create a thick description of data, highlight similarities and differences across the data, generate unanticipated insights of the participants' experiences, and produce qualitative analyses suited to inform the development of policies and practices that can dismantle dominant ideologies perpetuated within the band world (Braun & Clark, 2006). In addition to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, I also used Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and intersectionality as an interpretive frame for analysis of the participants' experiences. I used BFT as an interpretive frame for purposes

of placing the participants' voices at the center of analysis. Through this process, I was able to illuminate how the participants found power among and between each other to define and share their own realities and truths of "self" and how they utilized counterspaces within their band programs. Further, I was able to describe how the participants resisted dominant ideologies within the band world. In addition to BFT, I also used intersectionality as an interpretive lens to uncover the complex dimensions of intersecting forms of oppression that the participants' encountered and how they intersected with their identities.

Trustworthiness and Reliability

Qualitative researchers seek to ensure their audiences that various measures have been taken to critically investigate the validity and accuracy of their findings (Glesne, 2016). As quoted in Denzin (2013), the American Educational Research Association (AERA) asserts:

It is the researcher's responsibility to show the reader that the report can be trusted. This begins with the description of the evidence, the data, and the analysis supporting each interpretive claim. The warrant for the claims can be established through a variety of procedures including triangulation, asking participants to evaluate pattern descriptions, having different analysts examine the same data (independently and collaboratively), searches for disconfirming evidence and counter-interpretations. (p. 530).

Similarly, Creswell (2013) suggests prolonged engagement in settings, clarifying bias, peer review, member checking, rich, thick description, triangulation, and external audits as measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. For this study, I used rich, thick description, member checking, peer review/debriefing, clarifying researcher's subjectivity, and ethical standards as strategies to ensure trustworthiness and reliability.

Rich, Thick Description

In research, it is important that readers are able to understand the actions, people, and context of the study being described (Stake, 2010). Through rich, thick description of the study, the researcher describes in detail about the participants' individual and collective experiences (Geertz, 1973). According to Stake (2010), studies with rich, thick descriptions transitions from specific to general interpretations and provides readers with abundant and interconnected details about the participants' experiences of the phenomenon being studied. For this study, I described in detail about the participants' experiences through the use of strong action verbs and quotes. Member checking also provided me with the opportunity to thoroughly illuminate the experiences of each participant, which I describe in detail in the next section.

Member Checking

To ensure accuracy in writing rich, thick descriptions of the participants' experiences, I asked participants to review transcripts of their interviews in order to make edits and provide clarification of the statements, only two responded. I considered additions and changes suggested by the participants. Through this process – known as member checking – the researcher is able to solicit participants' perspectives of the interpretations and provide readers with an accurate and thorough description of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013). As Creswell (2013) stated, “most qualitative studies involve taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (p. 252). In other words, member checking provides the researcher with the opportunity to ask

their participants to confirm whether the statements were appropriately interpreted and represents the participants' perspectives about the phenomenon being studied.

Peer Review/Debriefing

Within qualitative research, "peer review or debriefing provides an external check of the research process" (Creswell, 2013, p. 241). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the role of the peer reviewer is to keep the researcher honest by asking questions about methods, interpretations, and meanings of the study (p. 309). In order to inform the researcher's decision making and to improve the research process, dialogue between the researcher and peer reviewer must happen throughout the research process. Dialogue between the researcher and peer reviewer may be recorded in journals to serve as written accounts of sessions, which are referred to as "peer debriefing sessions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, peer debriefing involves "colleagues re-analysing your raw data and discussing any concerns you might have about their interpretation" (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p. 98).

For this study, I dialogued with my supervisor, Dr. Gareth Dylan Smith on a weekly basis to discuss my research findings, analysis, thoughts, and questions. To receive feedback about the complexities of this study, I had informal conversations with peers within the field of music education. I also conversed with experts outside of the institution of affiliation. Through expert and peer feedback, I was able to resolve research problems, refine interview questions and research procedures, and consider recommendations for future research.

Clarifying Researcher Subjectivity

Researcher's Role. The role of the researcher is to “collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). As an African American woman and social justice activist, I decided to conduct this study to reflect and illuminate the participants’ voices, which was informed by my commitment to broadening the participation of African American women in instrumental music programs such as band. Through an Afrocentric feminist epistemological perspective, I must seek to reveal the participants’ stories in order to empower African American women (Collins, 2009). As Collins (2009) stated:

I knew that when an individual Black woman’s consciousness concerning how she understands her everyday life undergoes change, she can become empowered. Such consciousness may stimulate her to embark on a path of personal freedom, even if it exists initially primarily in her own mind. If she is lucky enough to meet others who are undergoing similar journeys, she and they can change the world around them (p. x).

Thus, the goal of the researcher is to provide a rich and thick description of the participants’ experiences while empowering others to participate in activist responses.

Reflexivity. Researcher reflexivity “generally refers to critical reflection on how researcher, research participants, setting, and research procedures interact and influence each other” (Pillow, 2003, as cited in Glesne, 2016, p. 145). In other words, “reflexivity is an awareness of the self in the situation of action and of the role of the self in constructing that situation” (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 145). Through a reflexive lens, researchers are able to become aware of preconceived biases and experiences that may have developed prior to and/or during the process of the research study. During the process of reflexivity, the researcher must understand that biases and pre-existing

assumptions or attitudes may influence the reconstruction of the data collected and interpretations of the participants' stories.

Journaling. As an African American woman, I believed that it was essential to document and expose my biases, attitudes, interests, values, and beliefs in a field journal. In this manner, I was able to illuminate the participants' voices and stories, rather than distort their stories (McAdams, 2001). Moreover, I used a journal to record my reflections, researcher activities (e.g., data collection, decision-making processes, interpretation, and interview settings/timelines), and to capture rich, thick descriptions of the experiences between and among the participants. I also shared my journaling process with my dissertation supervisor, Gareth Dylan Smith, and my peers who are experts within the field of instrumental music education. This process allowed me to wrestle with my own biases and assumptions as an African American female navigating racialized spaces within the band world.

Ethics, Confidentiality, and Disclosure of Data

As a qualitative researcher, I used various ethical procedures to maintain the privacy interests of participants and the integrity of the research process (Baez, 2002). For this study, I sent each participant a consent letter detailing the scope of the study. I sent an individual and focus group invitation letter to each participant who agreed to participate in the study. Individuals who wanted to participate in the individual interview could decide not to participate in the focus group interviews. A total of 15 out of the 17 participants in this study agreed to participate in the focus group interviews. To minimize risks, I informed participants that I would like to audio and video record the interviews

for transcription purposes only. Individual and focus group interviews were not recorded without the participants permission. Before each interview, I informed participants that the confidential information discussed in either the focus group or individual interviews must not be repeated or shared with others. I also advised participants to only use their first name during the focus group interview and to not share any personal information such as the location and name of the school where they are employed. All information collected from subjects was stored on a password-protected computer. To avoid deductive disclosure, I used pseudonyms to replace the participants' legal names and the name/location of the educational setting (Kaiser, 2009). After transcribing interviews, I asked each participant to read through their interview transcripts for accuracy, only two responded. Once interview transcripts were reviewed by participants, I made changes at the request of each participant. Following the completion of final edits, I asked each participant to check my interpretation of their statements in the findings chapter, only two responded. I did not share chapters where I included themes identified during the analysis process.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in as much as it does not represent the experiences and perceptions of all African American/Black female band students and band directors at the secondary level. This research is limited to my own positionality as an African American female band director navigating and surviving within racialized spaces. It is limited to the participants' perceptions and experiences of counterspaces in selected school-related band programs. Although this study is limited to the experiences of the participants and

my own positionality as an African American female band director, the detailed analysis of this investigation is intended to enrich my own and other scholars' understanding and knowledge about the manifestations of oppressive powers in social institutions, in particular about multiple ways of empowering African American/Black women to continue the work of creating a socially just world.

Chapter 4

Becoming an African American Female Band Director

Through individual and focus group interviews, the participants of this study were asked questions about their experiences as African American female band directors at the secondary level. In this chapter, I provide insight into the 17 African American female band directors' lived experiences within educational, familial, and societal settings. The illumination of the participants' experiences provides vital contextual information for understanding how each became a band director.

Linda: "I broke barriers as a tuba player"

As a third-grade student, Linda was excited about playing an instrument and her music teacher placed her on clarinet. Through Linda's experience in third grade, she was able to continue playing clarinet during her middle school years. While in middle school, Linda's African American female band director encouraged her to continue to participate in band beyond the middle school level. When it was time to register for high school, Linda chose to attend Logan High School in Baltimore, Maryland. Once enrolled at Logan High School, the band director asked if anyone wanted to play on a different instrument since most of the girls who enrolled in band played a woodwind instrument. Linda replied with the response, "hey, why not...clarinet is cool, but I will switch." Linda chose to play the tuba and became one of the best tuba players in her high school band program. Tuba was Linda's principal instrument throughout high school and during her undergraduate years at Tussey State University.

During Linda's first year at Tussey State University, she found out that the tuba

section leader was another African American female. Linda was so excited about having the opportunity to practice and play alongside another African American female. Linda stated, “I wanted to grow up to be just like her...when she leaves, I’m going to be the tuba section leader.” Linda was one of two female Tuba players at Tussey State University. By her sophomore year in college, Linda became the section leader. As a section leader, the band director, Mr. Jones gave her various leadership roles such as conducting during rehearsals, leading sectionals, and recruiting students for band.

After completing studies at TSU, Linda was offered a job at a Northern County School District in Maryland. While teaching at the secondary level, Linda also assisted the band director at Tussey State University. Although Linda had a very “strong presence” as a tuba player, Linda endured many challenges as an African American female band director.

I taught at the college level and the high school level. As the assistant at the college level, everyone initially thought that I was the head band director’s daughter or secretary. When I took the band to various competitions, people would ask me to judge the auxiliaries and I would have to let them know that I am a band director. I would also tell them that they would have to find someone else to judge the auxiliaries...I had to set those standards so that people could respect me as a band director. A lot of times I found myself having to prove myself. I think that African American females in a male dominated field must...make [their] voices relevant and heard.

Linda not only faced challenges in academic settings, but also in her personal life. She wanted to become a mother, but juggling the tasks required to be a successful band director and mother was challenging.

One of the biggest challenges for me was choosing between being a band director or starting a family and becoming a mother. When my daughter was born, I had to decide to either see her first steps or to be at band rehearsal at 10:00 at night...I wanted to be a mother. To be a mother to my daughter, I had to make decisions

that would allow me to be a band director and a mother. It had come to the point when my daughter had after-school performances that were scheduled on the same day as my band rehearsals. So, I had to make sure that I did not schedule any rehearsals on the days of her concerts or performances.

Despite the challenges that Linda endured in academic settings and in her personal life, she was able to continue to pursue her dreams as a mother and band director. For 21 years, Linda was the only African American female band director at the secondary level in a Northern County School District in Maryland.

Alexandria: “I did not see a place for myself in the band field”

Growing up in the music city of New York, Alexandria always wanted to play a musical instrument. Although the middle school that she attended in New York did not offer band classes, she was able to take piano lessons. After moving to Virginia, she enrolled in a high school band program. During Alexandria’s freshman year in high school, she had to take beginner band classes to learn about the fundamentals and logistical workings of the band program because she was not enrolled in band during middle school. Despite her excitement to participate in band, the high school band director, who was a White male, said, ‘you’re wasting my time...[and] you’re not going to use this anyways.’ Alexandria’s African American friends who were enrolled in advanced band classes told her to not listen to the band director’s negative comments. The following year, she decided to continue in band and to enroll in higher level band courses. During her sophomore year in high school, the school hired a White female to be the band director. Alexandria’s new band director was energetic and encouraged her to “be the best” and to form chamber ensembles. Alexandria further expressed that “during [her] second year of band, [she] knew that playing a musical instrument was what [she]

wanted to do for the rest of [her] life.” Under the leadership of a new band director, she was able to create a “clarinet chamber” ensemble. As a participant of this ensemble, Alexandria gained exposure to performing at “opening of businesses” and “all-state band” festivals. After completing high school, she was offered a scholarship to join the Javier University band program in New Orleans.

While in New Orleans, Alexandria was hired as a high school band director. As a high school band director, Alexandria was “disrespected” and “undermined” by authority figures of the same race:

During my first year at the high school, I had a Black woman principal who had over 20 years of experience. However, she did not respect me and would talk to me in an unprofessional manner. The second year, we had a Black male principal. I was working really hard to prepare the kids to go to college. The principal told me that he was not concerned about the kids learning the necessary fundamentals to go to college or learning how to read music well, but was more concerned with using the band program to recruit kids to the school.

Alexandria became very upset because she was treated as if she did not know how to do her job. She wanted the children in her school to become successful musicians, but the administrative staff did not care about what she wanted to accomplish as a band director. Alexandria felt that the administrative staff “did not value” her as a band director.

Because of the challenges that she faced with administrative staff at the high school in New Orleans, Alexandria decided to leave her position as a high school band director and pursue a career as a general music teacher at a nearby elementary school. Although she taught general music at the elementary level for one year, which was not her “cup of tea,” Alexandria was able to go back to teaching band at the secondary level, this time in Houston, Texas.

After accepting the position as a band director, Alexandria was faced with the reality of being the only African American female band director in the school district.

Alexandria struggled with not seeing other African American female band directors in the district.

When I walk into a room with other directors, I am usually the only woman of color in the room...the other band directors are usually White males...I struggled with being the only woman of color in the room. When I started teaching [band], the directors would go to the district meetings and no one in the room looked like me.

Alexandria's struggle with being the only African American female stems from the negative, derogatory comments that were expressed by her White colleagues. According to Alexandria, many of her White colleagues believed that she was incapable of becoming a successful band director because of her race and gender. She further explained that once her colleagues learned that she was also a HBCU graduate, they would say negative things like, 'oh, you really don't know anything.' As the only African American female band director in the district, Alexandria felt she had no one in her corner to "fight for [her] and with [her]." Alexandria not only felt that she had no one to lean on in times of trouble, but she did not "see a place for [herself]" within the field of instrumental music education. She further stated, "I did not see African American females represented in the field. I do feel that I am [alone]" within the band profession.

Patricia: "I had to go above and beyond to prove myself"

Growing up in a family of professional musicians, Patricia was exposed to the art of music at a young age. During Patricia's high school years in Georgia, the band director, who was an African American female, encouraged her to continue to excel in

the band program. Once leaving high school, she felt that it would be an awesome idea to continue to play the trumpet and major in performance, specifically for “mak[ing] music for Bugs Bunny Cartoons.” However, Patricia’s parents were a bit unsettled on the idea of her pursuing a career in music. Patricia’s parents felt that she would be able to take care of herself if she became a doctor. Patricia explained, “I tried it, but I sucked at it and did not want to do it anymore.” Therefore, she decided to transfer to Cavanagh State University. Patricia enrolled in the band program and decided to major in conducting. She became a section leader for the duration of her degree program at Cavanagh State University. As a section leader, Patricia “really liked it” and enjoyed teaching other undergraduates to learn to play various complex musical pieces. After completing her studies at Cavanagh State University, she decided to look for a job as a band director.

After a few months of searching, Patricia was able to get an interview with a local high school. Patricia did not know that she would have to prove that she was more qualified than males in the same field within the district.

When I went to interview, the principal, who was a Black man, told me that he was taking a chance by hiring me. He adds, ‘you’re a young Black woman and I don’t know about your kind.’ I was treated in this manner throughout my time as the head band director. He only hired me because of recommendations from other people. He clearly did not want a Black woman as the band director at his school.

Although Patricia was stunned by the principal’s comments, she was hesitant, but decided to accept the job offer. After starting the new job as a band director, Patricia endured more challenges because she was an African American female. The parents of the high school felt that Patricia was incompetent and not qualified to be a band director. Patricia stated, “parents would come and sit down in the back of the band room without any prior

notices. They would say things like, ‘I just want to make sure that you know what you’re doing.’ I was treated in a negative manner by the principal and the parents for the duration of my tenure at the school.” In spite of the negative comments and challenges faced as a band director, Patricia revived the band program and had several successful Large Group Performance Evaluation appearances. After reviving the band program, Patricia moved to a different city and decided to teach at the high school level as the assistant band director. Patricia explained, “during my first year at my new school, I did not have any flutes, but I made a way out of no way and I was still able to take the band to district performance evaluations.”

Gabrielle: “I didn’t want to seem like the angry Black woman”

Gabrielle grew up in Peachtree City, Georgia where she gained the skills needed to pursue a career in music. In elementary school, Gabrielle was one of four African American students on campus. Although “it felt very weird,” Gabrielle decided to try out for band since the assistant band director was the only African American female teacher on campus. After trying out for band, Gabrielle was placed on trombone, since she was the only person to obtain a good tone and “it felt very natural to [her].” Although she continued to participate in band at the middle school level, the band director, who was a White male, only “cared about what we did in middle school, and...cared less about what we did [beyond the middle school level].” During registration at a high school, Gabrielle found that the African American female assistant band director during elementary school was the head band director at a predominately White high school that she chose to attend. The African American female head band director asked Gabrielle to join band—“I was

like, alright, I will keep going with this, although I don't think that I'm very good." Once enrolled in the high school band, Gabrielle was surprised that she was the only African American female in the band program. Gabrielle explained to the band director, "you didn't tell me that I was going to be by myself."

During high school, Gabrielle was able to obtain a position on the marching band staff as a sectional coach. After completing high school, Gabrielle decided to go to college in hopes of obtaining a law degree.

During my first year of college, I didn't want to be a band director. I didn't want to be a teacher. I had planned to go to law school. However, I knew that I was good at music. So, I went to school for music because I was good at it and I was going to go to law school after completing my music studies. After I completed my first practicum in music education...it was like God had shined on me and I knew that music was my thing.

Although Gabrielle made the decision to continue in the music education field, Gabrielle felt that she had to "work harder" than her White peers to graduate and to obtain a teaching position.

I was the only female out of 30 White males in the trombone section at Jasonville State University. Eventually, a Black guy joined the band program, and I was ecstatic. Since both of us were the only Blacks in the section, we knew that we were going to have to work harder for the same positions as the White males. We also knew that we had to be better than them to get a job. So, we supported each other throughout the program and became good friends.

Through perseverance and hard work, Gabrielle was able to pursue a bachelor's degree in music education at Jasonville State University.

Gabrielle's first teaching job as a band director at a middle school was "basically handed" to her by a friend, who she had known since college.

[My friend] knew that I was applying for a band director position and she was like you are the perfect person for the band director position that is open here in

Alabama. However, she didn't tell me that I was being hired because I was Black and that I was new, and I would not know any better. So, the hiring personnel told me that no one signs contracts anymore...you just come to the job. They hired me a week before school started because they could not find anyone else. It was a predominately Black school. I ended up teaching three band classes, one orchestra, one chorus, and a music appreciation class.

After accepting the position as the head band director, Gabrielle learned that the eighth graders who had been in band for the past two years did not know the skills necessary to become a successful musician. The previous band director at the school had no formal music training or certification to teach band students.

I was so shocked...The previous band director had been teaching at the school for five years, [but] he wasn't really teaching the kids; he would write out the fingerings for each piece of music and give it to the kids. So, I had eighth graders who were getting ready to go to high school and they didn't know how to read music and the students at the other schools did know how to read music. So, I had to take the kids back to the basics because I wanted them to succeed.

Gabrielle not only faced challenges with creating a successful band program, but also with her identity as an African American female. Gabrielle stated, "I was always considered not Black enough. I had some parents who loved me and others who thought that I was uppity because I sounded educated." Because Gabrielle "dealt with a lot" during her first year of teaching, Gabrielle wanted to quit teaching and pursue a different career path. According to Gabrielle, "I basically told myself that I was young and can go to law school." Although Gabrielle's first job "freaked [her] out," Gabrielle's former high school and college band director encouraged her to continue in the field of music education.

Ms. Logan, a Black female, who was my former high school band director and Mr. Thurgood, the professor of music education at JSU told me that, 'you're good at music, whether you feel like you're good at it or not.' So, Mr. Thurgood told me to continue to get my education since I had already applied for graduate

school. He also told me that I could apply for other schools. If they had not told me that I was good enough, I would have left the field of music education. My former band directors believed in me more than I believed in myself.

After conversing with her former high school band director and college instructor, Gabrielle became more confident in her abilities to teach band to underrepresented students. Despite her efforts to continue to teach band, later that year, she found out through a band student that she was going to be terminated from her position as a band director.

At the end of the school year, I had a great successful spring concert that consisted of the orchestra, chorus, band, and music appreciation class... Two weeks before school was out, I sent one of my trombone students to the local music store to get a baritone for the upcoming school year. The student came back to the school with his mom, and they asked me if I was going to be leaving. I said, "why are you asking me this question?" The trombone player and his mom explained to me that the personnel at the music store told them that he did not need to switch his instrument yet because the school was getting a new band director.

After hearing the news, Gabrielle quickly asked her principal about the termination of employment. The principal responded, "you didn't get your letter yet?" [The principal] explained to [her] that [she] was sent a pink slip in the mail, but it kept coming back." Gabrielle felt so hurt because the principal told everyone else except for her about the termination of employment. Gabrielle wanted to stand up for herself, but she "didn't want to seem like the angry Black woman." She found out that she was only hired to cover the position until the previous band director was able to become a certified instrumental music education teacher. Gabrielle learned that the principal had no intentions of keeping a Black woman as a band director at his school.

Although Gabrielle was furious about receiving a termination of employment

letter, she decided to go back to college to obtain a graduate degree in instrumental music education. While enrolled in a graduate degree program for music education, Gabrielle was hired as a full-time percussion instructor and substitute for the high school that she attended in Georgia. After a few months of working, the assistant band director left, and Gabrielle was hired as the assistant band director at her “Alma Mater.” Gabrielle was excited to be working alongside “another Black woman” within a field dominated by White males. Although this was Gabrielle’s fifth year as assistant band director at the high school that she attended, “there are always discussions about the two African American female band directors at a predominately White school.”

Jaleesa: “I had to beg for things that the band needed”

Around tenth grade, Jaleesa and her family moved to Atlanta, Georgia. Jaleesa felt that she “wasn’t a good student with anything else” and decided to learn to play the flute. After enrolling in band, Jaleesa noted that “[she] was good at that...and that [she] could actually do this with ease.” For the first time, Jaleesa felt that she had “accomplished” something great in life. During Jaleesa’s tenth and eleventh grade year, Mr. Tyler, who was the band director, exposed her to various classical, jazz, popular, and orchestral musical works. During her enrollment in Mr. Tyler’s band program, she was one of the few African Americans in the band program and Jaleesa always reminded herself that “[she was] not going to let the White girls outplay [her].” She always felt that “these people think that they are all that in this band...I’m going to show them, I’m going to go to school for music education to become a band director.” Because of Jaleesa’s motivation to become a band director, she was “the only one who became a band

director... out of all of the students” who were enrolled in her former high school band program. Although she moved again during her senior year in high school, the band director, Mr. Alexander would always select her to perform and play for college band recruiters. Her exposure during college recruitment led to her to play flute for community orchestras and pit orchestras around the Atlanta area. Through encouragement and work ethic, she attended Cookman University and received a bachelor’s degree in music education. After completing the instrumental music education program at Cookman University, she accepted a position as an elementary music teacher, which was not her “dream job.” Although Jaleesa was an elementary music teacher, she stayed active within the band profession.

Because my husband was a band director. I pretty much lived in my husband’s shadow. I would help my husband out as much as I could. I also received calls from other band directors to come in and work with their flute section since I was a professional flutist.

Although she was very active within the band profession, Jaleesa wanted to fulfill her dreams as an aspiring band director. However, as a mother who had continuous pregnancies throughout her years as an elementary music teacher, she felt that she was not going to be able to become a band director. Every time that Jaleesa interviewed for a band director position, she was pregnant, and therefore, she was not hired because school personnel did not think that a pregnant woman was capable of completing the tasks necessary to become a successful band director. After having her third child, she knew that she had to make some drastic changes to become a band director. She made a decision to put a hold on having more children. After making her decision of not having any more children for a while, she was able to obtain a position as a middle school band

director.

After becoming a middle school band director, Jaleesa did not know that she had to go above and beyond to obtain resources, doable schedules, equipment, and other nuances required to maintain a successful band program.

I had to flirt to get the resources, equipment, and other things that I needed for the band program at the school. I would have to buy the counselors fruit to bribe them to create a feasible schedule for the band program.

Shockingly, Jaleesa realized that she had to beg for things that she needed for the band program, while her White colleagues were given everything that they needed to be successful. For example, “the chorus teacher, who was a White male got everything that he wanted. The school administrators, who were Black, would do whatever to impress him since he was a White male in a predominately Black school.”

Although she faced many challenges in regard to obtaining the resources, equipment, and supplies needed for the band program at the middle school, those challenges did not deter her from interviewing to obtain a position as an assistant band director at the high school level. She was optimistic about obtaining a position as an assistant high school band director; however, the principal at the high school that she interviewed with felt that she was not qualified for the job.

When I went to interview at the high school, the female principal says, ‘you don’t have any high school experience.’ I should have known that her comment was a red flag. I explained that I was very qualified, and I had been around band my entire life.

Despite the principal’s comments, she was able to obtain the position as the assistant band director at the high school. After she accepted the position, she noted that parents always questioned her abilities to lead a high school band program. Jaleesa further

shared, “it was like they wanted to see what I was [capable] of as a female band director. There was so much pressure put on me about my ability.”

Jaleesa not only had to endure challenges within academic settings, but also within social settings outside of the school environment.

I was in a group with other HBCU band directors. The guys in the group, who were all Black men, would say negative things about every Black female band director who went to CU. They would say things like, ‘they don’t know what they are doing’ and they would express how they had to go into some of the classrooms and the female band directors did not have control. I finally got upset and left the social group for band directors. I told them that they didn’t know what they were talking about.

Despite the challenges that she had to face as a band director, she was able to create a successful band program at the middle and high school level. Under Jaleesa’s direction, her middle school/high school bands have received superior ratings for the last five years at band festivals and Large Group Performance Evaluations throughout the state of Georgia.

Karen: “It was difficult to be undermined by other Black women”

While in middle school, Karen decided to take a risk and audition for the band program. On tryout day, Karen took a music diagnostic exam and scored a perfect score because of her piano background. So, “the band director, [Mr. Waller] comes up and he’s got a clarinet in his hand, and he is trying to get us to pick out an instrument.” According to Karen, “I didn’t know anything about band, except that my older cousin was in it, but I never seen him play...I just knew that I could play piano, and this was something cool to get me out the house.”

For our first sixth grade band meeting, Mr. Waller [band director] stood in front of the [class]...he picked up the clarinet and played the Oscar Mayer Weiner

song. It was not the regular Oscar Mayer Weiner song; he had jazzed it up and added trills. I wanted to play that [instrument], “I do not know what it is, but I want to play that [instrument].” I ran and told my mother, and she purchased the clarinet on the spot. I have had that instrument ever since.

After playing clarinet for a year, Karen’s parents decided to relocate to a different county, where she attended a predominately White school. However, Karen felt very uncomfortable about attending a school where students and staff members did not look like her.

After enrolling at the new school, I went from being at the top of the band program at a predominately Black school, to being at the bottom of the clarinet line at a predominately White school...that killed my spirit. I didn’t have a band director who looked like me and my friends didn’t go there...I was kind of at the point to where I didn’t want to do band anymore.

In spite of Karen’s frustration and thoughts about not participating in the band program, the school’s band director encouraged her to continue participation.

My high school band director came up to me and said, ‘I don’t know what your problem is Karen. Mr. Waller told me that you were one of his best players, but here you are sitting at the bottom of the totem pole and we cannot have that. So, whatever you have to do to get the love of music back, you need to do it.’

While conversing with the band director, Karen decided that she wanted to play a different instrument; Karen stated, “I didn’t want to play clarinet anymore, I wanted to play bass clarinet. I figured since I was sitting at the bottom of the chain, at least I’ll be sitting close to the top of chain.” Karen’s high school band director did allow her to play the bass clarinet in the band program. To learn to play the bass clarinet, Karen’s mother “got [her] private lessons that summer, which was something that was not afforded to [Karen] at the previous school district.” While taking private lessons, Karen practiced more than ever and began “to get [her] love for music back.” When school was back in

session the following school year, Karen auditioned, and the band director placed her as first chair in the top band at the school. During Karen's senior year, she auditioned for various state and district level band competitions and placed first chair; "I was loving it...this was it." At the end of senior year:

The band director came up to me and said, 'Karen you are doing a great job. Dilley State University is looking for great players and has a full scholarship available. So, I put your name in the pot and they need you to come and audition next weekend.' So, I prepared a piece of music and went to the audition and played... I got a full scholarship to Dilley State University.

With a full scholarship, Karen obtained a bachelor's degree in music education. After completing her studies at Dilley State University, Karen was hired as an assistant band director at a high school in Mississippi. Although Karen was excited to work as an assistant band director at the high school level, Karen was constantly undermined by the lead administrator at the school of employment.

When I was working at the high school as an assistant band director, the principal at the time was a Black woman. After starting the job, I noticed that the principal would always come down to the band room to observe me. She not only observed me, but she would always make comments and tell me what I am doing wrong. She didn't even have any formal music training. It was never anything positive. According to the head band director, who was a Black male, the principal had never come down to the band room for multiple consecutive observations until I was hired. She never bothered him, but she would always question my ability as a band director.

Karen explained, "it is difficult as a Black woman to be undermined by your own race." After working as an assistant band director for several years, Karen applied for a position as a middle school head band director and had been working in that position for over a year. Karen shared, "although I may not have many of the resources to teach band, I usually make a way out of no way. I feel that I am blessed to be doing something that I

love.”

Juanita: “I’ve always been that person, don’t tell me what I can’t do”

In sixth grade, Juanita decided to join the band at her middle school. During auditions, Juanita scored a high score on clarinet. With self-confidence, Juanita knew that she could achieve her goals to become an excellent musician. She explained that while in high school, “the band director, Mr. Barnes kept us [band members] busy and engaged...whether it was playing at Alabama State University, University of Alabama, or Auburn University for competitions, festivals, or adjudications, he kept us interested.” According to Juanita, “I remember the joy that I had playing an instrument and decided that I wanted to become a band director.” Although Juanita was excited about auditioning and applying for a music teacher education program to become a future band director, “someone told [her] that [she] couldn’t.” Juanita stated, “they said you’re a girl and you can’t be a band director.” Juanita chose a program of study that was seemingly more appropriate for men than women. Juanita explained, “I’ve always been that person, don’t tell me what I can’t do, I will show you...and that’s what I did.”

After completing high school, Juanita applied for the instrumental music education program at the University of Moby. During the application process, the department’s advisor, who was a White female, told Juanita that ‘ladies do chorus...I’ll put you down for instrumental music education, but we will see how you do.’ However, the advisor did not have an issue with a White female applying for the instrumental music education program. According to Juanita, a White female, who was the same age, stated that she wanted to also apply for the instrumental music education program; the advisor

said, “okay, great choice!” After seeing what had happened, Juanita became more anxious to prove that she was capable of excelling within the instrumental music education program at UM:

When it was time to take our theory placement exam, I was one of the highest scorers. So, this White male theory instructor wanted me to take his class. The next day I got to the theory class early and I sat in the back. I sat in the back because I had easy access to the door if I needed to leave. So, I looked around the class and I was not just the only African American female in the class, I was the only female in the class. Everyone else in the class were White males. I felt that I had to prove that I could do this. I was the only African American female in every class. Sometimes I would think and ask myself why I didn’t attend a HBCU like Alabama State University. I knew that if I had gone to a HBCU I wouldn’t have felt that uncomfortable.

Although Juanita faced many obstacles as an African American female attending a Predominately White Institution (PWI), she graduated with honors and received a bachelor’s degree in instrumental music education. After graduation, Juanita was hired as a band director for a high school in South Alabama.

When I got hired at my first school, parents and staff members didn’t think that I could be a band director because I was short and an African American female. I remember when someone told me that ‘you’re not a band director...you’re not going to do anything here.’

After three years of teaching at the high school level in South Alabama, Juanita accepted a position as the band director for a middle school in the Southeast region of Alabama.

When I first started teaching at the middle school in the [Southeast region of Alabama], I loved it. For my first three years, the school had a fine arts department that consisted of chorus, drama, art, band, and dance. We would have various large-scale music productions. The band would play for parades and I loved it. I remember thinking, ‘this is why I wanted to be a band director.’ After the first three years, a new principal was hired, and we lost the drama, art, and chorus unit. When I first started teaching at the school, I had six band classes and by my sixth year I only had three band classes. The principal told me that, ‘you

don't need to be a band director...you can teach sixth grade.' So, I had to explain to her that my teaching certificate is for P-12 instrumental music education.

Despite the obstacles faced as a band director, Juanita was intrinsically motivated to continue to work in the field of music education. Juanita stated, "dealing with people saying what I can't do kind of pushes me to remain at the school that I currently work and to continue to be a band director."

Amber: "I was questioned about being a mother"

As a young child, Amber's father taught her how to play the piano, which was her primary instrument throughout high school. Amber's father took pride of teaching his children the love and art of playing an instrument. As a professional musician who obtained a degree in music performance, Amber's father was hopeful that one of his children would pursue a career in music. Amber stated, "although he taught all of his kids' music, I'm the only one who grasped it...I was very advanced with [playing the piano]; through most of my schooling, my dad was my music teacher." In other words, Amber did not enroll in a band program at the middle or high school level, she only received music lessons from her father. Although Amber was taught to play the piano, Amber was also interested in becoming a star athlete.

The funniest part about following my father's footsteps as a piano player... I was an athlete. I was a track star, and I had my mind set on running track when I went to [college]. However, I got injured during my sophomore year in high school...I had tendinitis. Although I was injured, I still competed in competitions and still got awards. By the time I was a senior in high school, I knew that my days of running track was over.

Although Amber "loved track" and received offers to various colleges, she "knew that [she] wouldn't want to keep running track forever." Therefore, she decided to apply at a

college where no one knew her. She explained, “I looked at Fayette State University, which is a school where my mother attended, and I decided that I wanted to go there.”

After enrolling at Fayette State University, Amber had to select a degree program. Amber recalled her mother stating:

‘You’re so good with computers, why don’t you go for computer science.’ So, I was like great... I would probably make good money choosing to obtain a degree in computer science. After taking a few computer classes, I hated [the classes], the classes were so whack.

While contemplating on what degree program to change too, Amber remembered always hearing the FSU band play; “the band always sounded so good.” Surprisingly, the band director came up to her and said, ‘I’ve heard about you...and I need you in my band.’ Amber shared, “I was like I’m good, I have a full-ride scholarship here at FSU.” The band director replied, ‘I can put money on top of that money...come and audition for me this evening.’ After conversing with the band director, Amber decided to audition to become a member of the Fayette State University’s Marching Band. After completing the audition process, Amber was delighted that she was accepted into the program and received a scholarship.

While in the band program at FSU, Amber occasionally travelled to the “rival school” to offer music instruction to at-risk students. After a few months into teaching, Amber realized that she enjoyed teaching music and working with at-risk children.

After a few months of working with the kids, I remember the band director at the rival school saying, ‘you are always working with the kids and you should major in instrumental music education’ and I was like, “okay.” My mother was against the idea of me majoring in music education. When my dad heard me say it, he was like... ‘yes, do it.’ My dad said, ‘you should do what you love, or you will hate it, you should never take a career that feels like a job.’

After hearing her father's encouraging words, Amber decided to change her program of study to instrumental music education. While pursuing a degree in instrumental music education, Amber continued to teach music to at-risk students at a local educational center.

I worked with at-risk kids throughout college. I did not know that working with at-risk children was going to be my first job. After obtaining my degree, I was hired to work with at-risk kids at an alternative school. There, I created a music technology program.

After working at an alternative school for a few years, Amber received an offer to work at a middle school as a band director. Amber also became the assistant band director and "drum major instructor" at a local high school. Amber helped the head band director at the high school to "transition the band from a corps-style band to a show-style band." Although Amber enjoyed working as a middle school band director and assistant band director at the local high school, the band director at the high school encouraged Amber to apply for his position because he was leaving.

One day, the head band director at the high school told me to 'get ready, I'm about to leave.' Although I was shocked, I decided to prepare myself to become a head band director at the high school. After the head band director at the high school left, I decided to apply for the position.

At the time of the interview, Amber was a divorced, single mother. Amber thought that the interview process was going to be an awesome experience since she had been working with the band program for several years, and the administrative staff knew about her successful accomplishments in the field. Instead, during the interview, Amber was asked questions about whether she would be able to "juggle" the duties of being a single mother and band director.

I was offended because guys are not asked these types of questions when they interview for a job. Although I endured many obstacles during the interview process, I knew that if I didn't [accept the position], the position would be filled. So, with the help of colleagues, I was able to get the position as a head band director at the high school.

After accepting the job, the administrative staff created "a whole new set of rules like, 'stay in your lane as a woman' and 'you better listen.'" Therefore, Amber faced obstacles that the previous director, who was a male, did not have to encounter.

After working a few years as the high school band director, Amber remarried and became pregnant.

After I became pregnant, I was questioned a lot. People would say things like, 'I can't believe you're pregnant.' I had to remind them that I was married and had a family. The entire year that I was pregnant, I did not miss any games, parades, recruitment trips, or band competitions. I only missed one day, and I was questioned about my ability to continue as a band director. My close male friend, who was the band director before me missed a lot of parades and games, but he was praised for his efforts.

Although Amber was questioned about her ability as the head band director, she continued to teach disadvantaged students within the community. Through perseverance and dedication, Amber was the only female band director in a North Carolina school district for several years.

Chelsea: "I wanted to be that person who saved lives"

Chelsea's love for music began in elementary school when she decided that she wanted to learn to sing like her mother. As a young child, Chelsea's father was "killed." Due to the absence of her father, Chelsea felt alone and "angry." Chelsea explained, "I was hurt because I saw my mother struggling and my father was dead." Because music was an outlet for Chelsea to express her thoughts and feelings, she decided to join the

band program at a middle school in Atlanta. After joining the band program, Chelsea felt that she had found “the dominant thing that [she] was looking for,” which was a space of happiness and joy. When playing an instrument, Chelsea felt that she did not have to worry about her troubles or think about what happened to her father. Chelsea explained, “the only [outlet] that I had was music, it saved my life.” During high school, Chelsea continued to participate in band. Although Chelsea was an awesome euphonium player in the high school band, she decided to apply for the music industry program at South State University.

I stayed in the music industry program for about two years and realized that I needed to change my major to something else. My family members were rappers and worked in the field of music industry. As I looked at my family members, they were successful in the field of music industry without a degree. I was like I need to change my major to something that I would actually need a degree...In my mind, I was like, if I’m going to be in debt, let it be worth it.

After much thought, Chelsea decided that she wanted to apply for a program of study that would help her to save people’s lives “like [her] band directors saved [her].

I wanted to be that person for someone else...I remember the compassion that my band directors had for me while I was in high school and college. I want to hear my students say that I love you...I remember when you helped me to accomplish my goal or to overcome my fears.

Once Chelsea realized that she wanted to empower the children within her community, Chelsea decided that it would be beneficial to major in instrumental music education.

After graduating from South State University, Chelsea accepted a position as the band director at a middle school in South Carolina. After working at the middle school for several years, Chelsea was offered a position as the head band director at a high school in the “corridor of shame,” which is the poorest region in South Carolina. While working in

the “corridor of shame,” Chelsea continued to work diligently to provide her students with the necessary tools and skills to become successful in life, despite the struggles that they face daily.

Sarah: “I was never seen as the band director”

Born and raised in Florida, Sarah always enjoyed listening to music and performing. At three-years-old, Sarah received vocal instruction and was taught to sing various gospel songs and hymns.

The minister of music at my church, Ms. Gwendolyn, helped me to understand my voice. Ms. Gwendolyn groomed my voice and she taught me how high and low I could [sing]. She not only groomed my voice, but she helped me to embrace my talent.

Sarah continued to sing and receive vocal instruction from Ms. Gwendolyn throughout elementary school. During fifth grade, Sarah heard the middle school marching band playing and instantly fell in love with the idea of playing in the middle school band program.

I was in the fifth grade when I heard the middle school marching band playing. I mean, they had a marching band at the middle school. So, I went up to the band director, Mr. Bell to talk to him about me joining the band program. I told him that I wanted to be in the band and how can I [join].

When Sarah began middle school, she joined the band program. While in the band program, Sarah learned to play the clarinet. After enrolling in high school, Sarah decided to continue to play the clarinet. According to Sarah, participating in the band program at the high school level “blossomed [her].” Sarah stated, “I had something that was mine and I did not have to compete with my brothers and sisters.” In other words, Sarah felt that she had a “special talent” that other family members did not possess. After

completing high school, Sarah stated, “I saw how my band director influenced me and I wanted to influence someone else.” At first, Sarah thought that selecting a career in music production would be great for impacting the lives of disadvantaged students. After doing some research, Sarah learned that she would not be able to impact the lives of students within the community and surrounding areas with a music production degree. Therefore, Sarah decided that she should pursue a career as a band director and enroll in a college with an instrumental music education program. Sarah chose to attend Cookman State University to obtain a degree in instrumental music education.

After obtaining a bachelor’s degree in instrumental music education, Sarah accepted a band director position at a middle school. After accepting the job, Sarah found out that most of the “instruments were beyond repair.” When she asked the principal about helping with funding the band program, “he would not help with funding or anything else that could build the band program.” The principal felt that Sarah “wasn’t good enough to get the program back to where it needed to be because [she] was a female.” The principal constantly questioned her ability as a band director during the entire duration of employment.

Sarah was not only viewed as an incapable band director by the principal, but many times was not even seen as a band director.

When I talk to parents or other people outside of the school environment, they would automatically think that I’m a band parent, the dance captain, or the auxiliary director. They never automatically think that I’m the band director because I am a Black female. They think that I’m too cute to be a band director...When I took my kids to a competition, I went to the judge to question him about the score that my students received as cymbal players. The first thing that the guy said was, ‘are you a band parent?’ I could not believe it! I had to

show him the letters on my band shirt, which clearly displayed the words, band director.

Although Sarah did not receive much support from parents and administrators, at the time of this study, she was continuing to teach symphonic, jazz, and marching band classes at the middle school level.

Kierra: “I had to demand respect”

While in middle school, Kierra decided to participate in the band program.

According to Kierra, participating in the band program at school provided her with the “confidence that [she] needed.” Kierra’s love for music continued throughout high school.

I was in the band program during my high school years. I was successful in doing what I was doing, which was playing an instrument. I enjoyed band because the band director would take us to compete in honor band competitions at Alabama State University and Grambling State University.

When it was time to apply for college, Kierra decided that she wanted to choose a major with the least amount of math courses.

When I was in school in Alabama, I felt like I did not receive a good foundation in math; therefore, I was like I should take up something that does not have a lot of math. I thought about degree programs that would not require a lot of math courses. I was like, I’m good in music.

Kierra chose to apply for a music production program since she did not want to become a band director.

For the longest, I told myself that I was not going to be a band director, but my friends and family told me that I should be a band director... I told them, “no, I’m not going to be a band director.” I wanted to go to college for music production. I got to the point to where I was working toward getting a master’s degree in music technology. I was in the entertainment business. Through my master’s program, I was able to get an internship at a recording studio. I thought that was what I was going to do.

Although Kierra accepted an internship position at a recording studio, she had to find a second job in order to take care of herself and pay for tuition while in graduate school.

Kierra was able to find a position at a local Home Depot to earn the extra cash needed to take care of herself. After approximately two weeks, Kierra chose to leave the Home Depot. Kierra was not thrilled about working at the local home improvement store and wanted to find a job somewhere else.

I left the Home Depot after two weeks of working there. I said to myself, “let me apply and see what they are doing at the school nearby.” I told myself that I have to either teach at a school or work at the local Home Depot. After much thought, I knew that I wanted to teach.

Kierra accepted a position as the head band director at a local high school.

After I was hired, the booster president told me that she really would have loved if they had a male band director because the previous band director was a female and she got pregnant and left. So, she didn’t want to have that same issue.

Although Kierra was shocked that the booster president of the band program wanted a male rather than a female, Kierra knew that she had to “prove herself.” After a few months as the head band director, Kierra decided to assist the middle school band director during the school day.

Because I was the high school band director, I would go over to the middle school to assist with the band program. Especially since the middle school was the feeder pattern school for the high school. However, the head band director at the middle school, who was a male, would ask me to do things like copy papers. I went over there to assist with getting the kids prepared for playing at the high school level. So, I had to let him know that he was treating me like I was a student teacher. After speaking with him, I didn’t have any more problems.

By speaking out, Kierra was able to dissolve issues with the head band director at the middle school. After demanding respect from the middle school director, Kierra was able to expand the high school band program to include students in grades 6-8. With the band

program's expansion, Kierra was able to provide students with quality instruction by hiring multiple assistant instructors.

Myra: "Just like me, people doubted my Black girl's abilities"

Although Myra was born in Washington D.C., she spent most of her life in Maryland. Myra grew up in Prince George's County, Maryland, which was one of the most affluent African American communities in the United States. In the fifth grade, Myra had an African American female band director who encouraged her to play an instrument, particularly a brass instrument. While in middle school, Myra was able to continue to be a part of a musical organization, which was band. Myra's band director, Mr. Theodore gave every student in the band program an opportunity to lead rehearsals and sectionals. It was because of these experiences that Myra knew that she wanted to become a band director one day.

I think that being encouraged to perform at a high level, regardless of gender gave me the understanding that I could be a [band director]. I remember when the band director, Mr. Theodore, would take us to the local high school football games to watch various high school bands perform. I was like, wow...this is something that I really want to do.

After graduating from high school, Myra moved to Baltimore, Maryland to pursue a career as a band director. To become a certified instrumental music teacher, Myra enrolled in the instrumental music education program at Morty State University.

When I had enrolled in the instrumental music education program, I told people about my accomplishments. I told people that I wanted to be a band director. The people that I told doubted me. Their response was, 'what...oh okay, you mean that you want to teach at an elementary school.' I was like, "no! I want to be a band director."

After enrolling in MSU, Myra found out that out of 20 students, only three were female instrumental music education majors. For Myra, the number of females enrolled in the instrumental music education program was shocking news.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree, Myra decided to continue her studies to obtain a master's degree in instrumental music education. While completing her studies at MSU, Myra also enrolled at Maryland University to obtain a degree in conducting. Although Myra was working on two graduate degrees, she was able to obtain a TEACH Grant², which required her to teach at a low-income school for at least three years. While working on both master's degrees, Myra was able to work part-time as a music teacher at an elementary school in the Maryland area. After completing both master's degrees, the school that Myra worked as a part-time music teacher made the position a fulltime position. Myra worked as a music teacher at the elementary level for ten years.

Myra wanted to pursue her dreams to become a band director, and therefore, decided to apply and accept a band director position at an all-girls high school in Maryland. As an African American female band director, Myra faced many challenges.

When I would take the band to various competitions, people did not recognize that I was the band director. Although I was standing in front of the podium, they second-guessed my ability to be a band director. When someone on the competition staff needed to talk to the head band director, they would always go to my male staff members with questions, rather than me. I was like, "I'm standing on the podium because I am the head band director." When I take the girls out in public to various events, people are not only shocked that I am an African American female band director, but also because my band program consists of girls only. Both women and men had second thoughts about my ability

² The TEACH Grant Program provides grants to students who are completing or plan to complete course work needed to begin a career in teaching.

to lead a high school band program. The staff at my school were hesitant about having an all-girls marching band. The school's staff would ask questions like, 'can we have our own marching band with all-girls?' I would quickly remind them that girls had been marching in the band at the school for the past 20 years.

Despite the challenges endured as a band director for the past several years, Myra was able to continue to share her passion and love for music with hundreds of girls each year.

Natalie: "I was placed at an underfunded school"

In the fifth grade, Natalie was provided with private piano lessons. After a few months, Natalie did not want to continue her piano studies. Natalie explained, "although I laugh about it now, my piano teacher seemed mean to me, she popped my knuckles too many times. So, I cried about it and told my mother that I wanted to quit." Although Natalie stopped playing the piano, she wanted to continue to participate in musical organizations at school.

During sixth grade, I found out that my cousins were in the band program at school. They would come home from school with different instruments such as trumpets and saxophones. Sometimes they would even play a few musical tunes for me. I thought that it was cool. So, I told my mother that I wanted to join the band program at school also. The next day, my mother went to the school and she was able to get me enrolled in the band program. She gave me a clarinet and told me that this is the instrument that you will play. I did not choose my instrument; my mother chose for me.

Although Natalie felt that she was a "naturally talented" musician, she did not have the best beginning band experiences. The band program at Natalie's middle school was a part-time program, in which the band students would only meet twice a week. After a year in the band program, Natalie was transferred to a different middle school. As Natalie began to learn about her new environment, the band director became ill and died.

Natalie's middle school could not find anyone to accept the position as a band director.

Therefore, the band director at the high school, Mr. Long had to provide the middle school students with band lessons.

Mr. Long would come over to the middle school and walk us over to the high school. He would put music in front of us and would say, ‘everyone in this band is struggling with these notes and measures.’ Mr. Long would also say things like, ‘you all are so behind.’ I responded, “you’re not going to tell me that I’m behind, you don’t know what you are talking about.” In my mind, I would say that “someone is going to tell me that I am a good musician.”

According to Natalie, Mr. Long encouraged her to “be the best that [she] can be.” Natalie continued to play the clarinet and other instruments such as tenor saxophone and baritone throughout high school. After completing high school, Natalie decided that she wanted to go to college to teach music. Natalie received her degree in music education at a predominately White institution. Once Natalie became a certified instrumental music teacher, Natalie applied for her first teaching job. Although Natalie was excited to begin her teaching career, she felt “completely out-of-place.”

I went to a predominately White affluent high school. My student teaching experiences were at predominately White affluent schools. For my first teaching job, it was basically down-in-the-dumps. It was one of the worst schools in the county. It was severely underfunded. There was no community involvement. When I first walked into my band class, I literally thought to myself, ‘this is completely trash.’ There were rats and roaches everywhere and big, large trash cans in the middle of the floor. So, my first week of work, I could not teach... I had to clean the room. When I looked at the music library at the school, the library had not been updated in approximately 15 years. It was a stressful experience.

Although Natalie’s experiences at her new workplace was stressful, she was able to persevere and rebuild the band program. During Natalie’s tenure at the middle school, she was hired as the assistant band director at the local high school. After working during school hours at the middle school, Natalie would drive over to the high school to assist

with the band program. The middle school was eventually demolished, and Natalie was able to obtain a position at another middle school. At the time of this study, Natalie had been working as the head band director at the school for four years.

Ava: “I was taught to work harder than everyone else to prove myself”

As a typical sixth grade student, Ava wanted to join the band program because it seemed to be a fun and exciting class. After joining the band program, Ava knew that she had found the perfect elective course. As a trumpet player, Ava stated, “I thought that I had an awesome White male middle school band director who taught me everything that I needed to know about playing the trumpet.” After leaving middle school, Ava decided to attend a predominately Black high school and continue her music studies.

Once I started high school, I joined the high school’s marching band. My band director at the high school was a Black male named, Mr. Cooper. He was an exceptionally good band teacher. However, he left after my first year of being in the band program. I was devastated. After he left the school, we ended up having a series of band directors because we ran the other band directors away. They were not Mr. Cooper, so we did not want anyone else to teach us. They were just not good enough.

Although Ava and her friends did not want another band director after Mr. Cooper (former band director) left, she admitted that the band director who came after Mr. Cooper supported them and gave them advice that positively affected their lives.

During my senior year, Myra L. Swoden accepted the position as the head band director at the high school that I attended...She stuck it out and she spoke positivity over us every day. One day, she told all the female band students, dancers, and flag girls to come to the band room for a meeting. She had a talk with us about respecting ourselves and respecting our bodies. She also talked about the reputation of the band program...That was the first time that I had seen anyone address the [concept of respect] as something that is necessary in a band program. Pretty much, she was giving us life advice through band.

Ava’s positive experiences in band at the high school level led her to consider the

possibility of becoming a band director. Ava stated, “when I was about to graduate from high school, the band director, Myra L. Swoden, asked me about my future endeavors after high school; I replied, I’m going to have your job.”

After graduating from high school, Ava decided to continue her music studies and applied for the instrumental music education program at Falk State University, which was a predominately White institution. Once enrolled, Ava’s band director at FSU warned her about the challenges that she might face in the field of instrumental music education.

The band director at FSU, where I attended college, literally told me that you have two things against you in this field; ‘the first thing is that you are an African American and the second thing is that you are a female.’ He explained, ‘this is a good ol’ boys club and you’re going to have to work harder than everyone else to prove yourself.’

Ava could not believe that she was going to have to experience racism and other forms of subordination to get a job in a field that she had loved since middle school.

After completing the required music education classes at FSU, Ava was prepared and ready to start working in the classroom through the school’s internship program. For the instrumental music education internship, Ava was sent to a predominately White middle school.

For my internship, I was placed at a predominately White school. Before starting the internship, I had to call the supervising teacher. I also had to send in my internship packet, which included a picture of me. As I talked to the supervising teacher, he stated, ‘I looked at the picture on the packet that you sent and said to myself, she is not going to fit in around here is she.’ I responded, “that’s how you introduce yourself to your future intern students.” After that conversation, me and the supervising teacher just did not get along.

Although Ava had to complete her internship at the school, she decided to talk to the band director at FSU about the incident. Ava stated, “when I spoke to the band director at

FSU, he said, ‘I warned you about this;’ I responded, you did warn me about what will happen, and I am living it.”

After completing the instrumental music education internship program, Ava was hired as an after-school “marching and pep band” instructor. Ava later went on to start her career as the head band director at a magnet school in Alabama. At the magnet school, Ava taught beginning, intermediate, advanced, and jazz band courses to students in grades 6–8. After teaching at the magnet school for approximately several years, Ava decided to accept a position at a different school for administrative reasons.

Although Ava had experienced racism in the workplace at the beginning of her career, Ava was not prepared to experience resistance from students enrolled in band classes.

After moving to the new job, I was excited and ready to start teaching various band concepts to students. Before taking the position, I was told that the band directors before me were all males. When I walked into the band room, I overheard a student say, ‘how is she going to teach band, and she is a female?’ I was like, “what are you talking about!” Since this happened in 2018, I told them to take out their cellphones and to go to www.google.com. After you get to www.google.com, type in the words ‘National Band Director’ of the year. The few students who had their cellphones followed my directives and they saw the name, Myra L. Swoden, who was my band director in high school. I explained to them that Ms. Swoden is the National Band Director of the year. So, do not tell me that I cannot teach you band when the best band director as of right now is a Black female.

For the entire first year, Ava worked to prove that she was qualified to teach band. Ava stated, “[the students] were not quite sure if I would work out and that I knew what I was doing. I think that [the students] did not realize that I really knew what I was doing until district assessment.” Once the students had completed their district band assessment, the fine arts director said, ‘this is the best that I’ve heard from this school in seventeen years.’

The kids responded, ‘oh wow, she knows what she is doing.’ After the students’ district performance assessment, Ava noticed that they began to understand that anyone can be a band director or anything that they want to be in life. With numerous superior performance evaluations, Ava was able to continue to be a successful African American female band director.

Lily: “I was undermined by the Black male head band director”

As a young child, Lily would sing various songs with her mother. Lily’s love for music continued throughout her childhood.

When I was little, both of my brothers were in band at the middle school. So, one of my brothers had a keyboard and I would crawl over to the keyboard and press the keys. They would always try to get me off the keyboard and I would cry about it. So, my mother decided to purchase a toddler-size keyboard that I could use on a daily basis without bothering my brothers. When I turned three-years-old, I would listen to songs played on commercials and try to play it on the keyboard.

While in middle school, Lily began to play songs on the keyboard that she created.

However, she did not know how to compose music. In other words, Lily did not know the fundamental concepts of music theory to compose a piece of music for others to play. To learn to compose music, Lily knew that she needed private piano lessons.

I heard the pianist at my church playing and I was like he knows what he is doing. So, one Sunday morning I played one of my songs on the piano at church and the pianist heard me playing. The pianist at my church told me that you need to get a score sheet and write out what you played. So, I told him that I do not know how to compose music... I just know how to play what I feel on the piano. He responded, ‘get over here and I will teach you how to compose music.’ So, I sat down at the piano bench Sunday after Sunday to learn to create my own musical compositions.

The pianist at Lily’s church did not only teach her to compose music, but also helped her with musical concepts and techniques of playing the clarinet to be a part of the

middle school band program. During the enrollment period for middle school, Lily decided that she wanted to play the clarinet and participate in the band program at the school. When Lily needed help with understanding various musical concepts or techniques, she was confident that the pianist at her church would provide the necessary support to continue in the middle school band program. With the church pianists unconditional support, Lily was able to continue to participate in band throughout high school. Although Lily participated in the band programs at the middle and high school level, Lily also loved to create “beats.” Lily explained, “music was my escape. So, when I would get upset, I would go and create a rock-and-roll beat. Whatever I was upset about, I felt better after creating beats.”

Although Lily was passionate about creating and composing music, Lily decided that she could pursue a career as a dentist. Lily decided to enroll in the pre-dentist program at the University of Pine Bluff. During Lily’s second year in college, Lily became pregnant.

When I got pregnant, I did not want to be a part of the dentistry program to learn about chloroplasts and atoms. I just felt that I could not do it anymore. So, I thought that it would be a great idea to go into something that I loved, which was music. I graduated from UPB with a bachelor’s degree in instrumental music education.

Although Lily had a bachelor’s degree in instrumental music education, Lily felt that becoming a music teacher would not provide her with the funds needed to have a prosperous lifestyle. Conflicted with negative thoughts about becoming a music teacher, Lily decided to talk to representatives at different colleges to learn more about the eligibility and degree requirements for the respiratory therapy program. After talking with

a few collegiate level representatives about the respiratory therapy program, Lily was “set up with an on-the-job respiratory therapy training position.” While getting prepared to work alongside respiratory therapists, Lily received a call about a job opening as the assistant band director at a high school. Lily explained:

It seems like whenever I try to shift my focus away from music, something better would always happen that is pertaining to music. I think that I was destined to teach music...I think that God kept me in the field of instrumental music education.

Lily worked as an assistant band director for several years before becoming a head band director at the high school level.

I was fueled to become a head band director because I was undermined as the assistant band director. When I wanted the kids to participate in various marching band shows, the head band director would say things like, ‘I don’t want them to participate in a show like that.’ I felt that I was not a partner, but someone to help carry out what he wanted me to do. After becoming a head band director, I finally had the freedom to do things that I wanted to do. I also feel that I have autonomy with my own program. If my students did not understand something...I will figure out how to teach [musical techniques or concepts] in a way that is understandable to my students.

According to Lily, becoming a head band director at the high school level was not an easy task.

When I accepted the job as the head band director, the students who knew how to read music and play very well were getting ready to graduate. I am the third band director at the school. The first band director wanted a corps-style marching band and the second band director transitioned to show-style. The students who marched using corps-style could sight read music very well and the students who marched using show-style could not sight read that good...When the top players left, the kids who could not read music or play very well were instantly exposed. They did not feel comfortable with sight reading music. When I asked them to sight read music, they would say things like, ‘why do we have to do concert band and sight-read music? Before you got here, I didn’t really have to play, I just held my horn.’

After working diligently with the students after-school each day, Lily was able to

eliminate the fears that the students had about learning to sight read and becoming great musicians. Lily stated, “the same kids who complained at first are now excellent musicians and they work with the incoming band students.” Lily was ecstatic and “loved seeing the progress” that the students made under her direction. Lily further explained, “teaching students about music has been an intrinsic reward. My students practice on their own now and I do not have to ask them to practice. My students realized that they can be great musicians.” As the head band director, Lily continued to “push [her] students to their maximum potential.”

Emma: “I was usually overlooked in the band field”

While in middle school, Emma decided that she wanted to enroll in the band program and play the clarinet. To become a great musician, Emma knew that she needed to practice assigned musical pieces at home. While practicing at home, Emma’s mother would let her know if she played a phrase or specific notes correctly. Emma’s “mother’s gift of recognizing incorrectly and correctly played notes, phrases, and musical expressions was mind-boggling.” Emma explained, “my mother was blind, and I could never figure out how she knew that I was playing a note correctly or incorrectly.” With the support of her mother, Emma decided to continue to participate in band throughout high school. While in high school, Emma thrived as a clarinet player and became a section leader and arranger for the band program.

My band director in high school was an incredibly positive person. He encouraged me to strive to be the best. Because of my band directors positive outlook during my high school years, I decided that I also wanted to become a band director. Therefore, I enrolled in the instrumental music education program at Grayson State University.

Although Emma graduated with a bachelor's and master's degree in instrumental music education from GSU, she did not know that she would have to face many challenges as an African American female band director.

There were many times that people did not realize that I was the head band director. I had my band students to participate in a parade and one of the staff members of the organization that sponsored the parade wanted the band to play a musical selection that would fit the occasion. So, the staff member went to the assistant band director, who was a male. The staff member asked him to do what they wanted the band to do. The staff member of the organization overlooked me and did not think that I was the head band director and I had on a band director's t-shirt. Of course, the assistant band director had to refer the staff member to me since I was the head band director of the program.

As an African American female band director, Emma not only had to face challenges outside of the school, but also within academic spaces.

I had issues with parents because they did not appreciate the fact that I was a female and the head band director. A parent once told me that 'a female should not be a band director.' I also had a student who did not do what I asked because she felt that women should not be band directors. The student stated, 'women are not supposed to be a band director. If you were a male, I would have done what you asked.' I've also had principals who did not like that I was a female band director.

According to Emma, there have been instances where "I wished that I was a male" since men's voices and ideals are illuminated within the field of instrumental music education.

Although Emma faced many challenges outside and within academic spaces, Emma had many great successes as an African American female band director. For over 20 years, Emma successfully led her bands to receive superior and excellent ratings at Large Group Performance Evaluations. Similarly, many of Emma's students have been selected to play for state-level symphonic and jazz band competitions. Emma explained that "being an African American female band director is rewarding."

Because I am an African American female band director, I have been able to effect change in the lives of young people more positively. I also think that I have been able to build a motherly relationship with my students.

Through ethics of caring, Emma was able to impact the lives of students in ways unimaginable.

Ashley: “I wanted to be a positive light for the kids in my neighborhood”

As a young child in middle school, the strings teacher made an announcement that there were openings for a beginning strings class. After observing one of the strings classes, Ashley decided to enroll in the beginning strings class. According to Ashley, “the beginning strings class seemed to be lots of fun.” Ashley was a double bass player and continued her studies throughout high school. Although Ashley played the double bass string instrument for symphonic and jazz band in high school, she also played the tenor saxophone and baritone for the marching band at school. As a successful double bass string player in a high school band program, Ashley was able to audition and play for the local youth orchestra. Ashley was also placed as the first chair bass string player for All-State Honor, All-State Orchestra, and Jazz Honor band competitions for four consecutive years.

After graduating from high school, Ashley knew that she wanted to “work with children.” Growing up in a neighborhood with children who did not have many supportive figures, Ashley knew that she wanted to make a difference in the lives of children who look like her.

I was thinking about going into dentistry since I like clean teeth. I also thought about teaching kids to play instruments. I like the fact of showing kids how to pick up an instrument and play it. In my mind, I felt that [teaching] was something that I could go into to help children.

After much consideration, Ashley decided to enroll in the instrumental music education program at Southern University. Ashley's father was excited since she would be the first college graduate in the family. Although Ashley grew up in a low-income area, she knew that graduating from college would be necessary in order to help a large number of children with similar experiences. After graduating from SU, Ashley decided to start looking for various instrumental music education job openings. During Ashley's search for a job, she noted that there were only band teacher positions open and not strings positions. Ashley explained, "I am a strings player and I wanted to become a strings director at a local school." However, Ashley was only able to find positions for band directors. Ashley decided to apply and interview for a band director position at a local middle school.

The principal at the school that I applied knew that I was fresh out-of-college and I was eager to teach. As an African American woman herself, the principal wanted someone who was not trying to just get their foot in the door and leave after a year.

Although the school that Ashley applied had a series of band directors, Ashley felt that she had made the best decision. However, Ashley quickly found out that the parents at the school were not incredibly supportive of her being the band director.

The parents would look at me like I'm a child because I was so young. I didn't dress or act the way that they expected me too. They had a certain idea of how I'm supposed to act as a band director. I try to be a good role model each day.

Ashley not only struggled to prove herself to parents, but also to the students in her classroom.

Because I'm young and a female, the kids sometimes don't view me as an authoritative [figure]. They feel like they can tell me what to do and they don't take me seriously. After working with kids, they start to understand that they must

do what I ask them to do and they will have consequences for disobeying. I just think that with a male presence, kids feel that they can't mess with them and they must obey. With females, kids think that they can [disobey] without any consequences.

Despite the challenges that Ashley faced as an African American female band director, Ashley was able to create a band program with many successful performances and evaluations. Ashley also created strings classes for students who wanted to play a string instrument. Despite charting the path of being a band director and strings player, Ashley was able to overcome many fears to continue the work of helping low-income children to become successful in life.

Summary

The participants' individual and collective experiences not only unveiled the nature of political forces and ideologies that were and continue to be perpetuated within the band world, but also the nuanced complexities of becoming an African American female band director. In the next chapter, I discuss several themes that were based on the encompassing nature of the participants' individual and collective experiences prior to and after becoming a band director: The interconnected dimensions of counterspaces as a mechanism to shelter African American women from the daily torrents of oppressive powers; the empowerment among and between African American women as an ideal approach for the upliftment of the individual woman, which was necessary for rejecting and dismantling systems of oppression; systems of motivation and support, which consisted of mentors, role models, and family members as figures that influenced the participants' initial and continuous pursuit to become an aspiring band director; the participants' encounters of various dimensions of racism as it relates to knowledge

systems of resistance and their perceptions and application of counterspaces within band settings; and the complexities of racial and gendered discrimination as it relates to the perpetuation of masculinity and White supremacy within the band world.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Becoming A Band Director

Participants in this study encountered similar and contrasting knowledge systems that influenced their decision to become an aspiring band director. In this chapter, I discuss common a priori and in vivo themes used during the analysis of the participants' narratives of becoming a band director. For analysis of participants' experiences, I employ Black feminist thought (Collins, 2002) as a framework to examine the complexities of oppressive powers and the interconnected domains of empowerment that informed the participants initial decision to become a band director and their perceptions of counterspaces for African American females enrolled in their band programs. Although I discuss the powerful nature of counterspaces within band programs in the next chapter, as a common theme in this chapter, I discuss the interrelated connections of counterspaces within the domains of empowerment and resistance of racism and other forms of subordination that are perpetuated within the band world, and its powerful impact on the dialectical relationship between African American female teachers and students. Furthermore, I provide a discussion about the empowerment among and between Black women, interconnected systems of motivation and support, various forms of racism, and the perpetuation of race and gender discrimination within the band world. In the last section of this chapter, I provide a discussion of the participants' perspectives on speaking up or staying silent within a racialized society.

Counterspaces in the Band World

It is sometimes very difficult and challenging to negotiate or grapple with the

complexities of race, racism, discrimination, and other forms of subordination alone, and without the support and guidance from others who have experienced and lived through the same level of oppression. Some of the participants recalled having band directors, in particular African American female band directors who purposefully created safe spaces within their band program to enable them to freely express themselves and to examine issues that concerned them. It is to my understanding that the participants band directors were aware of the various forms of oppression that their African American female band students faced within a racialized society. Because academic spaces are premier settings for the continuous perpetuation of oppression, counterspaces within academic spaces serve as a mechanism among many that are designed to empower African American women to take back their freedom and rights to an equal place within society by standing against oppressive forces as a collective.

Like Sarah, Natalie, Ava, Lily, and Juanita, Gabrielle did not face or understand the reality of racism and other forms of subordination until she started school. Gabrielle explained that “the first time that [she] got called the N-word was at school. The first time that [she] had heard derogatory terms like *monkey* was at school:”

I looked at my band director, and I remember her telling me that I could always come to the band room, in which she created it to be a safe space for us Black girls...When I first got called the N-word was at the end of band practice waiting on my mom to pick me up. I told my band director that these White boys rode by on a golf cart and called me the N-word. I was so upset and traumatized, but I knew that I could come to [my band director] and she would understand...After talking with her, we actually laughed about it, and talked about how to resist structures of racism.

Through the victimization of racism, Gabrielle desperately needed to express how she felt with others who had similar experiences. Gabrielle explained that the band director at the

high school that she attended created a space where she could feel supported, understood, and empowered to continue to make efforts to thrive while resisting the perpetuation of oppressive forces within academic spaces. Similar to Gabrielle's experience, Ava articulated that the band director, who was a Black woman, at the high school that she attended created a counterspace to empower the African American females enrolled in the band program:

During my senior year, Myra L. Swoden accepted the position as the head band director at the high school that I attended...She stuck it out and she spoke positivity over us every day. One day, she told all the female band students, dancers, and flag girls to come to the band room for a meeting. She had a talk with us about respecting ourselves and respecting our bodies. She also talked about the reputation of the band program.

Ava stated, "that was the first time that I had seen anyone address the [concept of respect] as something that was necessary in a band program. Pretty much, she was giving us life advice through band." Ava further articulated that "my band director taught us less experienced females about the skills needed to survive" within a racialized society. Ava's quote above demonstrates how the struggles for group survival "consist of actions taken to create Black female spheres of influence within existing social structures" (Collins, 2002, p. 204).

Counterspaces can also foster African American females' sense of empowerment among and between each other (Collins, 2002; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). When Gabrielle's band director created a counterspace within the band program, Gabrielle was able to share her experiences with other African American female band students for purposes of empowering each other, which involves fostering each other's sense of activism, self-definitions, and rejecting dimensions of knowledge that perpetuate forms of

oppression. Gabrielle expressed that through the band program's counterspace, other African American females were able to understand the level of oppression that they had to face, which was essential for surviving and thriving within a space dominated by oppressive powers:

I remember during my junior year; twin Black girls joined the band program. Immediately, I was thinking "how do I make the girls comfortable?" So, my band director took us into her office. It was me and the twins. My band director let them know that it was going to be a different experience for both of them...they had just moved from a school in Chicago where they were not the only Black females in the band program. My band director said, 'Gabrielle, I want you to explain to the twins about what's going on.' I said, "look, we are the only Black female students in the band program and there are people in this school who do not like us. You can be smart, pretty, intelligent, but in the end, a lot of the teachers and student body will see you as Black." I was like this is still the South and some people are racist and stuck in their ways. I let them know that everything is not roses in this town. I also let them know that things will happen, and the administrators and teachers will sweep it under the rug.

Gabrielle expressed that the band director created a counterspace within the band program "for us Black girls to be able to survive" within a racialized space, such as the school. Without a counterspace within the band program, Gabrielle articulated that she felt that many of the African American female students could have easily become severely oppressed, which could have led to an acceptance of negative images, ideas, and behaviors that demeans and disempowers them. In other words, when someone becomes severely oppressed, they can lose sight of their capabilities, power, worth, and who they are as an individual (Bivens, 2005). When African American women lose sight of the qualities that encompasses their character, they can succumb to their oppression, and unconsciously learn and practice negative behaviors that align with being silent or invisible (Bivens, 2005; Collins, 2002; Collins, 2009). Therefore, counterspaces must be

present within racialized spaces for the continuous empowerment of African American women (Collins, 2002; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Counterspaces Among Black Women

Although six of the participants' experiences of counterspaces within the band world were through a physical structure, Gabrielle, Linda, Myra, and Patricia's experience of counterspaces were simply the presence of African American women in an organization. Gabrielle, Linda, Myra, and Patricia expressed that they were appreciative of the fact that they could find other African American women who faced similar obstacles in life. Gabrielle further shared that she thought that she was alone, and other African American women were not facing the same level of oppression that was perpetuated by members of the dominant group and, sometimes from other African Americans. While in college, Gabrielle joined a Black women's leadership organization—through dialogue with other African American women, she realized that she was not alone and every African American woman within the organization shared that they faced similar forms of oppression. Gabrielle stated, "I was shocked and could not believe that all of the women within the organization who looked like me had similar experiences." Gabrielle learned that the women within the organization were not just seeking to share their individual and collective experiences, but to also find shelter from the daily torrents of racism, discrimination and other forms of subordination that were perpetuated at the institutional, cultural, and social level. Gabrielle further expressed that "after hearing [her] own stories through the other women in the leadership organization, [she] became empowered." Counterspaces, whether through a physical structure or the

presence of African American women, allowed the participants to hear their own stories through others, which led to a subconscious awakening of self-empowerment and collective empowerment among and between each other (Collins 2002; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Empowerment Among and Between Black Women

Through the continuous victimization of oppressive powers, the participants developed a consciousness to embark on a path of freedom that involved rejecting and dismantling systems of oppression. Black women's empowerment can be born either through an understanding of self-worth or seeing oneself through the eyes of others with similar experiences (Collins, 2002). Black women can engage in the dualities of empowerment as an individual or through the collective actions of other Black women (Collins, 2002). Empowerment among and between Black women is crucial for the upliftment of Black women as a collective (Collins, 2002).

Self-Empowerment

Regardless of the continuous victimization of racism and other forms of subordination, several of the participants in this study expressed that they consciously made efforts to uplift themselves, even when others within society were unable, or unwilling to, for purposes of surviving and thriving within a racialized society. This type of consciousness, which Collins (2002) describes as Black women's empowerment, is born when African American women understand their self-worth within a society that views them as inferior, incapable, and worthless. When African American women do not view themselves through a White supremacist lens and come to their senses of knowing

their self-worth, which involves understanding that they are capable of, intelligent, and worthy to have an equal stance within society—they are subconsciously opening up a dimension of knowledge that involves rejecting the perpetuation of negative, racist, and stereotypical ways of knowing, which leads to finding power within themselves (Collins, 2002). Juanita, like all the participants in this study, faced various obstacles while taking the road to become a band director. Juanita expressed that people blatantly told her that she could not become a band director because she was Black and a female. For example, Juanita wanted to apply for a music teacher education program at the collegiate level, but “someone told [her] that [she] couldn’t.” Juanita explained that “they said, ‘you’re a girl and you can’t be a band director.’” Juanita further explained, “I’ve always been that person, don’t tell me what I can’t do, I will show you...and that’s what I did.” Juanita expressed that she rejected the viewpoints of social actors who perpetuated powers of oppression, and consciously made efforts to find power within herself to take the necessary steps to become a band director. Through self-empowerment, Juanita achieved her dream of becoming a successful band director.

Collective Empowerment

Although self-empowerment may be crucial for the upliftment of an individual African American woman, collective empowerment involves African American women working together as a collective to empower each other (Collins, 2002). When African American women find themselves with their backs against the wall because of the obstacles that they face daily—as a collective—they are able to seek guidance and comfort from other African American females with similar experiences (Collins, 2002).

African American women who engage in collective actions to empower each other have accepted the role of becoming a sister-like figure—African American women who consider themselves as their sisters’ keeper because of their role and efforts to foster each other’s self-definitions and sense of empowerment (Collins, 2002). African American women’s empowerment as a collective not only involves the role of empowering one another, but also the role of fostering activism among and between each other for purposes of dismantling and resisting oppressive powers within society (Collins, 2002). During high school, Alexandria’s band director expressed that he was “wasting [his] time” teaching her to play an instrument since she may not continue studies in the future. After hearing the negative remarks, Alexandria felt betrayed because the one thing that she loved, which was band, could possibly be taken away. Not knowing what to do, Alexandria talked to her African American female friends who were also enrolled in the band program about what had happened. Alexandria stated, “my friends said, ‘don’t listen to him, you’re going to have fun...you must keep up with this.’” Alexandria expressed that her friends encouraged her to stay in the band program and helped her to become a better musician by providing free private lessons. Alexandria also articulated that her friends engaged in activist responses by “speaking with the band director” about his decision to not “help me” and expressing that “I was a great addition to the band program.” Through the collective actions of Alexandria’s African American female friends, she became one of the highest-performers and most successful musicians in the band program. As revealed in this study, the empowerment among and between African American women as a collective was crucial for the continuous participation and

involvement of African American females within the field of instrumental music education.

Seeing Myself Through My Students

While self-empowerment and collective empowerment were vital for several of the participants continuous involvement in music, which led to the decision to become a band director, nine of the participants were empowered through the conscious nature of working with children who looked like them. Amber, Gabrielle, Lily, Jaleesa, Juanita, Linda, Chelsea, Myra, and Karen noted that the African American female students that they taught encountered similar issues and obstacles as they did while in school. After working with at-risk kids, Amber realized that she wanted “to make a difference in the lives of children who look like [her].” Amber expressed that “many of the students that [she] worked with faced similar challenges of racism” and other forms of subordination within and outside of academic spaces. Therefore, Amber wanted to make sure that she was present within a position of power to help African American females to become successful in life, and “to show them that they can also attain similar or greater levels of success.” Amber stated, “as Black women, we must be present within these positions” of power. Without African American women’s presence within leadership positions, the younger generation of African American females may not fully understand the meaning of having an equal stance within society (Collins, 2002). By consciously understanding the issues and obstacles that their African American female students face daily, many of the participants in this study became empowered to continue to teach African American females from the standpoint as band directors.

This type of consciousness that empowers African American women to be present in a position of power can sometimes develop when reflecting on experiences of racist and negative stereotypical behaviors, ideas, and practices that are situated within communities and racialized spaces. By reflecting on racist and stereotypical experiences, African American women can become empowered to dismantle systems of oppression that made them feel that they were incapable, unintelligent, and inferior human beings (Collins, 2002). Gabrielle expressed that her reflection on experiences and involvement with teaching students empowered her to continue to be a band director:

Although I felt insecure about teaching, I became more empowered to teach because I was teaching kids who looked like me...All of my life I was told that I act White...I was like, I just sound smart because I'm educated, not because I'm White... I wanted my Black girls to realize that they were smart and capable of achieving any goal.

By consciously reflecting on her experiences, Gabrielle believed that she could help other African American females who have coped with similar issues. Gabrielle utilized her teaching and mentoring skills to help other African American females with an understanding of what it means to be smart and educated within a society that portrays negative, stereotypical roles of African American women.

Interconnected Systems of Motivation and Support

Although counterspaces and the interconnected dimensions of empowerment and resistance played significant roles in participants understanding about issues that African American females face within the band world, data revealed that mentors, role models, and family members provided support and motivated the participants initial and continuous pursuit to become an aspiring band director. Without the support of mentors,

role models, and family members, some of the participants may have never chosen a career in instrumental music education or to continue their studies within the field.

Mentors, role models, and family members were key individuals who assisted the African American females with managing and surviving the daily torrents of racism and other forms of subordination perpetuated within the band world.

Motivation

Along their journey, several of the participants generated the desire and interest to participate in musical activities and to pursue a career to become a band director.

Chelsea, Jaleesa, Lily, and Ashley had a personal desire to continue to engage in music, which Hamann and Cooper (2016) describes as internal motivation. Becoming internally motivated served as a crucial component for the participants' goal settings and the achievement of those aspirations (Hamann & Cooper, 2016). For example, Chelsea's love for music blossomed during elementary school when her father was killed. Due to the absence of her father, Chelsea felt alone and "angry." Chelsea explained, "I was hurt because I saw my mother struggling and my father was dead." Because music was an outlet for Chelsea to express her thoughts and feelings, she decided to join the band program at the middle school that she attended. After joining the band program, Chelsea felt that she had found "the dominant thing that [she] was looking for," which was a space of happiness and joy. When playing an instrument, Chelsea felt that she did not have to worry about her troubles or think about what had happened to her father. Chelsea explained that "the only [outlet] that I had was music, it saved my life."

Although Chelsea, Jaleesa, Lily, and Ashley were internally motivated, Karen,

Sarah, Kierra, and Amber were externally motivated. Becoming externally motivated formulates when the goal originates from an external source rather than the person themselves (Hamann & Cooper, 2016). Karen shared how she became externally motivated to participate in band, which led to a career as a band director:

I didn't know anything about band, except that my older cousin was in it, but I never seen him play...I just knew that I could play piano, and this was something cool to get me out the house...For our first 6th grade band meeting, Mr. Waller [band director] stood in front of the [class]...he picked up the clarinet and played the Oscar Mayer Weiner song. It was not the regular Oscar Mayer Weiner song; he had jazzed it up and added trills. I wanted to play that [instrument], I did not know what it was, but I wanted to play that [instrument]. I ran and told my mother, and she purchased the clarinet on the spot. I have had that instrument ever since.

After hearing the band director play the jazz version of the "Oscar Mayer Weiner" song, Karen became adamant about learning to play the same instrument with a similar level of musicianship. Karen asked her mother to purchase the instrument, which was a clarinet. Through the purchasing of the instrument, Karen was able to progress as a musician throughout grade school and ultimately became a band director.

Unlike Karen's experience, Sarah had heard the middle school marching band playing and instantly fell in love with the idea of joining the band program. Sarah recalled:

I was in the fifth grade when I heard the middle school marching band playing. I mean, they had a marching band at the middle school. So, I went up to the band director, Mr. Bell to talk to him about me joining the band program. I told him that I wanted to be in the band and how can I [join].

After completing the audition process, Sarah became a band member. While in the band program, Sarah not only learned to play the clarinet, but she became a successful musician who performed for prestigious venues across the country. According to Sarah,

participating in the band program “blossomed” her in such a way that she became more confident about herself and abilities to achieve any goal in life. Sarah stated, “I had something that was mine and I did not have to compete with my brothers and sisters.” In other words, Sarah felt that she had a “special talent” that other family members did not possess.

Kierra, like eight of the participants, shared her early beginnings of becoming motivated to participate in band, but also the manner in which she became motivated to pursue a career in instrumental music education. For example, Kierra articulated that her experiences as a youngster in band motivated her to become a band director to help other African American females. More specifically, Kierra wanted to engage in actions to help other females who looked like her to achieve their goals. Kierra further explained:

I wanted to be that person for girls who look like me...I remember the compassion that my band directors had for me while I was in high school and college. I want to hear my students say that I love you...I remember when you helped me to accomplish my goal or to overcome my fears.

Once Kierra realized that she wanted to empower the children within her community, she decided that it would be beneficial to become a band director. Through Kierra’s decision to become a band director, she helped hundreds of African American females to be successful in life, despite the struggles that they faced daily as living in a racialized society.

Mentors

Chelsea, Natalie, and Ava expressed that their secondary and collegiate level band directors supported them during their journey to become a band director. Some of their instructors, whether at the collegiate or secondary level, encouraged them to pursue a

career in instrumental music education and to work hard to be among the best band directors within this country. Like Natalie and Ava, Chelsea recalled having a positive relationship with her high school band director:

My band director supported me. He kept me engaged and interested in band...I was on the percussion section, and he was really hard on me, but he treated us all the same... I remember when I talked to my high school band director about what was going on at home. He knew that my mom did not have the money to purchase me a euphonium, so he allowed me to take a school-owned instrument home during the summer. I was like I know that I'm not supposed to have this instrument over the summer, but he let me check it out...Establishing that connection with my band director was awesome because I loved music.

When Chelsea's mother did not have the funds to purchase or rent an instrument, the band director allowed her to utilize a school-owned instrument. Chelsea explained that the band director at the school wanted to make sure that she was able to practice during the summer months to become a successful musician. According to Chelsea, "it was because of my band directors unconditional support that I was able to pursue a career in instrumental music education" that led to obtaining a position as a high school band director.

Although Chelsea, Natalie, and Ava decided to pursue a career in instrumental music education, Gabrielle wanted to leave the profession after facing the harsh reality of discrimination, racism and other forms of subordination that lurked within academic spaces. Gabrielle stated, "my first job freaked me out about teaching...I was always considered as not Black enough... I dealt with a lot during my first year of teaching and I almost quit." Due to the obstacles that Gabrielle faced during her first year of teaching, she felt the urge to contact the band director at the college that she attended for graduate school and her former high school band director about her decision to leave the

profession and to receive guidance on other career possibilities within the field. Although Gabrielle wanted to leave the profession, her college professor and former high school band director helped her to understand her worth and why she needed to follow her dreams, which was to be a band director. Gabrielle expressed that she would have “never continued to be a band director” if her college professor and former high school band director did not truthfully tell her that she was “good” at teaching children and being a band director, even though “[she] did not feel that way.”

Unlike the experiences of Chelsea, Natalie, Ava and Gabrielle, Amber’s father was her primary mentor. For example, Amber shared that her father made a conscious decision to teach her the fundamentals of becoming a successful musician:

As a young child, my father taught me how to play the piano, which was my primary instrument through high school. My father took pride of teaching his children the love and art of playing an instrument. As a professional musician who obtained a degree in music performance, my father was hopeful that one of his children would pursue a career in music. Although he taught all of his kids music, I’m the only one who grasped it... I was very advanced with playing the piano; through most of my schooling, my dad was my music teacher.

As a professional musician, Amber’s father taught her how to play the piano at a very young age with high hopes that she may one day follow the path of becoming a successful musician/teacher.

[For college], I decided to apply for a college where no one knew me. I looked at Fayette State University, which is a school where my mother attended, and I decided that I wanted to go there. I wanted to major in music education... When my dad heard me say it, he was like... ‘yes, do it.’ My dad said, ‘you should do what you love, or you will hate it, you should never take a career that feels like a job.’

After hearing her father’s encouraging words to enroll in a program that allowed her to do something that she loved, Amber knew that she wanted to become an instrumental

music education teacher to inspire children who look like her to become exceptional musicians. Amber expressed that without her father's support, she may have never pursued a career as a band director, nor to become a successful African American female director within the area of residence.

Unlike Amber's experience, Lily had a mentor who was a nonrelative. For example, Lily expressed that as a young child her mother purchased a keyboard, and she became interested in learning more about the fundamentals to compose her own musical works. One day at church, Lily decided to go up to the piano and play a few of the songs that she had created. The pianist at the church heard her play and stated, 'you need to get a score sheet and write out what you played.' Lily explained that she did not know "how to compose music...[she] just [knew] how to play what [she felt]." Lily articulated that the church pianist told her to 'get over here and I will teach you how to compose music.' The pianist at Lily's church taught her the fundamentals of composing music and various musical concepts and techniques for her to become a successful member of the middle school's band program. Lily stated that "when [she] needed help with band, [she] was confident that the pianist at [her] church would help her to understand" the musical concepts and techniques taught at school.

The support and advice received from mentors provided the participants with a realistic view of how they must also become mentors for the younger generation of African American females. This level of mentorship allowed the participants to share their wisdom, experiences, and skills with other African American females for purposes of empowering them to become future leaders within society. Ashley shared that

mentoring Black females functions as a power that can make a difference in their lives and the future of the Black community:

A lot of the people in my neighborhood did not have much help growing up. So, my mother would always try to work with the children in the neighborhood who were less fortunate. She would help them in any way that she could...I was like, there must be something that I can also do to help children also. So, I felt that teaching would put me in the position of helping and caring for children in the way that my mother and teachers supported and mentored me.

Watching her mother engage in the role as a mentor to support the kids in the neighborhood empowered her to become a mentor. Ashley explained that many of the kids in the neighborhood where she grew up did not have a mentor or a supportive figure in their lives. Many of the kids were engaging in activities that yielded negative consequences; therefore, Ashley's mother took on the responsibility to mentor the kids within the neighborhood. Through mentorship, Ashley articulated that her mother was able to see a positive change in the kids' lives. In other words, many of them were engaging in activities that ultimately led them to become successful in life. Ashley shared recollections of longing to become a mentor like her mother. Ashley stated that "[she] also wanted to help the children within her neighborhood" to transition from a life of negativity to one that was full of positive outcomes. Ashley further stated, "it only takes one teacher to change the lives of thousands of children." With this understanding, Ashley decided to pursue a career as a band director. Through mentoring, Ashley was able to help many students who lived in poverty to become "first-generation college graduates, successful business owners, teachers," and pursue other avenues towards a successful life. In essence, Ashley and her mother not only helped individual students, but rather the communities in which they lived. When individuals of the community

become successful, they function as a shared bond that moves the community forward (Collins, 2002).

Peer Mentors

In her experiences of becoming a band director, Alexandria noted that the connections made with peers contributed to her success. This level of peer mentorship provided her with the support needed to facilitate the accomplishment of goals.

Alexandria shared how the mentoring relationship with peers formed:

During my freshman year in high school, I had to take beginner band classes because I did not have band while in middle school. I was so excited about taking band. But I found out quickly that the band director, who was a White male did not want to teach me...I told a few of my friends who were enrolled in advanced band classes about what happened, and they stated, 'don't listen to him, you're going to have fun, you must keep up with this.' I was about to give up. So, many of my peers stepped up and became my mentor. They helped me with practicing and anything else that I needed to do to be a part of the advanced band classes. After much practicing, the following year I made it into the advanced band classes.

The band director at the school assumed that Alexandria was not capable of engaging in the necessary steps to become a successful musician within the band program. The director of the band made it clear that he was not going to make any efforts to teach her the fundamentals of becoming a successful musician. Although disappointed, Alexandria engaged in conversation with her close friends about the band director's decision.

Alexandria expressed that her friends told her to persevere and continue to participate in the band program. Alexandria further articulated that some of her friends formed a mentoring relationship by engaging in ethics of caring that involved providing her with free private lessons and practicing with her during the weekends. Through formed mentoring relationships, Alexandria was able to become a phenomenal musician. In

essence, less experienced musicians are inspired and motivated by other musicians to become successful within the band world (Goodrich, 2007). Peer mentoring within instrumental music settings can improve interpersonal relationships between students and lead to the success of a school's music program (Goodrich, 2007; Sheldon, 2001).

Role Models

While several of the participants shared positive recollections of their encounters with mentors, Myra, Ava, Gabrielle, Linda, Emma, Natalie, and Amber reported that role models played an integral part of shaping their identities, which led to the conscious decision of becoming an aspiring band director. The participants who described having positive role models in their lives expressed that their role models shared the same experiences and that they were also members of the same race. For the participants in this study, aspiring to be like someone who possesses idealistic characteristics of success is the closest realistic view of becoming successful themselves. Role models are individuals who lead by example; that is, they embody values, abilities, and characteristics that promote ideals of success while also revealing how to attain similar success (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999). For some of the African American female band directors in this study, the success of another African American not only helped them to identify strategies to become successful in life, but to identify and resist oppressive powers that could possibly hinder their success (Collins, 2002).

Like Ava, Gabrielle, Linda, Emma, Natalie, and Amber, Myra expressed that the role models in her life were capable of, and willing to motivate, inspire, and provide her with the necessary concepts, ideas, support, and survival strategies to become a

successful band director within a racialized society:

My first band director was an African American woman. She taught at four or five different schools. She played the trombone, and she was very big on starting young ladies on brass instruments...specifically instruments that [females] might have been deterred from playing in the fifth or sixth grade because [females] are kind of small at that point in life...Having an African American female band director initially played a big part of me being able to see myself do it...My second band director was an African American male. I think that the fire for being a band director came from him...he had an equal opportunity band... boys lead and girls lead. When I talked to other females from the college that he taught at, they explained to me that he had drum majors who were African American females, which was not a common practice back in the day... I think that being encouraged to perform and to be in leadership roles in the band, regardless of gender at a high school...kind of gave me that sight that I could do this. He used to take us to the local college school football games, and we would watch the bands play. I was like wow; this is something that I really want to do. I think it was the exposure that also helped...I didn't even know anything about gender [discrimination] until I got to college.

Myra articulated that the African American band directors, both female and male, recognized the complexities of racism and discrimination within the band world; therefore, they consciously made the decision to counter negative, stereotypical behaviors and ideas that negated the success of African American females within the band world. Myra further expressed that the band directors created band programs where every student, regardless of gender or race, were considered equal, and they were treated in a fair and equal manner. Through equal opportunity and treatment, Myra articulated that she was capable of completing the tasks necessary to become successful within leadership roles, which led to her decision to become a band director.

Although successful role models do not need to be the same race and gender, role models possessing an understanding about various obstacles that African American females face at the social, cultural, and individual level and embodies characteristics

related to success are essential for fostering African American females understanding about themselves, their unlimited capabilities, and the roles that they aspire to become in life (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999; Martineau & Mount, 2018). Within the band world, females, especially African American females, are still widely underrepresented; therefore, role models are vitally important for African American females' continuous participation and leadership within the profession (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012; Wooten, 2017). Ava expressed that African American females must be able to see other African American females in the profession to acquire the understanding that they are capable of becoming successful leaders within the field, despite the continuous domination of males:

It's important that little Black girls are able to see other [African American females] in these positions that otherwise, they may not see themselves able to do. When they see us doing it, they can say, 'hey, I can do that too.' It's huge for them to be able to see that. They know that they can be themselves...If they see men doing things, they say, 'oh, I can't do that,' but when they see me, they say, 'I want to do that because she can do it' ...Just like there has never been an African American female president, someday, someone is going to be up there, and other little Black girls will be like I can do it too.

Ava's framing of role models in the lives of African American females was based on her own experiences. During high school, Ava encountered a role model who not only possessed the qualities of a successful African American female, but her role model made efforts to converse with her about concepts, strategies, and ideas about success and resistance of oppressive powers. Ava revealed that her African American female role model had conversations with her that others deemed as unnecessary and a "waste of time." Through a positive relationship with her high school band director, Ava explained that she was able to gain navigational skills for surviving and thriving within a racialized society. According to Ava, without a caring and understanding role model, "I don't think

that my love for music and aspirations to become a band director would have been established.” Ava’s high school band director’s “advice” about life led her to become a successful band director and a positive role model for other African American females within the band world.

Peer Role Models

Some of the participants in this study not only had adult role models, but also peer role models who were also African American females. For example, Linda was a tuba player throughout high school, and wanted to continue to play the instrument while pursuing a career to become a band director. After applying for an instrumental music education program, Linda assumed that the other tuba players within the band program were possibly White males. During one of the rehearsals, Linda saw a Black woman playing the tuba. The young woman was a tuba player and a section leader. Linda “jumped for joy” because she was so excited about having the opportunity to play alongside another African American female. Linda stated, “I wanted to grow up to be just like her...when she leaves, I’m going to be the tuba section leader.” Linda was one of two female tuba players at the college attended. By her sophomore year in college, Linda was granted the opportunity to become the section leader for the marching band at the college. As a section leader, Linda engaged in various leadership roles such as conducting during rehearsals, leading sectionals, and recruiting students for the band program. Linda expressed that without seeing someone who looked like her in the same field and with similar aspirations, she “may have never been inspired in such a way” to continue to make efforts for purposes of becoming an exceptional musician. Linda shared

that the African American female tuba player “showed me that I could also become the tuba section leader and anything that I wanted to be in life, and that is why I am a band director today.” Linda’s perception of a peer role model not only revolved primarily around the interactions that she had with the section leader, but rather the fact that she was able to see someone who looked like her in a position dominated by males. In essence, Linda expressed that her peer role model clearly demonstrated through actions of perseverance the true meaning of successfully navigating and thriving within a profession controlled by oppressive forces.

Family Support

Although participants reported that mentors and role models played a key role in their decision to become a band director, they also expressed that close family members provided them with a greater level of support that continued through adulthood. For example, Lily shared that her mother may not have been musically inclined, but she purchased her a keyboard after noticing that she was interested in becoming a musician.

When I was little, both of my brothers were in band at the middle school. So, one of my brothers had a keyboard and I would crawl over to the keyboard and press the keys. They would always try to get me off the keyboard and I would cry about it. So, my mother decided to purchase a toddler-size keyboard that I could use on a daily basis without bothering my brothers. When I turned three-years-old, I would listen to songs played on commercials and try to play it on the keyboard.

As a young child, Lily’s mother recognized that she had potential for becoming a successful musician. Without hesitation, Lily’s mother purchased her a keyboard, which allowed her to progress as a musician, and ultimately an aspiring band director.

Like Lily, participants mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters were among key individuals who supported and encouraged them to follow their dream, which was to

become an aspiring band director. For some of the participants, family members were among the first to recognize their musical talents. Without someone consciously understanding and recognizing their abilities, several of the participants felt that they would have never chosen to pursue a career in music. Emma, Patricia, Kierra, and Ashley explained that their family members understood who they were as individuals; therefore, they were able to engage in dialogue about their experiences without judgment. The dialectical relationship among family members fostered the participants understanding on how to live, navigate, and thrive within a racialized society and a profession that has been dominated by White males.

Encountering Various Forms of Racism

While I sought to investigate the formation of the participants' perceptions about counterspaces within the band world through the interrelated connections of empowerment and resistance, data revealed that multiple dimensions of racism played an extensive role in participants' conscious knowledge, perceptions, and application of counterspaces in the band world. The sole purpose of the perpetuation of racism was to place the African American female band directors along the inferior end of the status continuum. Based on the participants' experiences, racism was constructed and practiced in known and unknown ways and expressed in a subtle or blatant manner. Whether encountered in a subtle or blatant manner, racism functions as a system of power that lives within the walls of society like an invisible pest.

Color-Blind Racism

Although all the participants in this study experienced undisguised, degrading

forms of racism prior to and after becoming a band director, most forms of racism experienced were hidden and entrenched within the structures of institutional, cultural, social, and political practices (Collins, 2009). That is, modern racism is disguised within normal, supposedly non-racist practices (Collins, 2009). For many of the participants, receiving delightful compliments about the professionalism of someone's speech or dress code was considered as a form of non-racist practices. However, participants like Gabrielle, expressed that she was surprisingly whitened by dominant and non-dominant groups of society through the use of unconsciously coded remarks that were seemingly non-racist practices. For example, Gabrielle had a conversation with a few friends, and one of them shouted, 'you talk and act so proper for a Black person.' Although Gabrielle was noticeably an African American female with a dark, brownish complexion, this seeming compliment was the perpetuation of color-blind racism (Collins, 2009). Through this subtle perpetuation of racism, African Americans are viewed as unintelligent and inferior to White people within society (Woods, 2001). As a system of power, color-blind racism functions as a form of racist behaviors that are upheld at the institutional, social, and cultural level to dehumanize and devalue the intelligence of African Americans within society (Collins, 2009; Kendi, 2019).

Color-blind racism depends on social actors within community organizations or schools to construct or perpetuate racial practices and the influence of mass media and popular culture (Collins, 2009). Music videos, television shows, and other mass media platforms present color-blind racism as a natural, normal, and non-racist practice of society (Collins, 2009). For example, mass media circulates stereotypical ideas and

images of African Americans. This type of color-blind racism functions as an attempt to control the minds of African Americans for purposes of dehumanization and to convince other groups within society that the stereotypical images and ideas of African Americans are truthful (Collins, 2009). Through the dehumanization of marginalized groups, the dominant group believe that they will be able to keep their dominant stance within society. Instead of allowing dominant ideologies to use mass media as a platform to perpetuate negative stereotypical images and ideas of African American females, Ashley, like fourteen of the participants in this study, acquired media literacy to promote positive images of themselves:

[W]hen I was in college, a lot of the girls felt that I should have a full-figure and wear make-up because that's what they saw on television and music videos. I stood up and said, "no! That is not who we are as Black women; those images are used to degrade us."

Ashley further stated, "as Black women, we shouldn't be what the media portrays and says that we should be, we must stand up against negative stereotypical images portrayed through the media." To take a stand against social actors who engage in oppressive actions to demean Black women, Sarah articulated how she wore clothing that portrayed a positive image of herself:

I want Black girls to see positive images of other Black women, not what they see on social media. To be a positive image, I dress professionally every day when I come to work or when I go outside. I let them know that this is how a successful Black woman dresses and carries herself. When I wear jeans, I wear them in a respectable manner and not with large holes to show my skin. I let them know that when people see you dressed appropriately and professionally, that's how they are going to treat you.

Sarah's quote above demonstrates that being a positive image provides the younger generation of Black females with a realistic view of how to become a positive image

themselves. Further, younger Black females are more likely to challenge and negate externally, defined controlling images of Black womanhood when they understand how these images transmit distinctive messages to keep them oppressed (Collins, 2002).

Internalized Racism

Through the continuous victimization of racism and other forms of subordination within society, African Americans can internalize racist practices and develop behaviors and beliefs that support racism and social actors who uphold oppressive powers (Bivens, 2005). This system of oppression, which Bivens (2005) calls internalized racism, negatively impacts marginalized groups, and disrupts individual's purpose and commitment of empowering each other for the sake of uplifting the entire community. Patricia, Gabrielle, Jaleesa, and Karen encountered internalized racism prior to and after becoming a band director. Patricia stated, "when I went to interview, the principal, who was a Black man, told me that he was taking a chance by hiring me." Like Patricia, some of the other participants were confronted by internalized racism during the hiring process for a position to become a band director, and others experienced internalized racism within racialized educational and social spaces. Participants reported that they were shocked to be negatively stereotyped and viewed as inferior human beings by members of the same marginalized group. Through internalized racism, individuals within the same marginalized group may view themselves as less inferior than other members of the same group and exhibit behaviors, attitudes, or ideas that are closely related to the dominant group of society (Bivens, 2005). Although unconsciously perpetuated, internalized racism functions as a component of the power struggle that can stem from an

understanding about the oppression that a person toils with daily and charting the path of surviving and living in spaces that are controlled by social actors who uphold oppressive powers within society. Managing this level of complexity requires African Americans “to notice, acknowledge and dismantle internalized racism—that is, to claim and bring forth our full humanity, power and wisdom as co-creators of an anti-racist society and culture” (Bivens, 2005, p. 44).

Through the continuous struggles with the manifestation of racism, members of the same group can become distant, which results in a lack of support or confidence in each other’s abilities (Bivens, 2005). Similar to Bivens (2005) description of the interpersonal dimension of internalized racism, the projection of racial practices onto the participants by members of the same race led to an erasure of support and confidence of the participants abilities to become successful band directors. Internalized racism leads to a lack of support and confidence between and among members of the same race and other forms of oppression like sexism (McRae, 2004). As I mentioned earlier, without a second thought, the African American male band directors within Jaleesa’s social circle discounted the work ethic, intelligence, and talent of African American women band directors because of their gender. Jaleesa articulated that “the guys in the group, who were all Black men, would say negative things about every Black female band director...they would say things like, ‘they don’t know what they are doing.’” As victims of racism, the African American male band directors developed sexist ideas and beliefs that support the oppression of African American women in leadership roles (McRae, 2004). Similar to Jaleesa’s experience, other participants in this study were not only

epistemologically discounted by their White counterparts within the field of music education, but also by members of the same marginalized group.

The conflicting nature and perpetuation of White supremacy among members of marginalized groups contradict the work of dismantling oppressive powers to create an equal and fair society. The hardest, but most transformational work toward dismantling oppressive powers involves African Americans engaging in efforts to trust and support each other, and to create spaces in efforts of understanding and addressing various facets of internalized racism and other forms of subordination (Bivens, 2005). Twelve of the participants in this study articulated that supporting each other was crucial for not only dismantling oppressive powers but functioned as a survival mechanism that allowed them to navigate, live, and thrive within a racialized society that perceived them as inferior beings. Alexandria articulated that “as a Black woman growing up in a fairly minority area, I saw a lot of Black women in competition with each other and not really holding each other up or motivating each other. I see more now because we understand the significance of supporting each other to survive” within a racialized society. Similar to Alexandria’s quote above, Chelsea stated, “we must work together and support each other because no one else is going to be there for us.” Without each other’s support, African Americans and other marginalized groups must understand that it becomes much more difficult to create a society that disrupts the continuous leadership of White supremacists within social and academic spaces or the perpetuation of systemic racism that African Americans face daily (Bivens, 2005; Collins, 2002).

Externalized Racism

As an interrelated component of internalized racism, several of the participants were also confronted with externalized racism. This particular racialized ideology manifests when members of the dominant group of society utilize social and academic spaces as a way to control and disempower African Americans and other ethnic cultural groups within society, and to remove or retain structures of equality (Collins, 2009). Through this perpetuation of racism, social actors who uphold oppressive powers place members of the dominant group in positions of power within academic and social spaces for purposes of fostering racialized ideas, beliefs, and practices that marginalize and disempower African Americans and other ethnic cultural groups within society (Collins, 2009). For example, during her experiences at a predominately White high school, Gabrielle discovered that the White counselor, who created the schedules for students, placed her in special education classes without checking the grades displayed on her transcript from the local middle school:

I could not believe it. I was a straight A student in middle school... My grades did not reflect what the White instructors and staff members had perceived of me... I was placed in classes with Black students who had actual disabilities and they needed a little help... What was crazy about it is that they placed all the other Black kids in the same special education classes. They figured that because a few people were struggling, they all must be struggling, and they all must be stupid. Because of the counselor's decision, I almost didn't get placed in band classes... Unfortunately, many of my Black peers who were in the same situation told me that it would be best to just give in, rather than to fight back... Thankfully, my middle school counselor, who was a Black female moved up to the high school a few days after school had started and she was able to look at my schedule. After looking at it, she said, 'none of this is right.' So, she put me in the advanced placement classes that I was supposed to be in, and she made sure that I had band on my schedule.

Without a second thought, the White counselor at the high school, whether intentional or

not, placed Gabrielle and other high performing African American students in special education classes, rather than advanced classes. Gabrielle articulated that the middle school counselor, who was an African American female, that “moved up” to the high school, “understood the [complexities] of racism” within academic spaces, and she made the conscious decision to dismantle racist practices by taking a stand against social actors who perpetuate racial behaviors, beliefs, and practices within spaces of learning. Gabrielle further stated, “by the grace of God, I had someone who was on the inside who helped me.” Without the support and effort of another African American female, Gabrielle, due to her membership within a marginalized group of society, felt that she would have been in special education classes for the entire school year, which functions as a practice of racism used to disempower African American children, and ultimately the African American community.

Unlike Gabrielle’s experience, Juanita faced externalized racism by members of the dominant group of society after accepting an internship at an all-White school. Juanita articulated that while working at the school to become an aspiring band director, multiple members of the community stated, ‘you’re not going to do anything here at our school.’ Juanita further articulated that the members of the community did not want an African American female in a leadership role at the school. This type of perpetuation of racism within institutions excludes African Americans from participating in dimensions of academic spaces that are perceived to be for Whites only (Collins, 2009). I contend that social actors within racialized spaces do not want African Americans and other ethnic cultural groups within society to know what it feels like to be privileged and to have an

equal stance within society (Collins, 2002). Oppressive powers understand that if structures of racism are removed from social and academic spaces, African Americans and other ethnic cultural groups within society could possibly obtain an equal stance within society, and they may lose their superiority over other races, which contradicts their idealistic view of the world (Collins, 2002; Cooper, 2018). Because academic spaces are premier places for the continuous spread and perpetuation of racism within society, African Americans and other races must take a stand against various forms of racism that are perpetuated within academic spaces, and therefore, strategize ways to create equitable, non-racist, and inclusive possibilities of schooling (Collins, 2009).

Essentialism

Through experiences of becoming band directors, eleven of the participants were confronted with essentialism. This particular racialized ideology perpetuates the idea that people within a single group think and act the same way (Ladson-Billings, 2013). The perpetuation of essentialism leads to stereotyping of marginalized groups (Ladson-Billings, 2013). For example, Gabrielle discovered that some of her White professors at the collegiate level assumed that she did not know that basic music skills and techniques to be placed in advanced music classes or to successfully play the trombone:

The White instructors thought that I didn't know the basics because I was Black. My private trombone instructor, who was a White male at the college, had all of the preconceived notions because I was Black. He had already made up in his mind that I was not going to be good enough for his program.

Gabrielle was also confronted with essentialism during the process of applying for an instrumental music education program at the collegiate level. Gabrielle articulated that several instructors assumed that “because [her] parents were Nigerians, [she] couldn't

speak English and would have an attitude because of previous encounters with Nigerian students.” Gabrielle expressed that the instructors at the school expected her to be like other Nigerian students who had previously attended the university and did not value her as a musician with numerous years of experience as a trombone player.

Juanita also had experiences with the perpetuation of essentialism within academic and social spaces. For example, Juanita articulated that a lot of her peers and instructors while in school felt that she was “ghetto” due to her membership within a marginalized group of society. Juanita explained:

A lot of people judged me because of my skin color. At school, they labelled all Black people as ghetto. I remember in high school, I had said the name of the song was called “fire” and this White girl said, ‘you are ghetto for saying the word fly.’ I was like, “I did not say that.”

In this case, Juanita was confronted with essentialism while navigating spaces controlled by dominant members of society. Juanita further articulated that the staff and students at the school accepted the negative, stereotypical images of Black people that were portrayed through media, and therefore, believed that those images were true. Similar to Juanita’s experience, Patricia experienced essentialism while working as an assistant band director at the high school level. She stated, “the head band director, who was a White male, believed that everything that was Black was ghetto.” Therefore, “he believed that I was ghetto and not smart.” Patricia further articulated that other White staff members within the school environment expected her to act like the African American females that they show in a negative light through mass media and did not value her as an individual who was educated and musically inclined.

Double Consciousness

As African American female band directors, all the participants believed that they experienced various intersecting forms of racism at the institutional level because of their membership within a marginalized group of society. Regardless of success, ability, or level of musicianship, sixteen of the participants felt that their White peers and instructors viewed them as inferior, less intelligent, and less morally capable of becoming a successful band director. The participants' experiences of blatant racism are similar to the "Negro Problem" described by Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903/2003). In his book, Du Bois (1903) asserted that because of the "Negro Problem," African Americans had acquired the notion to live in a space of double consciousness—seeing themselves through their own eyes and also through the eyes of social actors who uphold oppressive powers. Within this aspect, African Americans become armed with knowledge about various forms of oppressive powers that plague their communities and spaces of learning (Collins, 2009). With a distinctive consciousness and understanding about their oppression, African Americans are able to challenge racialized practices upheld at the institutional, cultural, and social level (Collins, 2002).

Similar to Hacker's (1992) expansion of Du Bois' double consciousness theory, six of the participants shared recollections about family members, instructors, and others informing them that they would have to work harder than their White counterparts to survive and thrive within racialized academic or social spaces. For example, Amber articulated that her former band director's, who were males, "did not treat [her] different than the boys but told [her] to become 'tough-skinned' because [she] had to work" harder

than everyone else to be considered equal. Although Ashley, Amber, Ava, Chelsea, Karen and Lily were informed by instructors and family members about various forms of racism and the notion of working harder than their White counterparts to obtain an equal stance within society, Alexandria, Emma, Gabrielle, Jaleesa, Juanita, Kierra, Linda, Myra, Natalie, Patricia, and Sarah learned through previous encounters of racism. For example, Patricia stated, “I had a lot of talent that was not cultivated early and not supported. I worked hard but was never recognized for my accomplishments. I was always overlooked.” Because racism and other forms of subordination are a central part of society, Alexandria, Gabrielle, Jaleesa, Kierra, Linda, Patricia, and Sarah noted that despite their hard work, they may never be recognized for their accomplishments and successes as band directors because they are members of a marginalized group of society.

Oppositional Consciousness

Although charting this path of double consciousness yields an understanding about various forms of oppressive practices as well as resistance strategies, it keeps African Americans from experiencing complete freedom within a racialized society. Kendi (2019) further describes the negative reality of double consciousness, also known as *dueling consciousness*:

[Within this context,] “the Black body is instructed to become an American body. The American body is the White body. The Black body strives to assimilate into the American body. The American body rejects the Black body. The Black body separates from the American body. The Black body is instructed to assimilate into the American body—and history and consciousness duel anew (p. 33).

This reality of double consciousness instructs African Americans to look at themselves through the eyes of the dominant culture—which implies that they need to change who

they are to be considered as an American (Kendi, 2019). When African Americans reject the ideals of double consciousness, “[t]he White body no longer presents itself as the American body; the Black body no longer strives to be the American body, knowing there is no such thing as the American body, only American bodies, racialized by power” (Kendi, 2019, p. 33). In essence, the rejection of presenting “self” within the dominant culture allows African Americans to not only become free from the depths of oppressive powers, but to refashion their own identities, behaviors, ideals, and beliefs that are not defined by dominant ideologies (Collins, 2002).

Instead of charting the path of double consciousness, all the participants in this study employed their own framing of oppositional consciousness for purposes of undermining oppressive powers to obtain an equal stance within society. Fueled by the continuous victimization of racism, oppositional consciousness is an empowering psychological state that allows members of marginalized groups to uncover racial behaviors and attitudes, and to create or recognize effective preexistent strategies of resistance (Mansbridge, 2001). Like other participants in this study, Karen’s consciousness about the complexities of racism within the band world played an important role in the formation of resistance strategies that undermined racist practices upheld by social actors within social and academic spaces. Karen shared:

When I was a freshman in high school, I was sitting first chair, first band. The next year, without warning, I was moved to second chair. The person that they put in the 1st chair spot was a White girl...My band director, who was a White male, did not say anything to me. When I asked about it, no one had an answer for what happened. I had never heard her play...I had never seen her in the band room until the day that I found out that she was placed as the first chair bass clarinetist. So, I told the band director that I am going to challenge her. Although my band director did not want to, and he acted like it could not be done, he knew that he could not

say no to me because it was a protocol set in place that band members could challenge other instrumentalists within the band program. So, I signed up to challenge her and my friends showed up to the challenge, and I easily won the challenge. I had over 30 points more than she did. In my mind, I was confused to how this White girl became first chair, first band bass clarinetist without auditioning.

Through previous experiences of racism, Karen articulated that her high school band director, whether intended or not, perpetuated a system that oppressed members of marginalized groups. Without second thoughts, Karen's high school band director placed the White female at the superior end of the status continuum because of her membership within the dominant group of society. Karen further shared that the White male band director did not care if the White female could play her instrument well or not, he was only focused on placing an African American female as second to a White female. This perpetuation of White supremacy, which has possessed the lives of social actors within institutional settings for centuries, is practiced for purposes of keeping African Americans and other marginalized groups on the inferior end of the status continuum, and for White people to keep their dominant stance within society (Collins, 2002).

Although Karen became discouraged and upset about her encounters of racism within the band world, Karen redirected her energy towards resisting and challenging racist practices. As mentioned in Karen's narrative, she was able to undermine systemic racism within her high school band setting. In this situation, Karen articulated that she identified rules of the band program, which were clearly created for members of the dominant group, to oppose the injustices that she encountered as a band member. Karen further shared that she consciously utilized the ideas of a system that was created for members of the dominant group as a means of maintaining their dominant stance within

society against those who perpetuate the idea of racism and White supremacy within institutions of learning. Karen also invited other members of marginalized groups to make sure that she received a fair score during the challenge against a member of the dominant group of society. Without support from members of marginalized groups of society, Karen noted that despite her playing ability, the band director could utilize his White privilege to make it seem like she was not a better musician than the White female who he had selected to be the first chair bass clarinetist without following proper audition protocols.

Unlike Karen's experiences of racism, Linda shared how she was "deliberately sabotaged" as a band director while working within spaces controlled by dominant ideologies:

Deliberate sabotage by colleagues have happened to me so many times...I remember when we had three nights of performances at the feeder high school. So, the first three nights, the microphones worked perfectly. When it gets to my night, the air conditioner does not work and none of the microphones worked. No one could figure out what had happened.

Linda articulated that social actors who uphold powers of oppression within the band world engaged in actions to "deliberately sabotage" her students' performance of complex musical works. In other words, "they thought that the kids would not be able to perform since none of the microphones nor the air conditioner worked." Despite being "deliberately sabotaged," Linda articulated that she did not let the situation stop her students from performing that night. Linda further shared that she engaged in oppositional consciousness by utilizing her voice to "call out" and "speak up" about what had happened.

Contrasting to Karen and Linda's framing of oppositional consciousness, Ashley engaged in actions to reject the ideals of White male dominance within the field. Ashley stated, "when I first started learning to play the bass, I faced a lot of rejection because I was an African American female." Ashley further articulated that "people would always say things like 'that's only for White boys.' I received all kinds of ignorant comments. I even had family members who said, 'you should play something smaller.'" Instead of allowing friends, instructors, and family members to deter her from playing and continuing studies to become a successful bass player, Ashley articulated that she "spoke up" and expressed how "African American females, like myself, can play any instrument that the White boys play." Within this context, Ashley rejected the ideals of masculinity that were imposed upon her by friends, instructors, and close family members.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender Discrimination

Although multiple dimensions of race and racism played a significant role in the participants' conscious knowledge, perceptions, and application of counterspaces, data revealed that all of the participants also faced various forms of racialized and gendered discriminatory practices that threatened their identities and initial view of the band world. The social construction of the dualities of race and gender are employed to maintain oppressive structures within social and academic spaces, and between and within nondominant and dominant groups within society (Jordan-Zachery, 2009). Within the field of instrumental music education, oppressive powers perpetuate ideals of masculinity and the cultural traditions of the dominant group for purposes of maintaining superiority over women and marginalized groups within society (Sears, 2018). In my study, all the

participants reported that the perpetuation of masculinity and racialized ideas within the band world involved the use of masculine traits of assertiveness and toughness, and Euro-centric ideals of music teaching and practices. Although employing masculine traits and Euro-centric ideals of music was expected and rewarded, African American females, in particular those in this study, still faced various forms of oppression and discriminatory practices within the band world (Sears, 2018). As a result, the participants have learned to live within two marginalized worlds—being Black and female (St. Jean & Feagin, 1997). Living within the dualities of two marginalized identities required the participants to acquire a greater level of resistance, determination, and resilience to survive and thrive within a male dominated profession.

As members of two marginalized worlds, the participants in this study faced a greater level of racial and gendered discriminatory practices than other groups in society. For example, Juanita faced discrimination during the application process for the instrumental music education program at a university:

When I got to [college], the advisor, who was a White female asked me if I had applied for the chorus program. I replied and said, “no, I am applying for the instrumental music education program.” She responded, ‘ladies do chorus...I’ll put you down for instrumental music education, but we will see how you do.’ The funniest thing was there was a White girl the same age as me and the advisor had no problem with putting her in the instrumental music education program. We were the only two females in the program.

Juanita articulated that because she lived within two marginalized worlds, being Black and female, the advisor at the college felt that she was not capable of successfully completing the instrumental music education program. Juanita explained that the advisor disliked her decision to apply for the instrumental music education program at the college

and assumed that the White female who also applied for the same program was more capable of becoming a successful instrumental music educator than a Black female.

Gabrielle, Patricia, Juanita, Linda, Jaleesa, Amber, and Natalie not only faced discrimination while applying to instrumental music education programs, but also during the hiring process to become a band director. Gabrielle articulated that the principal at her alma mater refused to interview her because she did not want another Black woman on campus:

I had been subbing at my alma mater while getting my master's degree. I was the percussion instructor. I had done my job of showing everyone that I knew what I was doing. But, the principal, who was a White woman, refused to give me an interview because I was Black, and she hated the head band director, who was also a Black woman. She did not want another Black woman at the school. There was zero reason for the hatred. This woman was a racist, evil person. So, she was forced by the superintendent to interview me, and everyone on the committee was like, 'why haven't we already hired this girl?' In my mind, I had asked the same thing because the school was my alma mater and the kids already knew me. I was the percussion instructor at the school for 10 years and it made no sense to not give me the job.

Because the principal refused to interview Gabrielle, the superintendent had to step in to continue the hiring process. Although the principal was forced to proceed with the hiring process, Gabrielle expressed that she tried to pressure her into slandering and criticizing the head band director's work ethic and character as a Black woman:

So, after I got hired, the principal went after me. After the first two weeks of school, she called me into the office and asked, 'is Ms. Gardner, the head band director, telling you what to do? Remember you are co-directors; you are not the assistant band director.' I told her that I am the assistant band director, and she is the head band director. She goes, 'well, you don't have to do that. You know you can eventually become the head band director. Ms. Gardner doesn't have to be in that position. You have your master's.' I had to tell her that I know that I have a masters, but I am learning from someone who has a lot of experience and I have the utmost respect for her. For three weeks, the principal kept calling me to the office to pick at me to get me to go against the head band director, who's a Black

woman. She tried to get me to backstab the only other Black female in the school, the person who was my former band director, and my best friend. I later learned that she tried to get six other assistant directors before me to do the same thing. I even learned from one of the assistants, who was a gay White male, that the principal had told him that Ms. Gardner didn't deserve to be in that position anyways and he could be the head band director.

Gabrielle expressed that the principal's agenda in this situation was to remove Black women from positions of power. Because the principal was unsuccessful in removing the head band director during previous years, she wanted Gabrielle to engage in actions to "sabotage the representation of the only other Black woman" on campus. Gabrielle vocalized that once she rejected the request, the principal retaliated. The principal claimed that Gabrielle was a horrible teacher and decided to give her low scores on evaluations. Gabrielle expressed that "it got so bad that me and the head band director had to start putting documents together for a lawyer." The level of challenges faced at the school began to affect the head director's "mental well-being." Gabrielle shared that "if we had not stood up, there would have not been any Black women band directors in the area."

Comparable to Gabrielle's experience, Patricia shared that when she interviewed for a position to become a band director, the lead administrator of the school expressed that he did not want to hire an African American woman for a position that had been dominated by males. The principal stated, 'you're a young Black woman and I don't know about your kind.' According to Patricia, the lead administrator assumed that because she was a Black woman, she was incapable of completing the tasks to be a successful band director. Not only did the lead administrator question Patricia's ability as a band director, but also parents. Patricia stated that the band students' parents would

come and sit down in the back of the band room without any prior notices. They would say things like, 'I just want to make sure that you know what you're doing.' Patricia further explained that she was "treated in this manner throughout [her] appointment as the head band director."

Unlike Patricia's experience, Juanita stated that she was treated in a negative manner because community and staff members within and outside of the school environment did not want an African American woman in a leadership capacity:

When I got hired at my first school, which was a predominately White school, community members and staff members didn't think that I could be a band director because I was short and an African American female. I remember when someone told me that 'you're not a band director...you're not going to do anything here at our school.'

Based on Juanita's experience, community and staff members did not want an African American woman to occupy a space that they claimed as their own. Within this context, Juanita expressed that the community and staff members did not care about her teaching abilities, but rather about her identity as an African American woman working in a space controlled by persons who engaged in oppressive actions.

Although participants in this study expected to face negative stereotypical comments by individuals outside of the field of instrumental music education, which led to discrimination in the workforce, Sarah, and nine other participants were shocked when they faced racialized and gendered discriminatory practices by individuals within the band profession. Sarah shared:

I really didn't experience [discrimination] by guys within the profession until I became a band director...When I take my kids to district performances, the guys look at me like I may be the auxiliary director because I am a Black female, but

when they see my kids perform and I'm on the podium, they act like they are so shocked. They think that Black girls can't be band directors.

Sarah explained that regardless of how well she could teach, men, and sometimes women within the field of instrumental music education perpetuate negative beliefs, behaviors, and ideas of African American women within society. Jaleesa further shared that the most upsetting part of this journey was hearing Black men perpetuate negative, demeaning ideals of African American women band directors. Jaleesa shared recollections of Black men within a social media group expressing that Black women who become band directors 'don't know what they are doing,' especially in the area of classroom management. Further, the men within the social group did not think that Black women were capable of being band directors. Within this context, Jaleesa articulated that the members of the social group believed that women who did not portray traditional masculine traits of power such as assertiveness, anti-femininity, and toughness could not manage a classroom of band students (Sears, 2018). Jaleesa also vocalized that the group members perpetuated ideals that only men possess the knowledge and authority to maintain a controlled classroom environment and the skills to teach musical excellence.

Despite that all the participants faced resistance of becoming a band director from staff and community members within the workplace and the profession, Ava articulated that she was not prepared to experience resistance from students enrolled in the band program:

After moving to the new job, I was excited and ready to start teaching various band concepts to students. Before taking the position, I was told that the band directors before me were all males. When I walked into the band room, I overheard a student say, 'how is she going to teach band, and she is a female?' I was like, "what are you talking about?"

Comparable to other participants' experiences, Ava's band students did not think that African American women could be band directors. Because Ava's band students had never seen an African American woman band director, they assumed that she was not qualified or capable of teaching them to become successful musicians. I contend that Ava's students' misconceptions about gender and racial boundaries stems from the continuous underrepresentation of African American women within the band profession. To counter students' misconceptions about African American women within the band profession, Ava had to explain that the "National Band Director," at the time, was an African American woman. Although Ava's students were amazed that an African American woman was the leading band director within the country, they were "still not quite sure if [Ava] knew what [she] was doing." Ava further explained that her band students did not believe that she was qualified to be a band director until the day of their district level music performance assessment:

It was time for my students to perform for the district band assessment. After my students performed the required musical pieces for the assessment, the fine arts director said, 'this is the best that I've heard from this school in seventeen years.' The kids responded, 'oh wow, she knows what she is doing.'

When the fine arts director explained to the students that they had an exceptional performance, Ava articulated that they realized that she was qualified and capable of leading the band at the school. After the music performance assessment, Ava explained that her students began to understand that African American women can become successful band directors and that they can also attain that same level of success or become anything that they want to be in life.

Proving to Be Competent

Through experiences of racism and discrimination, many participants faced the reality of being told by administrators, parents, and students that females are incapable of completing the tasks to be a band director, while others faced discriminatory hiring practices, unfair treatment, and isolation within the field because of their membership within a marginalized group of society. Due to experiences of race and gender discrimination within and outside of the band world, Juanita, like all the participants in this study, expressed that she constantly engaged in actions to prove that she possessed the capabilities of a successful band director:

I taught at the college level and the high school level. As the assistant at the college level, everyone initially thought that I was the head band director's daughter or secretary. A lot of times I found myself having to prove myself.

Juanita had to prove to others within and outside of the field that she was capable of completing the tasks required for the position as an assistant band director. Karen further articulated that she was shocked that she not only had to prove herself to men and other women within society, but also Black women. For example, the lead administrator, who was an African American woman, constantly questioned Karen's ability as an assistant band director; however, she never doubted the ability of the head band director, who was a Black male. Shockingly, the administrator had "no formal music training to make her claims justifiable." Karen expressed that it "becomes a difficult journey when members of [her] own race," who have thrived and survived within this racialized society, think and act in the "same manner" as social actors who uphold powers of oppression. Within this context, Karen articulated that the lead administrator participated in acts of

discrimination set forth by oppressive powers for purposes of abusing marginalized women within society. As a marginalized member of society, Karen explained that the administrator not only separated herself from other African American women but tried to perpetuate the negative status attached to Black women within the band world by emphasizing her superior class position. In essence, Karen explained that the administrator's actions were purposely orchestrated to portray herself as a superior being within a space occupied by another marginalized woman of society. Although the lead administrators' actions may be acceptable within spaces controlled by oppressive powers, "the price she pays for her acceptance is the negation of her racial identity and separation from the sustenance that such an identity might offer" (Collins, 2002, p. 94).

Due to the nature of race and gender discrimination, eleven of the participants not only felt the pressure to prove themselves within the profession, but they felt overworked. For Myra, she had to work harder to prove herself as capable of leading a successful band program and to maintain her stance as a successful band director:

I can attest to being overworked...They believe that if you made it in this position as a Black woman, you would always have to be perfect. Initially, they don't expect Black women to do a good job, but when they do, they expect that you be the best of the best.

This type of perpetuation of discrimination within the field of instrumental music education leads to an imbalance of home/work life, isolation, and an increased risk of becoming burnt-out (Sears, 2018). I think it is safe to assert that powerful actors in society do not want African American women to succeed, and therefore, they try to remove African American women from leadership positions—more specifically, positions that can dismantle power structures such as masculinity and the perpetuation of

dominant interpretations of the world (Sears, 2018).

All of the participants stated that even when they were not forced to demonstrate their capabilities, in spaces controlled by the dominant culture, they still felt the need to prove themselves as a worthy occupant of that space. Juanita shared:

When it was time to take our theory placement exam, I was one of the highest scorers. So, this White male theory instructor wanted me to take his class...The next day I got to the theory class early and I sat in the back. I sat in the back because I had easy access to the door if I needed to leave. So, I looked around the class and I was not just the only African American female in the class, I was the only female in the class. Everyone else in the class were White males. I felt that I had to prove that I could do this. I was the only African American female in every class.

Juanita articulated that as the only African American female occupying a space controlled by White males, she felt the need to prove to them that she was capable of successfully completing the course. Further, Juanita wanted members of the dominant culture to know that she also possessed the knowledge and skills required to be successful within the program. Juanita contended that her need to prove to others that she was capable of passing the course, was not only for herself, but rather an action to place Black women as a collective in a positive light. In other words, Juanita articulated that she thought that by proving herself to be a competent human being, members of the dominant group may see all Black women as intelligent beings.

Alike Juanita, Gabrielle articulated that she felt the need to not only prove that she possessed the characteristics of an exceptional trombonist within a space occupied by White males, but also that she was more qualified than her White peers to obtain a position as a band director:

I was the only female out of 30 white males in the trombone section at Jasonville State University. Eventually, a Black guy joined the band program, and I was ecstatic. Since both of us were the only Blacks in the section, we knew that we were going to have to work harder for the same positions as the White males. We also knew that we had to be better than them to get a job.

Because society underestimates the abilities of African Americans, Gabrielle and her close friend, who was a Black male, found themselves working harder than their White peers to prove that they were capable and more qualified to become a band director.

Like Gabrielle and other participants in this study, Ava shared that she was taught to work harder to prove herself within a field dominated by White males:

The band director at FSU, where I attended college, literally told me that you have two things against you in this field; ‘the first thing is that you are an African American and the second thing is that you are a female.’ He explained, ‘this is a good ol’ boys club and you’re going to have to work harder than everyone else to prove yourself.’

According to Ava, the band director at FSU expressed that because she lives within two marginalized worlds as an African American woman, she must work harder than Black men and other races of men and women within the field to prove herself as a competent human being. In other words, Ava explained that she was taught to engage in actions that collude with the dominant culture’s ideals of success to be respected in the field because her ways of knowing represents inferiority. In *Introducing Womanist Theology* (2002), Stephanie Mitchem outlines that African American women, like Ava and other participants in this study, are far too often “given the message that they are just not good enough unless they *earn* respect and prove their communal worth” by emulating the behaviors, ideals, and practices of the dominant culture of society (p. 45). Moreover, African American women are told by members of the Black community as well as

members of the dominant culture that they must conform to the standards set forth by oppressive powers (Mitchem, 2002). Within this context, African American women unintentionally enter the trap created by social actors who uphold oppressive powers and conform to their defined notions of a successful Black woman. When Black women allow persons who uphold oppressive powers to define their meanings of success, they become “caught in the need to prove themselves, feeling the need to do more and to be the best in any situation” (Mitchem, 2002, p. 45).

Despite that all the participants believed that they must work harder than dominant members in comparable roles to prove their capabilities, Ava learned that working harder does not change a person’s negative, racist perspective about Black women within the profession. While completing the process for an internship at a predominately White school, the supervising teacher expressed that Black women did not belong in spaces of Whiteness. Because Ava had to complete her internship at the school selected by personnel from the university, she decided to talk with the lead band director at FSU about the incident. Ava stated, “when I spoke to the band director at FSU, he said, ‘I warned you about this;’ I responded, you did warn me about what will happen, and I am living it.” Ava explained that the supervising teacher immediately judged her by the color of her skin, rather than work ethic and intelligence. Ava expressed that the supervising teacher assumed that she did not possess the skills needed to teach musical excellence to children of the dominant culture. Moreover, Ava expressed that the teacher believed that her, and other Black women’s consciousness of knowing stands inferior to that of the dominant group of society. For this reason, Black women within the profession

are often forced to teach at schools with a smaller population of White students (Love, 2019). More specifically, Black women are sometimes, not given the opportunity to choose the school of employment, but rather told and assigned to a school (Love, 2019).

Gabrielle further articulated that Black women's exceptional qualifications, in many cases, do not matter within spaces controlled by oppressive powers. After having a successful spring concert, Gabrielle was told by the personnel at the local music store that she was going to be terminated. She confronted the school's principal, and he responded, 'you didn't get your [termination of employment] letter yet?' Gabrielle did not know that the principal at the school of employment had no intentions of keeping an African American woman as a band director. Gabrielle later learned that she was only hired to "cover the position" until the previous band director was able to become a certified instrumental music education teacher. The previous director, who was a White male, "had no formal music training" or certification to teach band—he was a "special education teacher." Despite his credentials as a special education teacher, he had been in the role as a band director at the school for several years. Gabrielle learned that the previous director was not qualified to teach band because of his credentials and that many of the students did not learn the basic fundamentals needed to become a successful musician. While employed, Gabrielle explained that she "had to take the kids back to the basics because [she] wanted them to succeed." I contend that the challenges Gabrielle faced as a band director exemplifies the complexities of race and gender discrimination that many African American women encounter within the band profession. Gabrielle's story confirms that members of the dominant group of society are often hired and

promoted with fewer or no qualifications (Harts, 2019). Moreover, African Americans, especially women, are faced with the reality of being overly qualified for the job but may never be hired or promoted because of their marginalized identities (Harts, 2019). In Gabrielle's case, she was more qualified than the White male who was rehired for the position after supposedly becoming a certified instrumental music educator. Within this context, Gabrielle articulated that she was only hired to teach the students how to become exceptional musicians, which did not happen with the previous director. In essence, members of the dominant group of society are assumed to be qualified, even when they prove to be unqualified, while Black women are often seen as unqualified and incompetent beings, even when they prove to be competent (Harts, 2019).

Black Women, Set Up to Fail

Within spaces controlled by social actors who engage in oppressive actions, qualified and competent Black women are sometimes set up to fail (Lucas, 2007). Thirteen of the participants expressed that oppressive powers purposefully create barriers to justify their negative, stereotypical defined notions of Black women within the band world. For example, after accepting a position as a band director, Jaleesa had to "flirt to get the resources, equipment, and other things that [she] needed for the band program." However, "the chorus teacher, who was a White male, got everything that he wanted." Within this context, Jaleesa articulated that the White male teacher was set up to become successful. He was provided with all of the resources and equipment needed to become a successful chorus teacher while Jaleesa struggled to obtain the resources needed for the band program. In other words, persons who uphold oppressive powers did not want a

Black woman, like Jaleesa, to be portrayed as a capable being within a position of power (Collins, 2002). To maintain a superior status, social actors who uphold oppressive powers purposefully create barriers to place Black women along the inferior end of the status continuum (Lucas, 2007).

Similar to Jaleesa's experience, Sarah shared that because of her identity as a Black woman, the assistant principal thought that she was incapable of building a successful band program, and therefore, did not make any efforts to help with the program:

When I first took the job, most of the instruments were beyond repair. I had approximately ten working instruments for the program. The program had gone through four band directors within a ten-year span. When I took the job, I felt that the assistant principal, who was the former band director at the school for 25 years, thought that I wasn't good enough to get the program back to where it needed to be because I was a female. He would always question my ability...He would not help with funding or anything else that could build the band program. Every time I asked for something, he acted like they couldn't get it. I just felt like the AP at the school always wanted me to fail.

After accepting the position as a band director, Sarah was faced with the reality of building a band program with only a few working instruments. To compound the problem, the assistant principal did not feel obligated to help because of his previous failures as the former band director at the school. Due to failures as the former band director, Sarah expressed that the assistant principal believed that if he was not successful, "then a Black woman, like me," did not possess the knowledge of creating a band program for students to become exceptional musicians. The assistant principal purposefully "made it difficult" for Sarah to obtain the support needed to build the program. When Sarah asked to purchase equipment or instruments for the band program,

the assistant principal “claimed that they did not have the funds.” In essence, Sarah explained that the assistant principal at the school did not want her to succeed, and therefore, set her up to fail. Although the assistant principal wanted to portray Sarah as an incapable being, she persevered and made conscious efforts to receive support from organizations and donors outside of the school environment. Through support from outside donors, Sarah was able to create a successful and thriving band program.

Natalie shared recollections of her experiences of lacking the resources needed to create a successful band program and being hired to teach within a classroom that did not meet state health codes. Natalie stated, “when I first walked into my band class, I literally thought to myself, ‘this is completely trash.’ There were rats and roaches everywhere and big, large trash cans in the middle of the floor.” Natalie explained that her first week on the job consisted of cleaning a band room that was filled with large trash cans and household pests. The band room had a library that had not been updated in over 15 years and there were only a few instruments. As a Black woman, Natalie felt that the hiring personnel set her up to fail. According to Natalie, there were openings for more affluent schools within the county, but they “claimed” that those positions were filled. I contend that Black women, like Natalie, are often set up to fail by “hidden” job responsibilities and expectations that do not appear on paper (Inglis et al., 2000). Black women are often hired at underfunded schools because of oppressive powers targeted retaliation towards them for seeking to advance their stance within the band profession, which conflicts with the objectives set forth by dominant ideologies (Buzuvis, 2010). To continue to fulfill their duties of oppressing Black women, dominant ideologies make certain that schools

that Black women are hired lack the resources essential for success (Buzuvis, 2010; Love, 2019). Like many of the participants in this study, social actors who uphold oppressive powers within the band profession deny Black women access to resources as a mechanism to support their ideals of them as incapable beings. Oppressive powers set Black women up to fail for purposes of keeping them in an oppressed state and to pressure them into leaving the profession.

Overlooked: “Treated Like A Hidden Figure”

Due to the complexities of race and gender discrimination within the band world, Sarah, Emma, Chelsea, Lily, Jaleesa, and Juanita expressed that they were not only set up to fail but was overlooked. Sarah shared recollections of not being noticed as the band director:

When I talk to parents or other people outside of the school environment, they would automatically think that I’m a band parent, the dance captain, or the auxiliary director. They never automatically think that I’m the band director because I am a Black female.

Sarah further articulated that when she took her band students to a competition, she went to ask the judge about a few questions about the score that the students received. Sarah stated that “the first thing that the [competition judge] said was, ‘are you a band parent?’ Sarah expressed that she had to “show the [judge] the letters on [her] band shirt” for him to believe that she was the band director.

Similar to Sarah’s experience, Emma articulated that there “were many times that people did not [recognize] that she was the head band director.” Emma shared her experiences of being overlooked in the band profession while participating in a parade:

I had my band students to participate in a parade and one of the staff members of the organization that sponsored the parade wanted the band to play a musical selection that would fit the occasion. So, the staff member went to the assistant band director, who was a male. The staff member asked him to do what they wanted the band to do. The staff member of the organization overlooked me and did not think that I was the head band director and I had on a band director's t-shirt. Of course, the assistant band director had to refer the staff member to me since I was the head band director of the program.

Emma articulated that she was shocked that the staff member of the organization did not believe that a Black woman, like herself, was the head director of the band program.

Moreover, Emma expressed that social actors who engage in oppressive actions perpetuate the idea that Black women “cannot” and “should not” become band directors.

Emma further expressed that “it seems like when [Black women] do get in positions of leadership, we are overlooked and treated as if we are invisible. Sometimes I wish that I was a male, so that I wouldn't have to deal with this level of discrimination.” In *The*

Memo: What Women of Color Need to Know to Secure a Seat at the Table, Minda Harts

(2019) eloquently expressed her frustration and bitterness towards the injustices that

Black women, including the participants in this study, face as leaders within this

racialized society: “[J]ust because we don't hold many leadership positions like our

[W]hite counterparts doesn't mean we don't have the capacity to lead” (p. 3). Harts

(2019) further articulated that “even though we have hit movies like *Hidden Figures*, it

doesn't feel good to get treated like a hidden figure” while navigating and working within

the capacity as a leader (p. 3).

Internalized Sexism

When navigating the complexities associated with participating and working in the field of instrumental music education, African American females can become victims

of sexist practices, and ultimately internalize sexism, which has many of the same consequences as internalized racism. The beliefs of the stereotypical nature of masculinity within the field of music education is so strong that African American females tend to accept the nuances of these sexist practices and act as though they are normal behaviors (McRae, 2004). As a participant of this study, Karen articulated that African American female band directors must empathize with their respective vulnerabilities of sexism within the profession of instrumental music education for purposes of addressing and dismantling components of internalized sexism:

I realized that I should be who I am as a Black woman. When I first got into the field, I would wear pants or tennis shoes like the male band directors...I later realized that I had internalized sexist practices that are portrayed within the field. I also realized that I was portraying an image that being a band director meant that you must conform to masculinity...So, I knew that I had to break that cycle and I decided to show my feministic side, which came with criticism...When I started wearing my skirts and heels, I started to get negative vibes from staff members. I would get comments that I was too good looking to be a band director.

Alexandria shared similar recollections:

It took me years to feel like I could wear my acrylic nails, my hair down naturally, or heels and a skirt. For a long time, I dressed like the directors I had known or those who taught me. It took me years to embrace who I am and to be comfortable with who I am in the field...I think that a lot of Black women adapt and try to conform to masculinity just to fit in.

Participants expressed that at the beginning of their careers they felt pressured to conceal their femininity qualities to be considered as a successful band director. To reject forms of masculinity, Karen and Alexandria spoke about the extent to where they had to embrace who they were as Black women. In other words, they had to become comfortable about portraying qualities of feminism, regardless of the negative, stereotypical comments that they faced in the field. Based on Karen and Alexandria's

accounts, social actors who uphold oppressive powers project gender and race roles within society for purposes of keeping those who are marginalized within their perspective places along the status continuum (McRae, 2004). The perpetuation of gender and racial discriminatory practices within society keeps members of marginalized groups from initiating and managing systemic changes that can dismantle oppressive powers (McRae, 2004). African American females must continue to resist the construction of gender and racial discriminatory practices that are perpetuated in the field of instrumental music education.

Motherhood and Band

African American females must continue to work toward dismantling powers that not only discriminate against them because of their gender or race, but because of their decision to become mothers. As a component of the perpetuation of gender and race discrimination within the band world, Lily, Jaleesa, Amber, Linda, Sarah, Ava, and Karen reported facing various forms of discrimination because they became pregnant. This reality of being a mother and pursuing a career as a band director felt impossible for the participants since many of the people around them did not agree with their decision of continuing the cycle of life while working in a field that has been dominated by White males for the past decade. Social actors who uphold oppressive powers perpetuate the idea that women who become pregnant while in the field of instrumental music education must either pursue a different career or wait to become a band director after their children have reached young adulthood (Fitzpatrick, 2013). As reported in this study, African American mothers in the field of instrumental music education who refuse to conform to

the ideals of social actors who uphold oppressive powers endure a greater level of discriminatory practices than that of women who are not mothers (Fitzpatrick, 2013). Lily contended that when a woman becomes pregnant while pursuing a career as a band director, society views them as incapable human beings, regardless of their capabilities, talents, or level of intelligence.

When I was in college, I had won the spot to be the drum major...but I became pregnant, I became a mom. Once they had found out that I had become a mother, they [blatantly] told me that I could not be a drum major anymore. They took it away from me and told me that I could just stay and play in the band...and nothing more.

Although Lily reported that she was hurt and upset about being removed from her position as the drum major, Lily stated that she was determined not to give up on her dreams of becoming a successful band director.

Similar to Lily's experiences of discrimination within the band world, Amber became a mother while performing the duties as a band director at the high school level. Despite her dedication and exceptional work ethic while carrying a child, Amber was "questioned" by administrators, parents, and staff members about her ability to continue to lead the school's band program. Amber noted that the previous band director, who was a Black male, "missed multiple games, parades, and important functions" required to lead a successful band program. Although he purposefully missed notable functions for personal reasons, "he was never questioned about his ability as a band director, but rather praised" for his limited efforts.

Unlike other participants' experiences of motherhood in the band profession, Jaleesa shared recollections of facing discrimination during multiple interviews because

of her pregnancy:

Because I had continuous pregnancies, I knew that my dream as a band director was fading away. Although I was an elementary music teacher, I wanted to become a band director. Every time that I interviewed for a band director position, I was pregnant. They made it clear that they were not going to hire a Black woman who was pregnant. They think that if you are pregnant you can't do anything. So, I had to do something to fulfill my dreams. After my third pregnancy, I knew that I had to make a decision and stop having children.

When Jaleesa interviewed for a band director position, she was pregnant, and therefore, she was not hired because school personnel did not think that a pregnant woman was capable of completing the tasks necessary to become a successful band director. Within the band profession, oppressive powers have perpetuated the idea that becoming pregnant can adversely affect a woman's performance on the job (Fitzpatrick, 2013). This level of discrimination functions to maintain male dominance while perpetuating a negative image of women, especially Black women as incapable beings.

Through the perpetuation of various forms of discrimination, African American women and other groups of women continue to face the reality of being treated unfairly within a male dominated profession. As long as social actors who uphold oppressive powers continue to infiltrate the minds of members within society as a way to enforce negative ideas about the capabilities of African American women and other groups of women, discriminatory practices within the field cannot be dismantled (Collins, 2002). African American women and other groups of women must challenge and resist male-dominant discourses within the band world to be heard and treated fairly. To begin the work towards resistance, women, in particularly, African American women must understand that the same laws that they thought were designed to protect them from

discrimination have been used to block them from obtaining leadership positions (Collins, 2002). “The assumption is that the U.S. matrix of domination now provides equal treatment because where it once overtly discriminated by race and gender, it now seemingly ignores them” (Collins, 2002, p. 279). With this logic, Black women who make claims or speak out about discrimination within the band profession are often seen as complainers due to the “rhetoric of color-blindness that defends the theme of no inherent differences among races, or of gender-neutrality that claims no differences among genders” (Collins, 2002, p. 279). Linda articulated that “if you say something, you are considered as the angry Black woman or they make an attempt to blackball you if you don’t fit or agree with their agenda.” Within this context, it becomes difficult to speak out about motherhood and other differences among women and men that stem from discriminatory treatment within the band world (Collins, 2002). Beliefs that collude with discrimination on the basis of ignoring discriminatory practices allows oppressive powers to perpetuate punitive policies that “reinscribe social hierarchies of race and gender” (Collins, 2002, p. 279). Because oppressive powers search for undetectable ways to suppress Black women within the band profession, I suggest that Black women also gain “new angles of vision” to resist and dismantle discrimination and other forms of subordination practiced within the field (Collins, 2002, p. 280). This level of vision allows Black women to gain an equal stance within the band profession.

Countering Racialized and Gendered Discrimination

White women, White men, or any other member of society will never understand the pain that African American women must endure to survive and thrive within a

racialized society (Cooper, 2018). As members of two marginalized worlds, the African American female band directors were placed in a position to endure a greater level of racism and discriminatory practices than other races of women. Because of the perpetuation of racism and discriminatory practices within the profession, African American women's voices are silenced, and they are not respected in the field of instrumental music education (Sears, 2018). For example, Myra shared that she was continually disrespected within the band profession. According to Myra, within and outside of band settings, she was viewed as an incapable being. She explained that "at competitions, people did not think that [she] was the band director, even though [she] was standing on the podium" to conduct the band. Myra further shared that when she attended public events, people were not only "shocked" that she was a Black woman, but that she led an all-girls marching band. Myra stated that "leading an all-girls band can be challenging since people within the school [did] not think that the girls at the school [had] the potential or capabilities to march" like bands that consist of mostly men. This perpetuation of negative, stereotypical behaviors and beliefs about African American women has become a serious issue within the field of music education (Bradley, 2015). In essence, the level of challenges that Black women face within the band profession must be moved to the forefront of activist responses. Without such dialogue about the challenges that Black women face, a complete transformation of the band profession that celebrates inclusivity and diversity cannot happen.

Although African American women face various obstacles within the profession, Sarah feels that administrators, educators, band directors, and members of society must

begin the work of respecting African American females within the field of instrumental music education:

Black females don't get the respect that we deserve. We shouldn't have to put on the tough persona just to show that we are band directors. I should be able to wear makeup and heels whenever I want to...People need to respect what we bring to the table...We produce other great Black females...Respect what we do...It makes no sense that we have to prove ourselves every day...Give us our props for what we do.

As Sarah noted, African American females have been “treated unfairly within the field of instrumental music education and it is time for [music educators]” around the world to wake up and make conscious efforts to understand the realities of racism and discriminatory practices within the profession that are created to disempower certain members of society. The continuous sustainment of racism and discriminatory practices calls for music educators to dismantle oppressive practices and create new policies, practices, and inclusive spaces that provides band directors, especially African American females, with an equal chance within the profession. Efforts to dismantle negative stereotypical behaviors, beliefs, and ideas about African American women that have been ingrained within the profession, and the creation of anti-racist practices, policies, and spaces cannot happen until music educators and others outside of the profession have conversations about the nature, effects, and perpetuation of racism and discriminatory practices within the field.

Demand Respect

To begin the work towards dismantling racism and discriminatory practices within the band profession, African American women must not only encourage educators and others within and outside of the band profession to respect them, but rather demand

respect. Alexandria articulated how the lead principal disrespected her because of the students' performance during a Christmas program:

I had followed behind a male director who had been teaching at the school for over 30 years. Here, I am fresh out of college. I knew what I was doing. I remember doing the Christmas program and the kids totally hated a tune that I had picked. During the performance, they stopped midway in the song while I was conducting. I was like what just happened. I didn't know if I had made a mistake and cut the song off with my baton. I didn't know if the kids had communicated to stop playing in the middle of the song. After the performance, the principal called me into the office and just started going off and hollering and saying, 'I've never seen this happen before.' I remember sitting back in my seat and I crossed my legs and arms, and she was like, 'let me go and get the principal.' I was like, "we can have a difference of opinion, but talk to me in a professional manner, treat me with respect." She didn't even know what happened and I didn't get the chance to talk to the kids to see what happened.

The lead principal treated Alexandria in a negative manner because the band students stopped playing while she was conducting a musical work. Alexandria articulated that she was not sure if the band students communicated to stop playing as a way to show that they disliked the song or they were unfamiliar with certain baton cues and thought that she wanted them to stop performing. Before Alexandria was able to speak to the students about the incident, the lead principal became angry and started shouting in a negative manner. Alexandria had to speak up and demand respect. Alexandria demanded the principal to speak to her in a respectful and "professional manner."

Unlike Alexandria's experience, Juanita shared that as a band director, she had to demand respect to be seen as a capable being within the field:

When I take the band to various competitions, people would ask me to judge the auxiliaries and I would have to let them know that I am a band director. I would also tell them that they would have to find someone else to judge the auxiliaries...I had to set those standards so that people could respect me as a band director. I think that African American females in a male dominated field must...make [their] voices relevant and heard.

Although Juanita was a band director, others within and outside of the field believed that she was only capable of judging the auxiliaries during competitions because of her marginalized identity as a Black female. In other words, Juanita articulated that competition personnel did not think that she possessed the capabilities to be a music performance judge—the person who critiques a band in areas related to tone quality, intonation, accuracy, musicality, and appearance. Therefore, Juanita utilized her voice to reject oppressive powers defined notions of Black women’s capabilities within the band profession.

Similar to Juanita’s experience, Kierra shared that, as the head band director at the high school level, she wanted to assist the middle school director with preparing his students for the high school band program. The male band director at middle school level “assumed that a Black woman, like [Kierra], was incapable” of advancing students’ musicianship, and therefore, did not want her to assist him. Instead, the middle school director requested that she “help with copying papers and other secretarial duties, rather than assisting” to prepare students to become successful musicians. Kierra utilized her voice to reject the director’s ideals and beliefs of her and other Black women within the field. Kierra stated, “I had to let him know that he was treating me like I was a student teacher. After speaking with him, I didn’t have any more problems.” In essence, Karen articulated that she did not allow the director to define her capabilities as a band director. By demanding respect, Kierra explained that the middle school director understood that he was not allowed to engage in practices that collude with the degradation of her nor other Black women within the band profession. Through this process, Kierra expressed

that the band director not only became aware of his participation with progressing male domination within the field, but rather that Black women, like herself, within the band profession are capable, intelligent, and qualified individuals. On one hand, demanding respect functions to challenge hierarchies that routinely label males as the only capable beings within the band profession and Black women as powerless victims of discrimination (Collins, 2002). On the other hand, demanding respect symbolizes Black women's actions as a collective to place positive labels on Black womanhood for purposes of gaining an equal stance within the band profession.

Speak Up or Stay Silent: The Voices of African American Women Band Directors

As members of a marginalized group of society, African American women have been scrutinized and viewed differently than White women, men, and other races of society (Collins, 2002). The perpetuation of systemic racism within society has placed African American women at the inferior end of the status continuum. Social actors of society who uphold oppressive powers use media outlets and other platforms to perpetuate negative ideas and images of African American women (Collins, 2009). Through the continuous perpetuation of racist practices, African American women have been viewed as incapable and inferior to other women in society (Collins, 2002). In some instances, African American women's experiences of racism seems greater than that of the experiences of African American men. This type of perpetuation within workplaces and academic spaces forces African American women to acquire a greater level of survival tactics (Collins, 2002). Through this type of systemic racism, African American women find themselves more focused on always proving themselves to be considered

equal within society (Mitchem, 2002). Sometimes, African American women have been forced to prove themselves, but when they do, oppressive powers still consider them to be incapable and inferior human beings (Mitchem, 2002). Karen shared similar recollections of her experiences as an African American female band director:

I am always undermined by parents, coworkers, and administrators. They always treat me like I don't know what I am doing because I am a Black woman...My students have received superior ratings for every adjudication and competition that we have participated in, but I still have parents who come and sit in the back of the band room and watch me teach. They will usually say things like, 'I'm just checking to see if you know what you are doing.'

Within this dimension of systemic racism, the dominant group strategically created interlocking systems of oppression to keep African American women from progressing and thriving within society (Collins, 2002). Although African American women may have similar or more qualifications than others in the same position, they become more likely to be viewed as lesser qualified (Mitchem, 2002). According to Karen, this type of systemic racism was perpetuated to discourage her from accepting or pursuing a leadership position. Social actors who uphold oppressive powers understand that when African American women are provided with a platform to showcase their talents and to illuminate their voices, various forms of racism will be dismantled (Collins, 2002). The silencing of African American women's voices has been a racist practice upheld at the institutional, social, and cultural level for many years (Collins, 2002). It is through the activist approaches of African American women using their voices to speak against systemic racism that a socially just world can be created.

When African American women speak against oppressive powers, they are portrayed as "angry Black women" (Cooper, 2018). For many African American women,

to be a decent human being, means to be silent and to accept unfair treatment within a society that was built to maintain racism and other forms of subordination (Lorde, 1984). This level of self-imposed silence generates a dual consciousness in African American women—one in which they “become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor...[while] adopting them for some illusion of protection” (Lorde, 1984, p. 114). Participants in this study faced the reality of being undermined in workplaces and academic spaces, and the portrayal as an “angry Black woman” if they spoke against racist practices. Like other participants, Juanita struggled with the concept of silencing her voice as a means of not being viewed as an “angry Black woman:”

I remember facing racism in college and wishing that I had stood up for myself. A lot of times I would hear them say things like, ‘she’s not going to be able to do that.’ Although I heard them say these racist things about me, I still had the opportunity to speak up. I didn’t open my mouth and stayed silent. I would just say things like, “okay.” When I kept silent, positions and spots in the band that I knew that I should have had because I was the best in the section or the class, they would give it to a White guy...I know that if I had said something, I would have been considered as the angry Black woman.

Juanita noted that staying silent gives social actors power to perpetuate racist ideas and practices for the sake of keeping their dominant stance within society, and as a means of keeping nondominant groups oppressed. Alike Juanita’s experience, Linda articulated that silencing her voice perpetuated the ideals of oppressive powers, rather than dismantling them:

When I was younger, you could not get two words out of me. I would just shut down when someone said something racist to me...but through everything that I went through, I could not stay silent any longer. I have not been able to keep my mouth closed...I don’t care if they call me an angry Black woman.

Linda and Juanita articulated that they struggled with the reality of either speaking

against racism or staying silent in efforts of being viewed as a human being, and not someone who was angry. Because of the horrific moments of history that has caused African American women to suffer within society, African American women have the right to be angry and to speak against racist practices that plague their communities and lives (Cooper, 2018). In the book, *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*, Cooper (2018) argued that African American women should not be apologetic for their anger towards a system that sees them as invisible, incapable, unintelligent, and inferior human beings. No other racial group or woman within society understands or “knows” the “soul” of African American women (Cooper, 2018).

Chapter Summary

The interconnected experiences among and between the African American female band directors contributed to the emergence of several common themes during the analysis process. The first theme is a representation of the participants engagement with *counterspaces in the band world*. Whether in a physical structure or simply the presence of other African American women, counterspaces as a mechanism, allowed the participants to share their experiences among and between each other without the surveillance of oppressive powers. The second theme, *empowerment among and between Black women*, emphasizes the nature of the participants finding power within themselves or among each other to dismantle and resist ideas, behaviors, and practices that collude with White cultural control and White supremacy. The third theme, coded as *the interconnected systems of motivation and support*, emphasizes how role models, mentors, and family members played an important role in the participants’ choice to not only

participate in band programs, but to continue to challenge and resist dominant ideologies. The fourth theme, *encountering various forms of racism*, not only represents the women's unique encounters of the perpetuation of racist practices within the band world, but also the complexities of engaging in activist responses of resistance. The fifth theme, coded as the *intersectionality of race and gender discrimination*, is a description of the challenges that the participants faced within the band world because of their race and gender. The last theme, *speaking up or staying silent*, represents the realistic nature of the participants utilizing their voices to speak up against various racial behaviors, ideals, and practices—even when they were viewed as “angry Black women.”

Prior to and after becoming a band director, the participants acquired shared experiential knowledge regarding the complexities of racism, discrimination, and other forms of subordination and the interconnected domains of empowerment and resistance. The knowledge they obtained through experiences informed their understanding and perceptions of counterspaces within the band world and activated a level of consciousness that empowered them to reject racism and other forms of subordination while embarking on a path to free themselves and others from the depths of oppressive powers. Through efforts of resistance, the participants stated that they realized that the complexities of racism and other forms of subordination that are perpetuated within the band world can be dismantled, thus setting a path to transform instrumental music education to become an inclusive and representative experience for African American women around the world.

Chapter 6

Counterspaces in the Participants' Band Programs

In this chapter, I seek to understand the complexities of counterspaces within the participants' band programs as it relates to the illumination of their African American female band students' self-definitions, individual/collective experiences, and common themes that contributed to their sustained involvement within band programs. To understand the importance of counterspaces within the band world, I describe in detail various forms of discrimination and racism that the participants African American female band students faced while navigating through racialized spaces. Furthermore, I provide a discussion about the interconnected domains of oppositional consciousness, self-definitions, empowerment, and systems of support as it relates to counterspaces within the participants' band programs.

Resisting Oppressive Powers

The participants African American female band students encountered intersecting forms of oppression while navigating racialized spaces within society. Some of the participants African American female band students' journey within the band world were more difficult than others; however, through the interconnected domains of counterspaces and resistance, they were able to successfully navigate and survive within racialized academic and social spaces. The illumination of the participants African American female band students' encounters with the pervasive nature of discrimination, racism, and other forms of subordination is vital for understanding the significance of counterspaces within band programs.

Countering Race and Gender Discrimination

Within the band world, music educators, whether intentionally or not, enact racialized and gendered discriminatory practices by emphasizing masculinity and Eurocentric ideals of teaching and learning (Bradley, 2015; Sears, 2018). The perpetuation of masculinity and a White Eurocentric approach to teaching and learning places African American females on the inferior end of the status continuum (Bradley, 2015). As victims of racialized and gendered discriminatory practices, African American females face the reality of being viewed as unintelligent, incapable, and inferior human beings, which results in being overlooked and silenced within the band world (Sears, 2018). As an assistant band director, Patricia witnessed the complexities of race and gender discrimination within her school's band program:

We have a White male head band director...My students are ignored like I was...I had to tell the head band director that we have a Black girl who is an amazing alto saxophone player. He acted like he had no idea until I said something about it...He just ignored her...The students who are first chair and section leaders are the pretty White girls. Some of them don't play well at all. Just like the drum major, he just found out this year that his White female drum major can't read music. I explained to him that I told you that earlier in the year. He responded, 'well, she is gorgeous, and she is popular.' That's his basis of who is a good musician. It's like he ignores all the Black students, or he expects the worst from them. Most of the Black kids are the best in their section. But he doesn't do chair tests, so all the White kids get to sit in the first chair spots.

In this example, the head band director, who was a White male, upheld the complexities of race and gender discrimination by emphasizing negative stereotypical ideas about African American females. He not only had negative expectations and perceptions about African American females, but he gave preferential treatment to particular students, specifically White females, who considered themselves to be a member of the dominant

group of society. Because of his stance about the superior nature of the White culture, Patricia articulated that he purposefully created a barrier within the band program to keep African Americans from progressing and striving within the band world. Within this aspect, Patricia noted that he made a conscious decision to remove chair tests within the band program, which allowed him to place White students at the forefront of each section. According to Patricia, “it did not matter if the students possessed the skills of a good musician or not, [the head band director] believed that African Americans were morally, intellectually, and physically inferior” to members of the dominant group of society.

Participants not only witnessed the perpetuation of race and gender discriminatory practices within formal band settings, but also during adjudications, competitions, festivals, and other events put in place to critique the quality of a band. Thirteen of the participants expressed that when they took their band students to an adjudication or competition, the judges, who were usually White, had negative perceptions and expectations of African American female students. According to Linda, “they always think that African Americans, in particular African American females don’t know how to play well, especially if they were taught by an African American female.” Linda further shared that once her students perform, the judges usually “say things like, ‘they play well for African Americans.’” Linda explained that “it did not matter about the students’ level of musicianship,” the judges of the critiqued performances believed that African American students were incapable of playing with complexity or producing a good quality sound. Furthermore, Linda, like twelve of the participants in this study, expressed

that the judges at the critiqued performances were never going to give them a high rating because they did not want bands with a higher proportion of African American students to participate. In other words, the participants described being in a space controlled by social actors who upheld the ideals of White supremacy. Within this racialized society, oppressive powers perpetuate the idea that certain spaces within society are created specifically for the dominant group of society; therefore, they exclude the ideas, intellect, traditions, and sometimes deny the participation of those marginalized by racial discrimination, in particular African Americans (Collins, 2009). To discourage African Americans from participating within spaces of Whiteness, social actors make conscious efforts to create barriers (Collins, 2009). Within critiqued events like competitions and festivals, social actors create on-the-spot excuses to disqualify bands with a higher proportion of African American students.

In addition to facing race and gender discrimination during critiqued band performances, participants shared that many African American females face discrimination during the hiring process for employment to become a band director. For example, Myra expressed that when her former African American female band students applied for positions to become a band director, they were denied employment or offered a position as an elementary music teacher. In this case, district personnel claimed that African American women were not hired as band directors during their first year of teaching because of safety concerns. Myra stated, “there is this fear that they are in danger, and they get placed in elementary music positions. [District personnel] try to act like they are concerned, but its discrimination.” Undoubtedly, Myra’s African American

female band students became victims of race and gender discrimination. The intersecting paradigms of race and gender discrimination during the hiring process further underrepresents and marginalizes African American women within the band profession, and therefore, must be dismantled (Collins, 2002; Harts, 2019; Sears, 2018).

All the participants expressed that dominant members in positions of power often create rules and regulations within academic spaces to control and dehumanize African Americans in society. Linda shared recollections of how the White administrators within her place of work created rules and regulations to not only silence the Black students, but to also punish them for exercising ideals of Black femininity:

The leadership at the school is all-White. So, when they make rules and regulations, they regulate anything that looks like the Black experience that they don't understand, and therefore, they put rules against it. They tell the Black girls that they can't wear headbands, or they can't do this or that. Many of the White leaders don't understand the Black culture. To the kids, it makes it seem like what they are doing is wrong and they get in trouble a lot for showcasing their heritage. The biggest thing at the school is headbands. The White leaders say that it's related to gang activity, so they won't allow them to wear it. For one it's not related to gang activity, the girls use the headbands to lay their edges down.

The White administrators' application of discipline emphasized dominant ideologies negative constructs of Black femininity. Within this context, the African American females were not allowed to wear headbands because it seemed like a threat to dominant interpretations of society. Due to the oppressive actions of the administrators, it is likely that they created rules and regulations to make the Black students feel that their way of life was inferior (Morris, 2015). Therefore, when the Black girls challenged the rules that were likely created to make them feel inferior, they were punished as if exercising constructs of Black femininity was a violation of law rather than an interrogation of

fairness (Morris, 2015).

Due to the fact that all the participants African American female band students faced a greater level of discrimination than their White counterparts, they all made a decision to create a space within their band programs to empower their African American female band students to counter intersecting forms of oppression. For example, Patricia noted that her African American female band students were treated unfairly by the head band director—a White male who believed that they were physically, intellectually, and morally inferior to members of the dominant group of society. Not only did she need to “stand up” and “speak up” for her African American female band students, but to also teach them to resist racist and negative stereotypical practices. Patricia stated:

When I saw what was going on within the band program at the school that I teach at, I knew that I had to do something. I could not stand by and be quiet about it or not do anything...I made it my obligation to make sure that I created a space to teach my Black girls about resisting racist practices to become equal.

Patricia’s quote above demonstrates how utilizing the voice as a mechanism to resist racial and gendered practices opens a dimension of freedom that allows Black women to not only demand equal treatment, but to become equal within society. Within this logic of becoming agents of resistance, Black females are not only able to obtain an equal stance as individuals, but also as a group. (Collins, 2002). Group resistance functions as a necessary step for dismantling the complexities of gender and race discrimination within the band world. Without teaching Black females the importance of resistance within the band world, they may never fully understand the meaning of removing the chains of oppression that keeps them bound as victims of race and gender discrimination (Collins, 2002; Collins, 2009).

Becoming Leaders

To effectively counter race and gender roles that collude with the ideals of dominant ideologies, several of the participants provided their African American female band students with opportunities to become band leaders. Alexandria explained that many of her African American females were never exposed to opportunities that placed them as positive and powerful leaders. Alexandria believed that “it is [her] responsibility” as a Black woman to expose young Black females to the powerful nature of leadership. Alexandria stated, “if I don’t do it for them, then who else is going to take the time out to do it.” Alexandria shared how she actively promoted the ideals of leadership among Black females:

I want to make sure that my Black girls feel that they are a part of the band program and that they can become leaders. So, I have Black girls who are band officers. I have Black girls who are section leaders. I have girls who are on the design team, where they create designs for band t-shirts and uniforms. I have girls who get on the podium to conduct during rehearsals every day.

To break race and gender barriers within the band profession, Alexandria described how she made conscious efforts to create opportunities that allowed the African American females enrolled in the band program to become band officers, design team leaders, section leaders, and conductors—more specifically, roles that were usually given to males.

Within this male dominated field, Linda articulated that African American females become use to “being in the background and not seen by others.” Linda further explained that “African American females are rarely given the opportunity” to become leaders within the field. Like Alexandria, Myra expressed that when she was a band

student, many stereotypes were fulfilled because her directors only allowed African American females to accept roles like copying scores or preparing water and food. For this reason, Myra not only taught African American females how to navigate areas of the band profession that she did not fulfill as a youngster, but rather created opportunities for them to engage in leadership roles during and outside of school hours:

Each year, I create summer leadership camps where the girls get paid like they would if they had an internship. When they get back to school, they are able to operate within leadership roles when I'm not around. When school starts, I also allow freshmen who have a good understanding of basic music skills to be on the podium. Each day I choose a different student, and they rotate throughout the school year. It was just one of the things that I did not get the opportunity to do while in high school and college.

Myra further shared that providing African American females with opportunities to become female drum majors, conductors, section leaders, and other types of leaders within the band profession can break barriers because a lot of people think that “these particular positions are only for boys.” With this logic, educators and others within and outside of the field must understand that the oppressive actions of those in power deny Black women the opportunity to become leaders due to the fear that they may become powerful, which threatens the status quo (Cooper, 2018). Within the band world, power dynamics perpetuate controlling images of African American females as incapable, unintelligent, and weak-minded beings (Sears, 2018). When Black women become leaders, they are able to replace negative images of Black womanhood with positive ones and illuminate their voices (Collins, 2002), which serves as a powerful tool for exposing and dismantling powers of oppression that lurk within the realm of the band profession.

Seeing Other Black Women Leaders

Through experience, African American females must not only be exposed to leadership roles within the band profession, but also provided with the opportunity to see women in leadership positions who look like them. Emma shared how she created activities to illuminate the experiences and voices of successful African American women in society:

For various programs, I create skits about the life of various Black successful women. I try to find Black women who can be a positive influence for Black girls. For the lesson, they have to research and find information about the women. They also have to find out who influenced their lives. For example, we did Oprah Winfrey and they learned that Maya Angelou and several other Black women influenced her. They were so shocked that Oprah Winfrey had so many other Black women who influenced her to become who she is today.

Emma further articulated that she also shared her own successes as an African American woman band director and professional musician:

I use myself as an example also. I let them know that at one point, I was the only African American female to be a commander of a military band. I use myself as part of history. I let them know that these are just some of the things that they can achieve as a Black woman. I tell them all the time to never say that “I can’t do it because I’m Black.” I let them know that they can do it, but they have to also believe in themselves. I teach them daily that they can be whatever they want to be. I like to share my mother’s quote, “if there is a will, there is a way”...I have to teach them about successful Black women because they don’t know about people like Sojourner Truth or Anna Julia Cooper. I even try to find musical works that reflect the lives of Black women. I even wrote a piece myself to show them that this is something that they can do.

Emma not only created activities about the lives of women as a way to inspire African American females enrolled in the band program to follow their dreams, but rather for them to understand the importance of becoming an inspiration to other African American females in society.

Through conversations about her experiences and those of other Black women in society, Emma reported that her band students became more confident in their abilities to become successful. I contend that Myra's vocalization of her experiences as a band director and professional musician and those of other Black women functions as an essential component for the success of those students who are typically underrepresented in the field.

Myra vocalized that "it's hard for Black girls to imagine themselves being in a position without seeing someone who looks like them in that position." To purposefully reject ideals of gendered and racialized roles within the band profession and society, Myra invited a range of Black women clinicians, including professional conductors, percussionists, brass instrumentalists, composers, drum majors, arrangers, and professionals outside of the field to present at the school's "HerStory" assembly:

For the HerStory assembly, I bring in Black women who have graduated from the school, and who are in different fields to show my Black girl's different perspectives and things that they can do in college or as a profession. At the assemblies, I always get different Black women leaders to represent the music profession. At the assembly, whatever the song the girls have chosen and that they feel represents the presenter, they perform that song for the presenter. We call them girl power shows. They talk about how being career driven is okay. They have to do a little research about the presenter, and then they bring me a list of songs that represents the presenter and I arrange it. Sometimes they have to interview that presenter to learn about their experiences and to get background information.

Myra further articulated:

After they see other African American women who are successful, they understand that they can be themselves and they can be whatever they want to be, and they get excited about it...Once they see other Black women do things, they began to understand that they can also play brass instruments, be a composer, or be whatever they want to be. They now understand that being a girl does not mean that they can't do something...They can do anything that the boys can do.

The school's "HerStory" assembly functioned as a mechanism to encourage African American females to become leaders within the band profession and society. The presenters selected for the assembly shared their stories and how they persevered to become successful Black women, despite the obstacles faced within society. Through the "HerStory" assembly, Myra explained that the African American females enrolled in the band program not only learned about other Black women's experiences, but also ways to navigate the complexities of life. In other words, they "begin to understand that someone else like them" has endured similar challenges in life, but they did not allow anyone to deter them from achieving their goals.

In addition to the "HerStory" assembly, Myra selected schools with a large population of underrepresented Black females to participate in the music maker's project. The schools selected did not have music courses available to students. Through the music maker's project, Myra's African American female students performed various musical selections and described the different leadership roles of the band profession. Like Myra, Ava shared that when African American females can see other women who look like them in positions that maybe otherwise, dominated by males, they understand that they can become successful leaders within the field. Juanita also shared similar recollections of the importance of providing African American females with the opportunity to see successful women who look like them:

A lot of our Black girls come into our band programs with low self-esteem and they don't think that they can be successful or capable of doing other things such as playing a brass instrument, being a conductor, or composer. As Black women, we must create activities that allows our girls to see successful African American women musicians, composers, arrangers, and conductors. As my witness, when they see other African American women who are successful, they understand that

they can be themselves and they can be whatever they want to be and they get excited about it...We must show them that they can play various instruments, arrange music, and other things that they say that only boys can do...Once they see us and other Black women do other things, they began to understand that they can also play brass instruments, be a composer, or be whatever they want to be. They begin to understand that being a girl does not mean that they can't do something...They can do anything that the boys can do...We must let them know that if we can do it, they can also do it.

Juanita expressed that African American females must become inspired to engage in roles typically dominated by males. Juanita further articulated that African American females must not only understand that living within two marginalized worlds does not “define their identities,” capabilities, or the level of success that they can attain in life, but rather that they can attain similar levels of success and power as men within society. Through empowering teaching activities, thirteen of the participants expressed that their African American female band students gained an understanding that when they do not reject racialized and gendered roles perpetuated within the band profession, they allow oppressive powers to interpret, control, and manipulate their realities as well as their trajectory toward success within society.

Countering Internalized Sexism

For years, social actors within the band world have perpetuated injustices on the basis of race and gender (Pucciani, 1983). All the participants expressed that many of the African American females enroll into their band programs with a preconceived idea of the roles in a band program. Participants explained that many of their African American female band students thought that girls could only be auxiliary directors or play instruments that seemed feminine, such as the flute or clarinet, and not band directors or brass and percussion instrumentalists. Myra expressed that when she first started

teaching, a few of her African American female band students felt that she was not capable of completing the tasks necessary to be a band director because of her gender. Myra stated, “they don’t quite believe that I know what I’m doing.” I contend that through the continuous perpetuation of sexism within the band world, the participants African American female band students eventually internalized stereotypical ideas and behaviors related to sexism. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, internalized sexism within the band world can be so strong that African Americans can develop or perpetuate ideas that collude with sexism within society (McRae, 2004).

Although some of the participants African American female band students had internalized sexism before joining the band program, all the participants reported making a conscious decision to create a counterspace within the band program to dismantle ideals and behaviors related to sexism. Amber stated:

I dismantled and broke that barrier from the beginning. My students are in leadership roles and they play brass and percussion instruments. My students know that being a percussionist or brass player is not a boy’s club thing. They understand that they are capable of being anything that they want to be.

Amber created a counterspace that allowed her African American female band students to become section leaders, drum majors, brass players, percussion players, and to fulfill other roles typically assigned to males within band programs. Fifteen of the participants articulated that offering their African American female’s roles within the band program that were typically given to males not only empowered them to become leaders within society, but it helped them to understand that they can achieve any goal in life.

Countering Color-Blind Racism

Although the participants African American female band students encountered various forms of discriminatory practices while in band, data revealed that color-blind racism played a significant role in shaping their minds prior to enrolling in band. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, color-blind racism depends on mass media to circulate negative stereotypical ideas and images about African American females (Collins, 2009).

Natalie shared:

Look at the media and how African American females are portrayed in society. It's insane because Black girls think that they have to develop the mentality that's shown through the media. They rarely put African American females in a positive light.

According to Natalie, younger African American females think that they must imitate the ideas and behaviors perpetuated through mass media. Natalie further articulated that some of the younger African American females become so blinded that they make fun of other girls who do not look or act like the women shown on social media sites or television:

I had girls who would talk about other girls because they felt that they didn't look or act like the girls shown on social media and television shows... They would even talk about them if they did not wear fake nails or a wig like the girls on television shows.

Within this aspect, Natalie's African American female band students not only imitated negative stereotypes perpetuated through various media platforms, but they attempted to lure other Black females into accepting negative and inferior images of them. Although no fault of their own, Natalie explained that the African American females enrolled in the band program did not realize that the images and behaviors portrayed through mass

media were created to dehumanize them. Despite that they were not consciously aware of the identity that had been forced upon them, Natalie articulated that she taught them how to recognize and challenge negative controlling images to fully engage in actions to refashion their own identities (Collins, 2002). To effectively foster their own conceptions of self and Black womanhood, Natalie, like all the other participants, created a counterspace within the band program. The seeming protections offered through counterspaces allowed the participants African American females to be themselves without the surveillance and judgment of oppressive powers (Collins, 2002).

Like Natalie and all the other participants, Ashley used the counterspace within the band program to not only teach African American females about the importance of resisting negative controlling images of Black womanhood, but also as a strategy to counter mass media's perpetuation of negative stereotypical images and ideas of African American females. Ashley articulated that teaching African American females to love their natural hair, bodies, and skin tone can be considered as one of the most powerful strategies for resisting and dismantling controlling images. According to Ashley, African American females must understand that they "should not be what media portrays and says that they should be, they must be themselves." Ashley further articulated that African American females must learn that oppressive powers want them to not only "believe that they do not possess qualities of beauty," but to be seen in a negative light—combative, argumentative, and negative towards each other. Therefore, Ashley encouraged African American females to engage in activist responses that involved loving themselves and each other—all positive aspects of Black womanhood not shown

through media:

I also let them know that they should not talk negatively about each other. I let them know that they can give each other kind suggestions to each other without degrading each other...Once I talk with them, they began to understand that importance of encouraging and uplifting each other, and not being what the media wants them to be and act like.

Through deep, thought-provoking conversations, Ashley articulated that the African American female students enrolled in her band program learned about the importance of uplifting each other for the sake of surviving and resisting the complexities of racism within society as well as discriminatory social practices that these controlling images supported.

To further articulate the importance of resisting the portrayal of negative, stereotypical images and ideas of Black womanhood, Ashley shared her personal experiences of how she did not let others persuade her to succumb to the ideals of oppressive powers:

I even share my experiences with them about how I was treated in school. I let them know that when I was in college, a lot of the girls felt that I should have a full-figure and wear make-up because that's what they saw on television and music videos. I stood up and said, "no!" That is not who we are as Black women...So, I let my girls know that they must act and present themselves in a positive manner. I let them know that you can be feminine without being something that you are not.

Ashley articulated that though the sharing of her personal experiences, many of the Black females within the band program began to understand that they must not let others, which includes friends or family members, to change their perception and understanding about the importance of rejecting externally, controlling images of Black womanhood. Ashley further stated that "my Black girls must understand that when other females are accepting

of the negative images portrayed through media outlets, they clearly lack an understanding about the [function of those] stereotypes.” Therefore, Black females must become agents of change by teaching others how to recognize the function of stereotypical images and ideas.

To fully reject negative images and ideas of Black womanhood, African American females must not only engage in conversations, but rather practices that portrays Black women in a positive light. Karen shared how she not only selected and taught musical pieces and songs that promoted a positive image of Black women, but she helped the students within the band program to select attire that placed them in a positive light:

Although I select music based on what they like, I help them to understand why a song or musical piece promotes a negative or positive image about Black women. If a song promotes a negative image, I will show them other similar pieces that promotes positive images of Black women...Even when we are selecting outfits for marching band shows, I work with them to select appropriate attire that promotes a positive image of Black women...After a few discussions, they began to understand the importance of promoting positive images of themselves and other Black women.

Ashely further articulated, “I am also very careful about the music that I select for the band because a lot of the pop music do not represent Black women in a positive manner:”

When me and the girls select songs, I have discussions with them about the lyrics of the songs and the meaning of the song. We also talk about whether or not the song is demeaning Black women or promoting a positive image of Black women. For songs that are appropriate, I will usually create an arrangement of the songs for upcoming performances or rehearsals...With continuous conversations, my Black girls now understand the importance of promoting a positive image of themselves and how to differentiate between a song that is demeaning or positive. They recognize and are now more conscious about what they choose to listen to...I let them know that I want them to respect themselves and to be respected by others.

When promoting a positive image, Ashley encouraged her African American females to be a positive image themselves for other African American females with academic and social spaces. Ashley shared, “I let my Black girls know that they must understand that when someone tells them to be themselves, they must make sure that they are being themselves in a positive and good way.” Through these conversations, Ashley articulated that her band students understood that they must not only be “conscious of the songs” that they select for band rehearsals, but also the “music that they listen” to daily.

As agents of change, Ashley expressed that the band students learned that oppressive powers want to control the way that they act, think, and navigate within society. Through this understanding, they learned to not only “speak up” when other people try to place them in a negative light, but to also engage in conversations with others about the importance of promoting a positive image of Black women. Ashley further shared:

If an administrator or someone else makes a suggestion about a song that promotes a negative image of Black women, my Black girls will quickly say the word, ‘no.’ They will also explain to the person who made the suggestion that they don’t listen to that kind of music because it promotes a negative image of Black women.

The quote above demonstrates that Ashley’s band students made conscious efforts to promote a positive image of Black womanhood, which was not only necessary for transforming band settings, but also the school environment.

Like Ashley, all the participants in this study utilized counterspaces within their band programs to counter mass media’s perpetuation of negative stereotypical images and ideas of African American females. Many of the participants expressed that they

engaged in conversations with the African American females enrolled in their band programs about the perpetuation and effects of negative stereotypical images portrayed through mass media. The participants also selected band repertoire and invited successful African American female instrumentalists and composers to promote a positive image of African American females. By seeing positive images and ideas of African American females, the participants African American female band students were able to gain an understanding about the importance of resisting the portrayal of negative stereotypical images and ideas of them.

Interconnected Systems of Support and Counterspaces

Although the interconnected dimensions of oppositional consciousness, self-definitions, and empowerment played a significant role in the participants African American female band students' understanding about the issues that they face within the band world, data revealed that the participants decision to become role models and othermothers within counterspaces significantly influenced their African American female students' decision to continue to be involved in the band program. As role models and othermothers, the participants emulated positive images and ideas of African American females, which shaped the minds of their African American female band students and provided them with an understanding that they are intelligent and capable of achieving any goal in life. Based on the participants' narratives, I also found that role models and othermothers with similar backgrounds were key individuals who helped African American females to manage and resist oppressive powers that are perpetuated within the band world.

Same Race and Gender Role Models

All of the participants expressed the importance of same race and gender role models within the lives of African American females. Within band settings, Linda vocalized that African American females encounter obstacles that Black men and other groups of women do not experience:

There are things that happen uniquely to African American females in band programs. When we go out to the colleges and they have to wear hats, my girls will be reluctant to wear the hats. They will state things like, 'I just got a fresh twist out.' As an African American woman, I have to be conscious because I do get it. As teachers, we don't need to have those conversations with Black males or White students.

As an African American woman, Linda described the challenges of her Black females wearing hats with certain hairstyles. As Linda stated, educators "do not need to have conversations about hairstyles" with other groups of women or even Black men. Further, Karen shared that "Black females are ecstatic to have an African American female role model because they know that they understand the challenges that they are facing in life." Because African American women fully understand the challenges that younger Black females face daily, they are most capable of empowering them to overcome those challenges (Collins, 2002).

Natalie further articulated that Black women, as role models, can show the younger generation that they do not have to conform to the ideals of oppressive powers within society:

Black girls need to see strong African American women in their corner showing them that there is a different way to do things, we don't have to be a stereotype, we don't have to be what society says that we should be. We need to be who we are, that's why role models are important.

Without a positive role model, African American females may never see a realistic, undistorted depiction of Black womanhood. For this reason, Natalie expressed that Black women must “walk in their truths” and become a positive influence for the younger generation of African American females:

We must walk in our truths as role models. [Therefore], I show them that they can be a professional woman and how to dress appropriately to work. I show them how to speak their minds without disrespecting others. I show them how to dress in a respectful way...Sometimes their parents don't know how to shop for them, and the girls will ask me for clothes that look more presentable. Sometimes their parents don't have the money to buy them proper clothing. So, I keep a closet full of clothes for them to wear...I notice that their confidence levels go up when they put on the clothes that I have provided for them...They feel better about themselves and who they are as Black females...I feel like they notice when I go out of my way to help them.

As a role model, Natalie expressed that the African American females enrolled in the band program learned that they must also exhibit positive characteristics of themselves and Black womanhood. When younger Black females obtain a realistic, positive visual of Black womanhood, they are not only able to engage in actions to define themselves, but also to teach the generation after them about Black womanhood (Collins, 2002).

Although all the participants articulated the importance of becoming a role model for the younger generation of African American females, Lily, Emma, Gabrielle, Jaleesa, Natalie, and Gabrielle did not initially consider themselves to be role models or even how much they influenced and impacted the lives of the African American females enrolled in their band programs. Lily explained:

In a sense, I never realized that I influenced my girls so much until I started to get calls from parents, or they tell me how much I have inspired them. If the parents have trouble with the girls at home, they will call me to talk to them. They feel comfortable about telling me things that they haven't even told their parents. I let

them know that I am glad that they are comfortable about telling someone, rather than holding it in.

Similarly, Emma did not realize that she helped many of her African American female band students to feel better about themselves and life in general:

A lot of my girls remind me of how I have impacted their lives. They would tell me that they would come to school and feel down, but after they talk to me, they would feel better about life and themselves. I even receive texts sometimes from my students stating that I was the best band director that they ever had.

Like Lily and Emma, Jaleesa influenced the lives of other Black females in such a way that they wanted to be “just like [her]:”

My girls always say things like, ‘I want to be just like you.’ I remember when I had a seventh-grade student, and we were having a dress like your favorite teacher day. Apparently, I wear all-black outfits. So, the girl wore all Black and said, ‘I dressed like you, Ms. Jaleesa.’ I was like “whoa, these girls are really looking at me.” So, I find myself to be a great role model for them.

The participants expressed that African American females not only emulated the way that they dressed, but how they acted as band directors. The participants shared that they had to be more cautious about the things that they said or did because their girls were watching them. Linda further stated that when she “portrayed a behavior that she thought was acceptable, [her Black female students] would mimic those behaviors.”

As role models, all of the participants explained that they were more capable of being a positive image for African American females and had a greater influence on them than non-African American women. Natalie further explained:

Because of the negative images that are portrayed through mass media, our girls definitely need role models who look like them. They need to see strong African American women in their corner showing them that there is a different way to do things. We don’t have to be a stereotype. We don’t have to be what they say that we should be on television. We need to be who we are and that’s why role models are important for our girls.

Natalie's quote above demonstrates how the presence of same race and gender role models within academic spaces provides African American females with a realistic view of Black womanhood. Natalie further articulated that when African American females see someone, who looks like them in a position of power, they understand that they can also attain the same level of success, and that they have unlimited capabilities. Within band settings, African American females who see African American females as band directors understand that they can also become successful band directors. Sarah further articulated:

My Black girls have so many goals and so much talent. Whatever they want to be, I let them know that they can do it. It doesn't matter if they want to be a lawyer, teacher, dancer, a band director, or something else, I push them so they can be great and to fulfill their dreams and aspirations.

Like Sarah, Jaleesa shared that African American females must not only be inspired, but also be encouraged to achieve their goals. Jaleesa explained that if she did not have role models who encouraged her as a young musician, she may have never fulfilled her dreams to become a band director:

Having those directors tell me that 'you can really play,' keeping me encouraged, and them letting me know that I can do something with my musical talent was really important to me. I did not think that of myself and that I could do something.

Jaleesa articulated that "a lot of Black girls feel the same way as [she] did. A lot of our girls still have that stigma about themselves and they feel that they can't do things."

Jaleesa stated that the African American female band students in her band program did not think that they were "good enough" to become successful musicians within a world that portrayed them as incapable beings. For this reason, Jaleesa vocalized that "Black women must celebrate [African American] girls, even if it is a small victory." Sarah

further articulated that “Black women must tell Black girls to never allow [oppressive actors within society] to tell them that their race or gender defines who they are as a person or what they can become in life.” With this logic, serving as a role model not only functions to inspire or encourage African American females to pursue their dreams, but also to disallow others within society to control or determine their destiny. In essence, Jaleesa and all the other participants in this study were not only able to “tell [Black] girls that they can, but also able to show them that they can achieve any goal or be what they want to be in life.”

Othermothers

Ten of the participants shared that they made a conscious decision to not only inspire their African American female band students, but to support, motivate, and provide them with concepts and ideas necessary for attaining self-reliance and independence essential for surviving and thriving within a racialized society. In other words, ten of the participants in this study expressed that they not only considered themselves to be role models, but othermothers. Sarah, Karen, Patricia, Juanita, Amber, Linda, Lily, Kierra, Chelsea, and Gabrielle expressed that one of the most important responsibilities as an othermother was to provide their African American females with concepts, ideas, and tools necessary for achieving any goal, regardless of their background. Sarah, Karen, Patricia, Juanita, and Linda further shared that many of their African American female band students not only felt that they were not capable of achieving goals because of the perpetuation of negative stereotypical images of African American women in society, but they did not have the tools or support required to

achieve their goals. Sarah articulated why she made a conscious decision to provide her African American female band students with the support needed to achieve their goals:

Many of my Black girls don't have a mother to talk to. They go through a lot within this world and sometimes at home, and they look to me for guidance and a better way of doing things...I had a mother that I could talk to and I know what a difference it makes in children's lives...I try to be a mother-like figure to them, and they know that they can come and talk to me about anything...They call me momma all the time...I let them know what they need to do or the steps they need to take to reach their goals...They know that I care about them and I will do anything to help them to achieve their goals... I mean who else is going to help them.

Sarah's decision to become an othermother was based on her own experiences of having a loving and caring mother in her life who provided her with the tools necessary to become successful. Sarah articulated that some of her African American female band students, for whatever reason, did not have a mother or someone who desired to be their mother. Sarah felt that her African American female band students needed someone who would care for them and to provide for them like they would for their own child. She was aware of the obstacles that they faced in life and the consequences of leaving them to fend for themselves within a racialized society. Sarah expressed, "I just didn't want them to fall into the traps of [oppressive powers]. I want them to know that I am here for them and I care about their feelings and how they are doing." By accepting the role as an othermother, Sarah, like nine other participants, were able to provide their African American female band students with the support and guidance needed to resist oppressive powers within the band world and to become successful within life.

Like mother-daughter relationships, Karen articulated that othermothering also involves the idea of teaching younger Black females the importance of personal

accountability:

I always had family members who were upfront with me...I am upfront with my students...If they do something wrong, I let them know that they will be held accountable for what they have done. I also praise them for doing the right things...I use positive reinforcements to encourage them to do the right thing...I also let them know that they are responsible for their actions.

According to Karen, othermothers take on the responsibility to raise and teach the younger generation of Black females for purposes of surviving and thriving within society. Karen teaches her African American females that wrongdoings can yield negative consequences. Therefore, Karen encouraged her students to always do “the right things,” no matter the level of difficulty. According to Karen, many of the African females enrolled in the band program were able to gain an understanding about the importance of engaging in actions that yields positive outcomes, rather than negative outcomes.

As an othermother, Patricia articulated that she not only supported and guided African American females, but also reminded them that they were not alone on this journey:

I talk to my African American female students, and I make myself available to them. I want them to know that I care and that I understand their frustrations and what they are going through. I get it. I share my experiences, so they don't feel like they are alone. They like someone who they can talk to and won't judge them, but also someone who understands them.

Juanita shared similar recollections:

I let them know that I went through some of the same situations as a young Black girl...Although I have degrees, I let them know that I can still relate to what is happening to them as Black girls. I'm not going to talk to them like they are less than me. I've seen that from other female teachers. The other female teachers talk to them like they are not human...I was treated that way when I was a Black girl,

and I know how it made me feel...I show them that I care, which is better than just telling them...I don't sugar code anything.

Through conversations, Patricia and Juanita expressed that the African American female students enrolled in their band programs were able to understand that other Black women have endured similar challenges in life. According to Patricia, this level of othermothering provided her African American female students with the assurance that “they have someone in their corner to fight and stand up against” hegemonic ideologies that oppresses them and other Black women in society. Without othermothers, the younger generation of African American females are left to fend for themselves, which in turn can lead them to becoming further victimized by the oppressive actions of those in power, and sometimes, ultimately succumbing to hegemonic ideologies (Collins, 2002). Moreover, it becomes more difficult to resist or remove the chains of oppressive powers when Black females fight alone without an army of Black women standing guard for protection (Collins, 2002).

Othermothering Beyond the Band Program

As othermothers, the participants expressed that they helped the African American females enrolled in their band programs with navigating the complexities of life and managing issues that occurred outside of the band program. For example, Kierra found out that one of her African American female band students was facing the reality of taking care of her mother who had cancer. Through othermothering, Kierra was able to provide the student with tips and suggestions for helping her mother to be cured of cancer. Similarly, Karen asked the African American female students enrolled in her band program to give her a list of events that they wanted her to attend. At first, many of

Karen's students did not think that she would attend their events since "the other teachers never come to events when they invite them." Karen stated, "I had to let them know that I am a woman of my word and they can count on me." By the end of the first quarter, Karen's calendar was filled with events that her African American female band students wanted her to attend.

Unlike Kierra and Karen, Amber recalled a drastic moment in life where a pregnant student became suicidal:

I had a girl this past year who became pregnant and delivered a stillborn. The first person who she called when she became pregnant was me. Although she became suicidal and dropped out of school because she was so embarrassed, I embraced her and let her know that it was going to be okay. I made sure that I was there for her every step of the way and that she was still a part of the band. I helped her to transition from a bad home to her mother to better herself. Because I stayed in her life and helped her, she was able to graduate from high school.

As an othermother, Amber helped to transform the life of a student who was headed towards destruction. Unlike traditional mentoring, Amber was able to help the student to overcome her fears about living within a world where she could be shunned for becoming pregnant while in high school. Through Amber's conversations as an othermother, the student had the courage to move with her mother and to become a high school graduate. Through othermothering, Amber, Kierra, Karen, Sarah, Patricia, Juanita, Linda, Lily, Chelsea, and Gabrielle believed that their African American female bands students were able to understand that they had a mother-like figure who cared about them.

Gabrielle, Karen, Linda, Chelsea, Sarah, and Patricia not only considered themselves to be othermothers to the African American female students enrolled in their band programs, but also African American females outside of the band program.

Gabrielle shared that she created opportunities during school and after-school for African American females to receive the support that they needed to navigate the complexities of life:

During my five years at my current school, I made it a point to cater to my Black female band students and to let them know that I was you, and you can do this. I recruit and talk with my African American female band students. It is not because I want to grow the program, I just don't want any of my Black girls to think that they can't do something because they are one of few Black kids in the school. I have in-school and after-school opportunities for Black girls to come and talk to me. I've had Black females outside of the band program to come and tell me that they were not being treated fairly by their White teachers and what should they do...As a mother-like figure, I let them know that I understand how they feel, and I am here to support them.

By accepting the role as an othermother, the participants were not only able to work on behalf of the Black community by expressing ethics of caring, but they were also able to uplift members of the Black community for purposes of helping them to attain the independence needed to engage in self-empowerment and collective empowerment (Collins, 2002). Through an understanding of the dimensions of empowerment, African American females within and outside of band programs are able to become activists within the Black community to resist and dismantle oppressive powers that are perpetuated within the band world and other racialized spaces.

Interconnected Domains of Black Females' Self-Definitions

Through the application of counterspaces within band programs, participants were able to help the African American females within their band programs to challenge and dismantle negative stereotypical images and ideas about them that were portrayed through mass media. This journey required an understanding of how their personal lives had been shaped by intersecting powers of oppression (Collins, 2002). As Collins (2002)

noted, African American females must “question not only what has been said about...[them] but the credibility and the intentions of those possessing the power to define” (p. 114). Further, embarking on this journey allows African American females to understand that they must take control out of the hand of oppressive powers, and interpret their own realities. By fostering an understanding about self-definitions, the participants African American females are no longer victims of oppressive powers, but free minded beings who possess the power to define themselves.

Self-Love

Eleven of the participants expressed that the African American female band students in their programs had low self-esteem and self-confidence. Chelsea, Emma, Juanita, Linda, Alexandria, Amber, Sarah, Kierra, Natalie, Ava, and Lily noted that their African American female band students did not think that they were beautiful or smart enough to be successful in life because of the images that were portrayed through mass media. They felt that to be beautiful and smart meant that they had to succumb to the ideals and images that were perpetuated by oppressive powers within society. Chelsea expressed that the negative images and ideas perpetuated through mass media took a significant and detrimental toll on her African American female band students:

When the girls that I have now first joined the band program, I noticed that they felt that they didn't have much to look forward to. They had so much pressure on them about how they looked and how they were shaped... I had to let them know that everyone can't look like an Instagram model. I had to show them how to embrace their uniqueness...I encourage them and let them know that they are beautiful and to be who they are and not what someone else tells them to be.

Chelsea asserted, “it just seems that [oppressive powers] always try to use [mass media] to put Black women in a negative light and our girls internalize it.” Social media and

other televised platforms view African American women as “argumentative, combative, not beautiful, and not valuable to society; [therefore], it’s important for [Black] girls to know that they are beautiful, smart, and valued.” Chelsea encouraged African American females to “embrace their uniqueness” and to not allow the oppressive forces of society to dictate who they are as human beings. As an African American female, Chelsea articulated the struggle of self-love within a society that exacerbates oppressive stereotypes of Black femininity:

I have to help my Black girls to look at themselves in a positive manner...I’m 32 years old and I still struggle with that...so, I know that they are struggling...There is just so much stuff that my Black girls deal with...I don’t want them to go through what I have gone through.

To help African American females in the band program to counter negative stereotypes and to “embrace their uniqueness,” Chelsea used the counterspace within the band program to share her experiences. Chelsea stated, “sharing my experiences allows my Black girls to understand the importance of self-love. Chelsea not only helped her African American female band students to understand their worth and to replace negative images with positive ones, but to embark on a journey toward defining themselves. When Black women define themselves, in which Collins (2002) calls Black women’s self-definition, they reject those in positions of power from interpreting their reality.

To define themselves, African American females must strengthen their “self-esteem by learning to love and appreciate themselves” (Tate, 1983, p. xxiii). Because African American female band students can internalize negative, controlling images of Black womanhood, Emma shared that Black girls must not only be encouraged to embrace their uniqueness, but also taught how to love themselves:

Many of my Black girls come into the band program and they have very low self-esteem...So, I have to talk to them about how they should love themselves...I've even had a student who came to me and stated that she felt that she was ugly because she was dark-skinned, and the other kids were not. So, I had to help her with being comfortable about being herself and loving herself. I let her know that she was beautiful...Because she was from another country, she did not see herself in a positive light on social media or television.

Juanita expressed that one of her band students felt self-conscious about her weight due to mass media's portrayal of the idea that Black females must have a small figure to be beautiful:

I had a student who was self-conscious because she had weight issues. I told her to not worry about it because I will find something that will fit her body type. I told her that the main thing is that people are going to ask you about your playing ability. She was shy, but after I talked with her, she became more confident about herself. I let her know that she is beautiful how she is.

Linda further articulated the importance of African American women taking on the responsibility of uplifting Black girls:

As African American female band directors, we must let Black girls know that they look different, their hair is different, but it is okay to embrace it. We have to talk to them about loving the hair that they have, loving the body that they have, and loving their skin color.

Through conversations of empowerment, African American female students are not only able to understand that they are beautiful, regardless of body type, skin color, or stature, but rather the importance of creating positive self-images about themselves and each other (Collins, 2002).

Self-Respect

Through the negative images perpetuated within society, eleven of the participants articulated that their African American female students internalized those images. Internalizing negative images caused them to feel that they were not beautiful

within the eyes of others within society, which led to low self-esteem. To counter aspects of low self-esteem, the participants not only taught the African American female band students in their band programs how to love themselves and each other, but to demand respect from society. Because no one is obligated to respect African American women, it is crucial that African American females encourage each other to have self-respect and to demand the respect of others (Collins, 2002). Lily shared how she taught African American females the importance of respecting themselves and to be respected by others:

I let them know that they should be valued and respected as Black women... After many conversations, they understand how they are supposed to be treated... I let them know that they have to carry themselves in a respectful manner. I understand that these girls are someone's babies, and I don't want anything bad to happen to them. So, I am very conscious about what they wear in public; therefore, I show them the importance of wearing certain clothing that puts them in a positive light... I want to make sure that other people respect them... There are a lot of things that they don't know when they come into the band program, so I have to teach them to be positive images... I have down-to-earth conversations with them because life is not going to sugar code anything.

Lily's assertiveness about self-respect and the demand for respect from others was based on her experiences as a band director. For example, when Lily's Black female students attended parades, they were sometimes ridiculed for having a curvy shape. In other words, oppressive powers want Black females to believe that if they are over a certain size and do not look like an "Instagram model" with a small waistline and figure, they cannot become members of a marching band (Collins, 2009). Lily's teachings to demand respect from others threatens the status quo and values those aspects of Black womanhood that do not align with the ideology of domination. "[T]he right to be Black *and* female *and* respected" not only pervades the conversation that Lily has with her students, but rather everyday conversations among African American women in society

(Collins, 2002, p. 115).

Self-Empowerment

Through the dimensions of self-definition, all the participants reported that they were able to help their African American female band students to embark on a journey to define themselves and to understand that they possess the knowledge necessary to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. The participants were aware that by fostering their African American female band student's self-definitions would open up a dimension of knowledge to reject negative stereotypical images of African American females. This consciousness of knowing and understanding the perpetuation and effects of racism and other forms of subordination that they face within society not only led them to resist power structures, but to find power within themselves. For example, Gabrielle recalled having an African American female band student who not only rejected power structures, but found power within herself to become successful within the band world:

I had a Black girl who is in her second year at a prestigious University. She is a phenomenal clarinetist...She was the state clarinetist since seventh grade. I always told her that people were going to say that she didn't deserve her title because of the color of her skin and not because of how well she can play. People actually told her that she could not become a top clarinetist for the state because she was Black...So, I made it a point to help her to understand that she was worthy, intelligent, and smart enough to accomplish any and all goals...She ultimately found power within herself. She made a point to make sure that people heard her more than they saw her. I often use her as an example for my younger Black girls to let them know that this is someone who found power within herself and defied all odds.

I contend that Gabrielle's efforts to help other African American females to become self-empowered stems from her own reality of navigating within a world where she had to find power within herself in order to survive and thrive. Within this context, Gabrielle

envisioned that all forms of oppression can be eliminated, which can lead to African American women becoming fully empowered. As Collins (2002) explained, “Black women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions themselves are eliminated” (p. 22).

Collective Empowerment

The participants not only taught the African American females enrolled in their band programs about the importance of empowering themselves, but to also uplift each other, which Collins (2002) describes as collective empowerment. The power among and between the participants African American female band students involved comforting and supporting each other. Karen expressed that she taught her African American female band students about the importance of uplifting each other through her analogy of a bowl of gumbo:

I don't let my Black girls say anything negative about each other or themselves...They know that we don't put each other down, we put each other up...I always tell them that our band program is like a bowl of gumbo...It's like if you eat gumbo and the roux is not right, you're going to throw it away, but when the roux is right, the chicken and shrimp is seasoned well, you're going to say it's good...Everyone in the band program contributes to our gumbo. Anytime someone puts negativity in our gumbo, it spoils the entire pot...When they hear my story, they respond, 'we don't want to spoil our gumbo'...So, they encourage and look out for each other.

Unlike Karen, Alexandria learned as a young child that when Black women work against each other rather than empowering each other, it becomes much more difficult to survive and thrive within a racialized society:

As a Black woman growing up in a fairly minority area, I saw Black women in competition with each other and not really holding each other up or motivating each other...That's why I try to encourage my Black female band students to build positive relationships with each other and to motivate each other. I let them

know that without each other, it's much more difficult to survive in this world. I explain to them that they must work together.

Natalie further articulated the importance of fostering collective empowerment among Black females:

As Black women, we must teach them that if they see another Black girl struggling, they should be willing to help them to make it through. We must tell them to always support and help each other, no matter the cost... They must understand that they have to work together.

By engaging in collective actions to empower one another, Karen, Alexandria, Natalie, and eight other participants expressed that the African American female band students in their programs were able to overcome difficult obstacles to achieve their goals of becoming successful within the band world. The participants African American female band students not only engaged in roles of empowering each other for purposes of support and guidance, but to also help each other to understand the importance of becoming activists within the band world and society. Together, the participants African American female band students were able to investigate and work toward resisting and dismantling power structures within the band world and oppressive practices that they may have internalized.

Black Girl, "I Hear You"

Through lived experiences, all the participants expressed that only another Black woman can fully understand the challenges and mistreatment that Black girls face within the band world and society. As African American female band directors thriving within a male dominated field, all of the participants articulated the reality of becoming listeners because they "are most able to pierce the invisibility created by Black women's

objectification” (Collins, 2002, p. 104). Listening requires the act of allowing Black girls to utilize their voice to speak their truths. Chelsea shared that “if Black women do not listen to their Black girls or allow them to listen to one another, then who will listen?”

It is our responsibility as Black women to listen to our Black girls. My Black girls know that if they need to talk to me about something, they can talk to me. They know that they are free to tell me whatever they need to get off of their chest...Some of the things that they tell me are unethical, and they shouldn't even be going through as children...If it's something unethical, I let them know that I am here to help them...I give them an opportunity to be who they are. I let them know that it's okay if their life feels chaotic. I let them know that they will get through whatever they are going through...I not only tell them that they will get through it, but I help them to get through it...I allow them to be honest without judgment...I let them be emotional. If they need to cry, I let them do it...Some of the things that they tell me weighs heavy on my spirit, and it hurts me to hear it...I let them be themselves and to be comfortable about being themselves.

Karen vividly remembered the day that one of her African American female band students approached her to express the injustices that she had faced within the school environment:

I will never forget the day that a student ran down the hallway crying. I was like, “what's going on?” She was upset and was in tears. She stated, ‘I don't understand, the White girl has the same outfit on as me. The teacher pulled me to the side and wrote me up and she didn't say anything to the White girl who had on the exact same pants. She didn't even have tights under her pants to cover the holes, but I did.’ So, I went and talked to the principal, who was a Black woman, to let her know about what was going on. The principal investigated the matter and straightened everything out by the end of the school day. My student was telling the truth. For her to see someone in her corner, she felt that she could speak up and converse with me about what was going on.

Karen had to listen to allow the student to share the injustices that she had encountered at school. After listening, Karen learned that a White female student had on the exact same outfit, but the little Black girl was the only person who had been punished. More specifically, students were allowed to wear pants with holes only if they wore tights with

the outfit. The little Black girl wore tights with the outfit, but the White girl did not wear anything under the pants to cover the holes. The teacher did not complete a disciplinary form for the White female student, but she punished the Black female student. Because Karen allowed the student to share her story, the situation was resolved. In this case, Karen explained that the Black student trusted her because she knew that only another Black woman knew what it meant to be a young Black female navigating spaces controlled by oppressive powers. Karen expressed that “a lot of our Black girls don’t have someone who will listen to them and care about what they are going through. Our girls see how the world treats them differently than other races of girls.” Further, this process of listening summarizes the impact that Black women can have on the younger generation of Black girls with resisting oppressive conditions. Ntozake Shange gives the following reasons for why Black women, including herself, must tend to the younger generation of Black females: “When I die, I will not be guilty of having left a generation of girls behind thinking that anyone can tend to their emotional health” (Tate, 1983, p. 162). Therefore, Black women must understand that they are the only women in society that can tend to the emotional needs of the younger generation of Black females and provide them with the skills needed to resist and overcome the challenges that they face in society (Collins, 2002).

In addition to becoming listeners, African American women must also encourage Black girls to share their experiences and to establish connections among other Black females. Black intellectualist, Mary Helen Washington (1987), points out that Black females’ relationships with one another are “vital to their growth and well-being” (p.

xxi). Juanita shared how she encouraged Black females to form positive relationships with one another:

I allow my girls to go to the band annex room and to form positive relationships. They have to rotate during the period to get the opportunity to share their experiences with multiple individuals...At the beginning of the school year, I'll have my students to fill out a form about themselves and they have to pass it to a neighbor within that group. Once they have given their form to someone, they will talk and share their experiences.

According to Emma, the process of forming positive relationships allow Black females to trust one another, which remains as a necessary step for overcoming obstacles faced within academic and social spaces:

Through positive relationship building, they trust each other with their lives, and are more comfortable about sharing their experiences with each other. The girls talk to each other about how to handle themselves if someone said something or did something that made them feel uncomfortable. I let them know that they can talk about anything even if it's something dealing with their home life. The girls help each other to get through things that has happened in their lives. The girls understand that when they come to band, they are part of a loving and nurturing family, who understands what they are going through in life.

Like Emma, Myra expressed that the process for forming positive relationships allows African American females to trust one another and to counter social issues that they encounter within institutions of learning. For example, Myra explained that many African American females endure various forms of harassment within the school district of her employment. Myra felt that the district did not make any effort to address the social issues that seemed unique to African American female students. Within the band program's counterspace, Myra decided to incorporate yoga mats for weekly meditation as a mechanism to address many of the social issues that African American female band students faced within and outside of the school environment:

Before rehearsal starts, we pull out our yoga mats and we meditate. After meditating to release the hurt and pain that they have endured, I allow them to talk about their issues and the hurt or pain. I allow them to talk about how they are doing, how their week has been going, or issues that they are dealing with.

Through the process of meditation and conversation, Myra articulated that the band students were not only able to share their individual and collective experiences, but rather to trust one another. When Black females trust one another, they become community or group resisters, who can function more powerfully than individual resisters of oppressive conditions (Collins, 2002). This leads to the realization that Black women cannot eliminate oppressive powers on their own—only collective action can eradicate long-standing oppressive powers (Collins, 2002).

To engage in collective actions that can eliminate oppressive powers, Alexandria explained that African American women must also form positive relationships with members of the younger generation of the Black community. Forming positive relationships with younger African American females can allow Black women to share their stories about how they have survived and thrived within a racialized society. Further, this level of relationship building can help younger African American females to face challenges that they may encounter later in life. Alexandria explained that Black women must “allow themselves to be vulnerable with Black girls.” To be vulnerable with younger African American females, Alexandria talked about her childhood experiences and the challenges that she faced as a Black woman growing up in a society that dehumanized her as a Black woman:

I let them know that I grew up in a single-family home and I beat the statistics. I am a successful Black woman. I let them know that they will face challenges as Black girls, but I am here to help them to face those challenges...They understand

that there is nothing wrong with being different and breaking barriers. I want their voices to be heard and I want them to change the world.

Unlike Alexandria, Juanita made her faults, feelings, and imperfections known:

I let them know about how I feel, and I tell them about the obstacles that I faced ... I let them know that I am a human being, and I am not perfect. I don't pretend like everything is together with me. I tell them to never let anyone tell you that you have to be perfect...I let them know when I am having a bad day...I also let them know that they will have cloudy days and its okay to have those days.

Kierra further articulated that being vulnerable also requires African American women to be truthful about the “struggles of being Black in America.” If younger Black females do not have knowledge about the nature of oppressive powers and the historical contexts of oppression within society, they may never fully engage in activist responses to dismantle intersecting paradigms of oppression (Collins, 2002). To foster activism, Kierra engaged in conversations with African American females about the nature of Black womanhood in America:

I talk to my Black girls about the struggles of being Black in America. I talk to them about what it means to be a Black female in America...We have conversations about slavery and the continuous oppression of Black people. We talk about why many slaves would have rather died, then to be a slave...My conversations with my Black girls are not only from a music standpoint, but from a global standpoint.

Through an understanding of the struggles that Black women as a collective endured for centuries, Kierra expressed that the band students were not only empowered to resist oppressive powers, but to change their circumstances and status within society. Kierra further articulated that the African American female band students longed to become equal within society, rather than inferior beings. Black women's collective knowing allows them to identify their own victimization within society, which in turn activates a

level of consciousness that empowers them to demand an equal place within society (Collins, 2002). In essence, the dialectical relationships among Black women not only can empower them as individuals, but vulnerable members of the Black community can also attain the independence needed to resist oppressive powers and to bring about change within their lives (Collins, 2002, p. 193).

Interconnected Domains of Oppositional Consciousness

The experiences of the participants can be viewed through Hacker's (1992) expansion of Du Bois' double consciousness theory, which emphasizes that African American adults must teach African American females about their unequal stance within society, racism, and other forms of subordination that they may encounter as members of a marginalized group of society. Thirteen of the participants expressed that African American females must understand that they have to work harder than their White counterparts to survive and thrive within a society that measures them by the color of their skin rather than by their individualized talents.

As African American female band directors, we have to teach our Black girls that the system is not built for them to prevail... They have to work harder and be five times better than their White counterparts to be considered equal in this world... We let them know that you may go to a competition and you may be the best, but because you are an African American female, you may not even be acknowledged as one of the best musicians.

Karen and twelve other participants' comments as viewed through the concept of oppositional consciousness demonstrates their experiences as African American females living within a racialized society that sees them as less powerful, less intelligent, and less capable of being successful. Therefore, the thirteen participants articulated that they

informed the African American female students within their band programs about the challenges that they may face within this racialized society.

Despite Myra's efforts of teaching African American females about forms of racism that they may encounter within society, she shared that some young Black females do not believe that they will face racism and other forms of subordination until it happens to them:

Some of my Black girls don't really believe me until they experience [various forms of oppression] in college. They come back and say things like, 'Ms. Myra, you were right. I cannot believe that we have to go through this.' I let them know that they were in a safe space while in my band program and now they are not. I tell them in some cases it's not just about how smart you are or how talented you are, it's about your skin color and gender. They come back after a few months in college to tell me about the obstacles they face in the band world as a Black woman...I let them know that sometimes you are going to have to be stronger and better than your male counterparts to thrive and survive...It's cruel, but they understand the severity of the situation and they appreciate my honesty.

Seemingly misplaced by time, Myra's Black female band students were more aware of their individual conditions rather than the collective conditions of Black women within society (Collins, 2002). By claiming that they cannot experience racism, they were not only denying the existence of racism, which "literally threaten[s] their own lives and the lives of the people and spaces and places they hold dear" (Kendi, 2019, p. 221), but also rejecting their connections with other Black females and the Black community. In other words, "the popular conception of denial—like the popular strategy of suasion—is suicidal" (p. 221).

Through the use of counterspaces within their band programs, the participants in this study were able to teach their African American female band students about the perpetuation of racism and other forms of subordination that they may encounter as members of a

marginalized group of society and knowledge systems of resistance for surviving and thriving within racialized academic and social spaces. Without an understanding of the need to address various forms of oppression and how they are organized and implemented within the band world, African American females cannot fully engage in efforts of resistance (Collins, 2002). Through strategies of resistance, the participants African American female band students were able to do more than just survive, they were able to succeed despite that they were learning within racialized spaces not created for them. For many of the participants African American female band students, resistance was a means of being heard as talented musicians, rather than being seen, and ultimately judged by the color of their skin.

Black Girl, “Stand Up” and “Speak Up”

Although Black girls must begin to share their individual and collective experiences among one another for oppressive powers to be eliminated, some of them are afraid to transform their silence into language. According to Collins (2002), Black girls can self-impose silence to protect themselves from becoming victims of racism and other forms of subordination (Collins, 2002). Alexandria stated, “I never want my African American female students to feel the way that I did—afraid to speak and to let my voice be heard.” Alexandria never felt comfortable about sharing her thoughts and feelings with the White band directors at school because she knew that her voice was not going to be heard.

A lot of the Black girls can easily feel uncomfortable about expressing themselves or letting their voices be heard. I know because I felt the same way. When they are upset, they just want someone to hear them. I step back and I listen to them...I feel that as a Black woman, I have an obligation to my Black girls...I listen to

them because I know how it feels to not be heard in a band setting and scared to talk about your experiences...I let them know that they can talk to me about anything and that they can use their voice.

Black females must understand that engaging in practices of silence perpetuate rather than eliminate forms of oppression. As Patricia expressed, “Black women must empower Black girls to speak up for themselves, to let their voices be heard, and to not let racist comments slide.” In other words, Black girls must not be afraid to take a position to resist oppressive forces or to share how they feel about a particular situation. For example, Patricia’s African American female band students realized that the White teachers within the school environment treated them differently than other races of students. Further, they became more isolated and scared to speak up because they were often punished for doing the same things as White kids who never received any type of punishment. In essence, they did not realize that being silent allowed oppressive powers to continue to suppress them. To teach Black females the importance of speaking up for themselves, Patricia led by example through engaging in activist responses within a school environment plagued with racist bodies:

My students know that when I hear racist comments, I call it out and have an educational conversation about it. When the White teachers and staff members in the school say things like every Black person is Ghetto. I let them know that is not true...Through my teachings, I empower them to speak up for themselves.

Through activism, Patricia stated that she believed that the African American females within and outside of the school environment had realized that they must “speak up” when they hear racist comments or derogatory remarks to gain an equal stance within racialized spaces. I contend that Patricia’s African American female band students learned that if they do not utilize their voice to “speak up,” racialized powers can

continue to oppress them within the school environment.

Chapter Summary

My analysis of counterspaces revealed that the participants African American female band students faced a greater level of racism, discrimination, and other forms of subordination than other groups of students within the band world. Social actors who uphold oppressive powers within the band world often perpetuated negative stereotypical images and ideas of the participants African American female band students and considered them to be morally, physically, and intellectually inferior to members of the dominant group of society. Through the continuous victimization of racism and other forms of subordination, the participants African American female band students unintentionally internalized ideas, beliefs, and practices that colluded with the perpetuation of oppressive powers within the band world. By accepting the role as othermothers and role models within the context of counterspaces, the participants were able to foster African American females' self-definitions and sense of empowerment to reject racism, race and gender discrimination, and negative stereotypical behaviors and ideas perpetuated within the band world.

Chapter 7

Implications and Suggestions

In this chapter, I provide music stakeholders, educators, and others within and outside of the band world with suggestions to begin the work toward creating a more inclusive field that represents the experiences, cultural/musical traditions, and voices of African American females. I also make suggestions for African American female band directors to become role models and othermothers for African American females within and outside of the band program and to implement counterspaces within racialized structures and between and among each other to foster African American women's individual and collective empowerment, self-definitions, and resistance of dominant ideologies within the band world. Last, I make suggestions for future research about counterspaces and other mechanisms designed to foster African American females' self-definitions, sense of empowerment, and resistance among and between each other. Accompanying my own suggestions are the participants' personal recommendations from the individual and focus group interviews.

Countering Racism within the Band World

In today's society, many people may assume that African Americans and other marginalized members of society do not wrestle with issues of race and racism anymore. Alexandria, like all the other participants, learned firsthand about racism and other forms of subordination perpetuated within the band world. While in high school, Alexandria's band director, who was a White male, assumed that she was not going to pursue a career in music. Alexandria stated that the problem was not necessarily that her band director

did not believe that she was going to take music seriously, but that he believed that African American females were not capable or intelligent enough to become successful musicians. Like Alexandria, Patricia not only witnessed the perpetuation of racism herself, but among her African American female band students. As an assistant band director, Patricia stated that the head band director, who was a White male, purposefully placed White females in first chair spots within the band program without following the required auditioning protocols to learn about their level of musicianship. Patricia stated that the head band director strongly believed that White females were more superior than African American females, and therefore, did not view African American females as intelligent and beautiful human beings. To reject and eliminate various forms of racism within the band world, I believe that all music educators might consider dialoguing about the history and perpetuation of racism within the band world in order to understand how it effects African Americans and other marginalized groups. I also believe that music educators must examine and recognize their own practices and behaviors that perpetuate ideals of oppressive powers within the band world. When members of the dominant group take the initiative to recognize their own racist behaviors, they are able to move toward dismantling racism within the band world, which can lead to the creation of a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic society.

Countering Race and Gender Discrimination

While pursuing a career as a secondary level band director, participants noticed that they faced a greater level of discrimination than their White colleagues because of their membership within two marginalized worlds. Being an African American female

within the band world negates the perpetuation of historically constructed racial and gendered roles (Sears, 2018). Within a field that is dominated by White males, African American females have been forced to navigate the complexities of race and gender discrimination within the band world to survive and thrive. Race and gender discrimination within the band world has been perpetuated through hiring practices, professional development, band curricula, teacher training programs, and band competitions, festivals, and adjudications. Based on the participants' experiences, in some instances, racial and gendered discrimination was perpetuated by fellow band directors. For example, Jaleesa was in disbelief that male band directors of the same race felt that African American women were not capable of completing the tasks necessary for being a band director. Although not thrilled, the participants expected to be devalued and viewed as incapable or incompetent by White males and White females within the field, but surprisingly, not from females and males of the same race. The issues of race and gender discrimination within the band world had fueled the devaluing of participants' identities and knowledge. The continuous devaluation of African American women within the band world ought to be alarming to music stakeholders, educators, and others within and outside of the field. It saddens me that the music profession has not made any drastic efforts to dismantle the perpetuation of race and gender discrimination. Myra stated:

If we continue to go down the path that we are on now, I think that my students will [encounter] some of the same issues that I had as a woman band director... I already see the negative effects of race and gender discrimination within instrumental music education. I recently had students who were told that the district that they applied for does not put African American women in positions as a band director at the high school level during their first year of teaching because

of safety concerns. They try to act like they are concerned, but its discrimination. They act like there is this fear that they are in danger and so they try to place them in elementary music positions.

Based on Myra's account about the perpetuation of discrimination in the field, I strongly encourage all band directors, music stakeholders, and others within and outside of the field to speak up about the perpetuation of race and gender discrimination and to work toward transforming the band world to become a more inclusive field that values the work of African American females and other diverse groups.

Confronting Racism as a Human Race

Throughout history, the dominant group of society has placed themselves along the superior end of the status continuum. Maintaining their superior stance within society, whether intended or not, has come at the expense of oppressing marginalized groups in society, in particular African Americans. As I mentioned earlier, Patricia noted that the African American females in the school were constantly "punished" and "treated unfairly" by White staff members. Patricia further articulated that staff members would engage in "racist" acts to demean the Black students. She explained that "the White teachers and staff members in the school would say things like 'every Black person is ghetto' and they believed that the Black students were not smart." In relation to Patricia's quote, Chelsea stated, "even when we call out and speak against [persons who engage in oppressive actions], they deny their racist actions and attitudes by stating that they are not being racist." The participants' narratives above demonstrate how the structural foundation of racism has become so entrenched within society that some members of the dominant group find it difficult to confront their own racist behaviors, beliefs, or ideas.

The inability to understand or confront racist behaviors or practices may have to do with the fact that members of the dominant group of society have never truly experienced various forms of racism. When members of the dominant group do not confront or try to understand the destructive power of racism, they become not only oppressors, but a part of the problem, which is the continuation of racism and other forms of subordination within society.

I truly believe that many members of the dominant group of society deny the complexities of racism because they think that African Americans and other ethnic cultural groups within society no longer face various forms of racism. As an African American female band director, Gabrielle attested to facing racism while waiting for her mother to pick her up from school. She explained that “these White boys rode by on a golf cart and called me the N-word. I was so upset and traumatized” by what had happened. Gabrielle’s quote above demonstrates that racism is alive and well within our society, and it continues to invade the lives of individuals who are members of marginalized groups. Although racism exists within our society, Chelsea articulated that “I just don’t think that [social actors who engage in oppressive actions] care because they don’t experience it. I am getting emotional right now just thinking about what I have gone through and what my Black girls go through.” I contend that the participants’ experiences of various forms of racism, whether structural or blatant, are a result of the continuous denial of racism among members of the dominant group of society. This belief of denying the complexities of racism within society continues the spread of racist practices and opens doors for more forms of racism to occur. When members of the

dominant group participate in racial practices, whether intentional or not, they are deepening tensions between marginalized groups and themselves. Although they may not truly understand the complexities of racism, members of the dominant group must eventually ask themselves the question of why they are more comfortable with perpetuating ideas and behaviors of racism, which clearly impacts the lives of African Americans and other marginalized groups of society in a negative manner, than to make conscious efforts to engage in multiple facets of resistance to dismantle dimensions of racism. After all, “only racists shy away from the R-word—racism is steeped in denial” (Kendi, 2019, p. 46). Denial is a central part of not wanting to become aware of the depths of racism in society (bell hooks, 1996). “[I]f we all pretend [that] racism does not exist, that we do not know what it is or how to change it—it never has to go away” (bell hooks, 1996, p. 4). For this reason, Gabrielle articulated that “we have to be upfront with children that racism is still alive. Children from all walks of life must know that we will not shy away from talking about issues within society.”

Keeping racism alive within society does not help with the progression of the human race—it keeps the human race divided. We cannot survive or thrive as a human race within a world where we tear each other down for purposes of keeping a superior stance. We can only survive the threats of this world when we work together as a human race, and not as individual groups of society. It takes each and every person within society to find power within themselves to confront various forms of racism to create a thriving and bountiful world. For this reason, Ava articulated that “we must all work together to fight the injustices that Black women [and other groups] face within the

field.” With this knowledge, one group cannot find happiness by oppressing other groups within society, although some people may think so, happiness comes when we are able to work together, which ultimately leads to success among and between each other.

Members of the dominant group must understand that we are all human beings, and we all deserve a fair and equal opportunity to be successful. As Kendi (2019) expressed, “[r]acist ideas are not natural to the human mind” (p. 224). Racism is rather a “cancer that we’ve caught early” (Kendi, 2019, p. 224).

Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs

To begin the work for dismantling racist practices, ideas, and policies within and outside the band profession, institutions of higher education must transform teacher preparation programs. As noted in the participants’ narratives, some dominant culture teachers come into the classroom without an understanding of the students that they teach. On one hand, this lack of understanding about diverse cultural groups can lead teachers to believing that there is nothing wrong with educational structures, policies, or practices. On the other hand, teachers—although sometimes unconsciously—began to engage in racist responses that collude with the ideals of White supremacy. For example, Linda shared how the White leaders and teachers at her school made “rules and regulations” against anything that looked like the Black experience. She further explained that “[m]any of the White leaders [and teachers] don’t understand the Black culture. To the kids, it makes it seem like what they are doing is wrong and they get in trouble a lot for showcasing their heritage.” For this reason, I suggest that institutions of higher education began to hire and recruit a more diverse population of teachers who teach from

an antiracist agenda. A diverse population of antiracist instructors can provide pre-service teachers with firsthand accounts of the realistic nature of racism and other forms of subordination that plagues the lives of African Americans and other marginalized groups within society. Without the perspectives of diverse populations, dominant culture pre-service teachers may never understand how deeply systems of oppression affect people and communities. As Kierra articulated, [dominant culture pre-service teachers] may never gain a realistic view of “the struggles of being Black in America [nor] understand ways that they perpetuate racist practices themselves.”

To become agents of change, faculty members, pre-service teachers, and others involved in the field must become aware of where they stand in relation to privilege and oppression and how these systems function in their everyday lives (Love, 2019). For example, Patricia articulated that “a lot of my White teachers underestimated me because I was a Black female. They never took out the time to nurture me.” She further explained that “the White teachers would always think that I was ghetto or not smart enough because I was a Black female. I had to push myself. Now those same people are surprised that I am a band director.” For this reason, I strongly recommend that institutions of higher education engage in conversations about racism and other forms of subordination and become agents of change. This level of awareness can allow faculty members and pre-service teachers to gain a sense of what it means to become an antiracist. In other words, becoming agents of change is not just about “acknowledging that racism exists but about consciously committing to the struggle of fighting for racial justice, and it is fundamental to...[antiracist] teaching” (Love, 2019, p. 54). As Kendi (2019) asserts,

“[w]e have to be courageous to be antiracist. Courage is the strength to do what is right in the face of fear, as an anonymous philosopher tells us” (p. 201). Being fearful of fighting for racial justices gives oppressors more power to continue to terrorize those who want to be treated fairly and equal within society.

To fight racial injustices, Chelsea noted that curricula, policies, and practices within the band field must be transformed to include the experiences of other diverse groups in society:

Within the band field, [social actors who engage in oppressive actions] always try to push the music of dead old-White men. Even within the college programs, they try to teach us from a White lens, and they want us to teach from the same lens. They never try to push the inclusion of musical works from African American females and other diverse groups in band curricula. That is why I made sure that I brought in musical works into the classroom from Black women and other diverse groups of society.

Emma shared similar recollections of her inclusion of diverse musical works within the band program:

I have to teach them about successful Black women because they don't know about people like Sojourner Truth or Anna Julia Cooper. I even try to find musical works that reflect the lives of Black women. I even wrote a piece myself to show them that this is something that they can do.

Kierra further articulated the importance of teaching from an anti-racist standpoint:

I have conversations with my Black girls about the historical contexts of various musical pieces. We have conversations about songs that are against slavery and the continuous oppression of Black people. We talk about why many slaves would have rather died, then to be a slave... My conversations with my Black girls are not only from a music standpoint, but from a global standpoint.

Because of the participants commitment to anti-racist teaching and the inclusion of diverse perspectives within the classroom environment, I also suggest that institutions of higher education engage in activist responses to dismantle oppressive powers by

becoming entities of change. This requires the development of policies, practices, curricula, and pedagogy that aligns with the ideals of anti-racism. When institutions become entities of change, faculty members and pre-service teachers will no longer be forced to conform to Euro-centric ideals of teaching and learning, but rather can be encouraged to engage in antiracist practices that normalize diversity and difference. Similarly, an antiracist lens to teaching and learning can allow faculty members and pre-service teachers to become actively engaged in the inclusion of diverse populations within teaching practices; further, faculty and pre-service teachers are able to teach about political and social forces that often work against marginalized groups within society (DeLorenzo, 2016). In essence, teaching and learning through an anti-racist lens requires persistent self-awareness, self-criticism, self-examination, and a “radical reorientation of our consciousness” (Kendi, 2019, p. 23).

Underrepresented: Breaking the Cycle

It is essential that stakeholders, educators, and others in the field of instrumental music education make an effort to include African American females’ voices, experiences, research, and cultural/musical traditions. For years, African American females have been severely underrepresented within the field of instrumental music education (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012; Sears, 2018). Band curricula, conferences, competitions, and festivals often mirror the cultural/musical traditions, values, and voices of the dominant group of society (Ware, 2006). Alexandria explained that during conferences such as the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA), she was usually one of only a handful of African American females in attendance. Similar to Alexandria’s

experiences, thirteen of the participants in this study have also observed similar populations at conferences such as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and The Midwest Clinic. While organizations like NAfME, The Midwest Clinic, and TMEA promote frameworks that are seemingly inclusive—in reality—their practices and activities promote White cultural dominance. For instance, NAfME’s mission state’s, “[t]he mission of the National Association for Music Education is to advance music education by encouraging the study and making of music by all.” On the surface, NAfME’s mission statement promotes diversity and inclusiveness, but the board lacks diversity, and most of the funded research proposals, conference activities, and practices collude with the ideals of the dominant culture. NAfME and other music organizations across the country must understand that they must talk about race and actively grapple with issues of race for inclusiveness and diversity to manifest.

In addition to creating conferences that promote diversity and inclusiveness, stakeholders must also begin to hire and recruit African American women for leadership positions within the band profession. As the only African American woman band director within an urban school district in Texas, Alexandria shared that she struggled with not seeing other Black women as band directors:

When I walk into a room with other directors, I am usually the only woman of color in the room...the other band directors are usually White males...I struggled with being the only woman of color in the room. When I started teaching [band], the directors would go to the district meetings and no one in the room looked like me.

As the only African American female band director in the district, Alexandria felt that she had no one in her corner to “fight for [her] and with [her]; and therefore, she did “not

see a place for [herself]” within the field of instrumental music education. She did not see African American females represented in the field. Alexandria further shared, “I do feel that I am [alone]” within the band world.

All the participants articulated that African American women must be represented for the sake of the future generation of Black females within the band profession.

Educators and others within and outside of the field must understand that Black women are most capable of showing the younger generation of Black females that they can become a band director. Linda shared a moment in life of how her presence within a male dominated profession positively impacted the life of a young African American female student:

When I first started teaching, I remember seeing a little Black girl who came into the 6th grade orientation night. When she walked into my band room, she shouted with joy, ‘oh my gosh, my band director is a Black woman.’ I will never forget that moment, she is now in her third year of college. That was the first time that she had a Black woman band director. She was so excited. Everything I did, she was in my shadow. She followed my footsteps. I realized at that moment how important Black women are to younger Black females. They look to us for their standard of excellence.

Linda and other participants in this study realized that their presence is necessary for the development and success of future African American female band directors. When Black girls do not see representations of themselves in positions of power, they find it difficult to understand their unlimited capabilities in a society that constantly dehumanizes them. Therefore, Black girls need to see themselves reflected to understand that they are capable of becoming successful leaders within a profession that has been dominated by White males.

Taking into consideration the participants’ experiences, African American

females and others within the field of instrumental music education must encourage stakeholders to transform conferences, school culture, school curricula, band festivals, adjudications, performance-based events, and the band profession to illuminate the voices, experiences, and cultural/musical traditions of various cultural groups, rather than only the dominant group of society. By doing so, African American females along with other minorities understand that their voices, experiences, and cultural/musical traditions are valued and respected within the field of instrumental music education. Stakeholders must also engage in actions to hire and recruit more African American females to become leaders within the band profession. “When [B]lack women [and other marginalized groups] do not see themselves represented within the institutional structure or classroom environment... there is a loss of individualism as well as gender and cultural constructs” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, pp. 20–21). Alexandria stated, “we should be doing more for our Black girls. They don’t see enough Black girls at solo ensembles, all-state auditions, and other spaces within the band field. They know that they are not in those spaces.” Through efforts of diverse representations within the music profession, African American females and other marginalized members of society are not only able to feel more comfortable about contributing and participating in band programs, but to also become leaders within the field.

Recommendations for African American Female Band Directors

Most of the participants in this study stated that they encountered racism, discrimination, and other forms of subordination prior to and after becoming a band director. Such experiences of racism and discrimination discouraged some participants,

and a few considered leaving the profession. For example, Gabrielle explained that she wanted to leave the field after experiencing racism, discrimination, and other forms of subordination. With a heavy heart, I understand how it feels to be devalued and disrespected within the field of instrumental music education. Although racism and other forms of subordination can be overwhelming, African American female band directors must stay in the field to resist and dismantle race and gender discrimination. The presence of African American female band directors within the field of instrumental music education is not only necessary for transforming the band world to be more inclusive, but it gives African American females a realistic view of what they can be in life. Myra shared, “it’s hard for Black girls to imagine themselves being in a position without seeing someone who looks like them in that position.” African American female band directors must understand that they possess the knowledge and understanding to not only transform the band world, but to also empower African American female students to become leaders within society. Without the activist responses of African American females, transformation within the field of instrumental music education may never happen.

Due to the fact that racism is alive and well within the band world, African American females band directors must continue to resist and eliminate racism and other forms of subordination that are perpetuated within the band world. To begin the work toward dismantling oppressive powers within the band world, Linda articulated that African American female band directors must share their experiences of racism and its effects with the world, even if it is at the expense of being viewed as an “angry Black

woman:”

As Black women, we must share our experiences and call out racist practices...When I was younger, you could not get two words out of me. I would just shut down when someone said something racist to me...but through everything that I went through, I could not stay silent any longer. I have not been able to keep my mouth closed...I don't care if they call me an angry Black woman.

Linda further articulated that African American women must understand that they should not be apologetic for sharing their experiences and anger toward the perpetuation of racist practices within society. As bell hooks (1996) asserts, African American women must speak up now:

The time to speak a counter hegemonic race talk that is filled with passion of remembrance and resistance is now. All our words are needed. To move past the pain, to feel that power of change, transformation, revolution, we have to speak now—acknowledge our pain now, claim each other and our voices now (p. 16).

Without speaking about racism and its effects within the band world, African American females must understand that society thinks that they do not care about the perpetuation of racism within the band world and how it affects them. When African American females stay silent about racism, they are actually helping oppressive powers to continue to perpetuate racist ideals. Bell hooks (1996) further explained that “White folks have colonized [B]lack Americans, and a part of that colonizing process has been teaching [Black Americans] to repress our rage... about racism” and other forms of subordination (p. 14). In fact, “[m]ost [B]lack people internalize this message well” (bell hooks, 1996, p. 14). For instance, Juanita was faced with a substantial amount of racism while attending college at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) to pursue a career as a band director. Juanita shared that a professor once told her that she was not capable of

becoming a leader within the band program. Juanita shared that she regretted the fact that she did not unmute her voice while experiencing racism. Because she stayed silent, the professor selected White males and White females to be leaders within the school's band program. Juanita explained that by silencing her voice meant that she agreed, although unintentionally, with the professor's decisions and racist perspectives.

The Power of Counterspaces

Based on the participants' experiences in this study, African American female band directors can utilize counterspaces to not only illuminate their voices, but also the voices of African American females within and outside of their band programs. The illumination of African American females' voices within counterspaces provides a platform for rejecting power dynamics within schooling discourses and society. When African American women share their experiences and engage in conversations about racism and other forms of subordination that they face within society, they are able to find power within themselves and among each other to manage the complexities of navigating through a racialized society and to also dismantle, and ultimately eliminate power structures that constrains them. Through the elimination of power structures within the band world, African American females can finally become fully empowered (Collins, 2002). Becoming fully empowered enables African American females to completely shield themselves from the negative influences of oppressive powers. This type of shielding leads to African American females taking complete control of their self-definitions among and between each other.

Self-Definitions

As I mentioned throughout this study, counterspaces removes African American women from spaces of oppression and fosters the conditions for African American women's self-definitions (Collins, 2002). For many years, social actors who uphold oppressive powers have perpetuated negative, stereotypical images of Black women (Collins, 2002). Natalie articulated that the media exploits Black females without regards to how it impacts their lives:

It's insane for how African American females are portrayed in society. Many of my Black girls think that they have to develop the mentality that is shown through the media... They rarely put African American females in a positive light.

With the continuous perpetuation of negative, controlling images of African American females within society, as a collective, Black women must take the power out of the hand of oppressive powers and define themselves. To engage in actions to define their own framing of "self," Natalie articulated that "our Black girls need to see African American African American women in their corner showing them that there is a different way of doing things and they don't have to be a stereotype." Patricia further articulated that "we must teach our Black females that they should not be what [society] wants them to be, or what [society] expects them to be, but rather to be themselves."

When engaging in actions to define themselves, African American women must understand that "self" is not separating oneself from others, but rather found in the connections among each other (Collins, 2002). Sanchez asserts that African American women must "move past always focusing on the 'personal self' because there's a larger self," which is the connections among other Black women and the Black community

(Tate, 1983, p. 134). “Rather than defining self in opposition to others, the connectedness among individuals provides Black women deeper, more meaningful self-definitions” (Collins, 2002, p. 113). The insistence on Black women’s self-definitions reframes the entire dialogue from simply rejecting oppressive powers from interpreting their realities, but rather to take complete control of defining their own framing of “self” (Collins, 2002). Because African American women’s self-definitions is part of the journey of going from victimization to a free mind (Collins, 2002), I recommend that African American women also recognize any negative stereotypical behaviors or ideas that they may have internalized while navigating through racialized spaces. Without recognizing negative stereotypical behaviors perpetuated by “self” as well as by others, African American females are not able to go on a journey that allows them to fully define the collective “self” (Collins, 2002).

Being A Role Model

When African American female students do not have positive role models within their lives, it can be difficult for them to fully define themselves or to recognize the differences between negative and positive images of African American women. The illumination of positive images of African American females negates negative images that are perpetuated within society. Within the context of counterspaces, Linda shared that African American female students must be able to see positive images of African American females within society to define themselves within a positive manner:

We have to show them positive images of African American women. We have to understand that our Black girls look to us for guidance and a better way of doing things. I did not realize how much we influence our Black girls until I started teaching...During open house, I remember one of the African American females

walking into the band room. She was a very outspoken young lady. She walked in and said, 'I have a Black female teacher.' Her mother puts her hands over her mouth. The Black girl was like, 'I can't believe this, you're the first Black female teacher that I have ever had.' Everything that I asked her, she was willing to do it. Although she has graduated from high school, when I see her, she gets so excited. She clung on to me. I was her role model... That was a big deal for her to see a teacher who looked like her. I had to be careful about what I said, how I dressed, and how I presented myself. Those eyes were watching me every moment.

Initially, Linda did not realize that African American females looked forward to having positive role models of the same race and gender. Based on Linda's experiences, I believe that African American female students' desire to have an African American female role model stems from the fact that African American women have faced similar challenges and understand how knowledge systems of power affect them. For instance, Gabrielle explained that her African American female band students expressed that they looked up to her because she persevered and overcame various obstacles that she faced in life. Due to having an understanding about power dynamics within society, African American females are able to provide African American female students with the tools necessary to not only become successful within life, but to also negate power structures that may hinder their success.

When African American women serve as role models within counterspaces, it can provide African American female students with more realistic views of the roles that they can achieve within a society where they are seen as inferior to their White counterparts. As role models, African American females are able to see strong and tangible examples of the ideals and values that they must possess to become successful within life. Because African American female band directors embody the characteristics, values, and ideals to positively impact the lives of African American female students, I strongly suggest that

African American female band directors consider the task of becoming role models to illuminate positive images of African American females within society. I also suggest that African American female band directors consider how they can influence their African American female students to become role models themselves. Alexandria stated, “it’s astounding to me the influence that we as Black women have on our Black girls when they become adults. It’s all about what we put in front of them because they do look up to us.” As role models, African American female students are able to continue the cycle of encouraging and leading the younger generation of African American females on a journey to navigate the complexities of life to become successful.

Othermothering

According to some participants, navigating the complexities of racism and other forms of subordination without guidance and support can be very difficult for younger African American females. As mentioned throughout this study, without the necessary support and guidance, African American females can unintentionally develop ideas, beliefs, and behaviors that support various forms of oppression. As othermothers, the participants worked on behalf of their bloodmothers by providing the African American females students enrolled in their band programs with the necessary tools, concepts, and ideas to overcome challenges and to reject oppressive powers. Kierra stated, “even after [they] graduate from high school, I tend to have a great relationship with my Black girls. They will call me or message me about advice as a young adult” navigating racialized spaces. Lily also shared similar recollections:

My Black girls always call me momma. I talk to them and I listen to them, and they feel like I’m their mother...When they do something silly or they feel

uncomfortable about something, they will come and tell me. They even try to come to my house because they want to be around me and talk to me...I've had girls to come to me and tell me that they felt depressed and wanted to commit suicide. I've had girls to talk about their relationship problems or home life...I let them know that I love them even if they make a mistake...I just want them to have someone that they can talk to. I'm glad that they are comfortable about talking to me so that I can help them.

This type of othermothering is intended to empower individual African American female students and to uplift the entire community so that “vulnerable members” of the community can also attain the independence needed to resist oppressive powers and to become activists within the community (Collins, 2002, p. 193). When African American females obtain knowledge from their othermothers, they become active agents of resistance, which allows them to go out into the community and share what they have learned. Based on the experiences of othermothers in this study, I suggest that African American female band directors invoke their power of knowing and become othermothers for the sake of the entire Black community.

Recommendations for Future Research

A vast collection of research investigates the participation rate of African American females within instrumental music education programs (Elpus & Abril, 2019; Gould, 2001; Palmer, 2011; Wheelhouse, 2009; Wright et al., 2008). Only a handful of research investigates potential influences on African American females' choice to participate in instrumental music education (DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016; Sheldon & Hartley, 2012). At the moment, my study is the only research that investigates the experiences of African American females in instrumental music education and the interconnected dimensions of counterspaces as it relates to the continuous involvement of

African American females within secondary level band programs. The evidence presented in this study makes clear that the power structures that perpetuated within the field and the existence of counterspaces as one mechanism of many that are designed to assist with creating a more inclusive field that represents the experiences, cultural/music traditions, and voices of African American females and other diverse groups.

Although I illuminate the voices of 17 African American females within the field of instrumental music education, more research needs to be conducted on topics related to counterspaces and other mechanisms designed to foster African American females' sense of empowerment, resistance toward oppressive powers, and support among and between each other within the band world. More research can also be conducted about the use of counterspaces as a mechanism to foster activism among African American females to transform other areas of the band field where their voices and experiences are not visible or represented, such as band curricula, music conferences, adjudications, and music festivals. A study of this nature can help to transform the band field to represent the experiences, cultural/musical traditions, and voices of African American females and other marginalized groups in society. Through future research about the interconnected dimensions of counterspaces and other mechanisms designed for African American females, scholars and others can gain a deeper understanding about the complexities of racism and other forms of subordination that are perpetuated and ways to directly counter oppressive powers and the underrepresentation, silencing, and invisibility of African American females within the field. I strongly recommend that researchers not only seek ways to understand various complex issues within the band world, but to actively

demonstrate how they are working to counter complex issues through their daily practices. This notion of demonstration allows researchers to become firsthand responders within the band world, rather than just bystanders.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how African American female band directors create counterspaces for African American female musicians to share collective and individual experiences, maintain involvement, form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to counter intersecting forms of oppression in bands. In this study, I also explored the participants' perceptions about counterspaces in bands. Three research questions guided this study: (1) What are the African American female band directors' perceptions and knowledge about counterspaces, and how do they utilize counterspaces to counter intersecting forms of oppression that African American female musicians face in bands; (2) How do the African American female band directors utilize counterspaces to help the African American female band students form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to share their individual and collective experiences of involvement in bands? and (3) How do counterspaces help African American female band directors understand common themes in the lives of African American female musicians that contribute to their sustained involvement in bands?

Participants reported that counterspaces within and outside of the band program, among and between each other, and as a physical structure within racialized spaces played a significant role in fostering African American female students' collective and individual experiences, self-definitions, sense of empowerment, and resistance toward

racial and gendered power structures that are illuminated within the band world. Within the context of counterspaces, the participants' experience with negotiating and navigating the complexities of life and racialized spaces such as those within the band world not only contributed to the participants African American female band students sustained involvement within band, but also their understanding about knowledge systems of resistance to dismantle oppressive powers that can potentially hinder their success and continued involvement in band programs.

The illumination of the participants' experiences prior to and after becoming a band director provides insight into the current status of African American females within the field of instrumental music education in the U.S and also helps music educators, stakeholders, scholars, and others within and outside of the field to understand and recognize dimensions of power structures that are continuously perpetuated to negate African American female's equal stance within the field. Based on the participants' experiences with intersecting forms of oppression, silencing, and underrepresentation within the band field, it is crucial that African American female band directors employ counterspaces within racialized structures and between and among each other to illuminate their voices and to foster African American females' self-definitions, sense of empowerment, and resistance toward oppressive powers that are perpetuated within the field. I also believe that stakeholders, educators, and others within and outside of the band world must begin the work toward creating a more inclusive field that represents the experiences, cultural/musical traditions, and voices of African American females. The practical recommendations provided in this study can be utilized as a blueprint to guide

future research about the interconnected dimensions of counterspaces and other mechanisms designed to foster Black women's self-definitions, empowerment, and resistance within the band world and other racialized spaces.

Appendix A
Recruitment Script

STUDY TITLE: Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American Female

Band Directors at the Secondary Level

Dear Friends,

I am a doctoral candidate pursuing a degree in Music Education at Boston University. I am conducting a research study to examine how African American female band directors create *counterspaces*, which are positive, safe spaces for African American female musicians to share collective and individual experiences, maintain involvement, form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to counter normalized racism and marginalization in band programs. In addition, I am interested in learning about your perceptions of *counterspaces* in band programs at the secondary level.

I invite you to participate in this study if you meet the following criteria:

- you are an African American female band director
- you teach band at the secondary level (middle or high school)
- you have at least one African American female student enrolled in your band program

Your initial participation would involve responding to a short survey. You may later be invited to participate in a series of two interviews—one individual interview and the second as part of a focus group. You have the right to withdraw from involvement in this study at any time and without consequence. The first question on the survey is your survey ID code. Please enter the code assigned to you by the researcher. If you are willing

to participate in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at kfe@bu.edu. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: kfe@bu.edu or Dr. Gareth Smith at gdsmith@bu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any complaints or concerns and want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University Charles River Campus IRB at 617-358-6115.

Sincerely,

Krista Williams

Appendix B

Survey

Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American Female Band Directors at the Secondary Level

Take this survey to participate in the study!

* Required

1. Survey ID code *

Your answer

2. Are you an African American Female Band Director? *

Yes

No

3. Did you participate in band when you were in middle or high school? *

Yes

No

4. Do you teach band at the middle or high school level? *

- Yes, middle school
- Yes, high school
- No

5. How many African American female students do you have enrolled in your band program? *

Your answer

6. Counterspaces are validating and positive safe spaces where African American females can share their individual and collective experiences. Do you use counterspaces to support your African American female band students? *

- Yes
- No

7. Are you willing to share your experiences and perceptions about counterspaces in your band program? Your responses will be anonymized and kept confidential. *

- Yes
- No

Appendix C
Consent Script

STUDY TITLE: Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American
Female Band Directors at the Secondary Level

Dear Prospective Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate pursuing a degree in Music Education at Boston University. I am conducting a research study to examine how African American female band directors create *counterspaces* for African American female musicians to share collective and individual experiences, maintain involvement, form positive self-definitions about themselves, and to counter normalized racism and marginalization in band programs. In addition, I am interested in learning about your perceptions of *counterspaces* in band programs at the secondary level. I am inviting you to participate in two semi-structured interviews, which will involve one individual and one focus group interview. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom for approximately 45 minutes. After the interviews are completed, all identifiers will be separated from the data. The individual interview will not be recorded without your permission; however, the focus group interview will be recorded to facilitate analysis of the findings. Since the focus group involves multiple simultaneous participants, all of whom will be able to see and hear one another, this brings with the risk of loss of confidentiality. If you are audio or video recorded, you will be assigned and referred to by a pseudonym and it will not be possible to identify you. The results of this research study may be published or used for teaching. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

If you choose to participate now, you may change your mind and stop participating later. If you decide not to participate, that decision will not result in any penalty. While there are no direct benefits for you if you choose to participate in this study, the data gathered from this research will help inform instrumental music education research and teacher practices. As noted above, there is a risk of loss of confidentiality for taking part in this research study. If you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact me at kfe@bu.edu, or call 251-654-3150. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Gareth Smith, at gdsmith@bu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any complaints or concerns and want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University Charles River Campus IRB at 617-3586115. The [IRB Office webpage](#) has information where you can learn more about being a participant in research, and you can also complete a Participant Feedback Survey.

Please respond to this email if you wish to continue with participation in the interview portion of this study.

Sincerely,

Krista Williams
Doctoral
Candidate Boston
University
kfe@bu.edu

Appendix D

Individual Interview Invitation Letter

STUDY TITLE: Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American
Female Band Directors at the Secondary Level

Dear Prospective Participant,

Thank you for completing the survey for my dissertation data collection. The upcoming individual interview will be based on your availability. The interview will be conducted via Zoom for approximately 45 minutes. As a reminder, I would like to audio and video record your interview for transcription; however, the interview will not be recorded without your permission. I will ask you before commencing the interview whether you wish to have the interview to be recorded. After the completion of the study, the computer files for the interview recordings will be deleted. Remember, this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. If you are interested in participating in the individual interview, please email me dates and times of your availability. Once I receive your response, I will send you a link to join the Zoom meeting. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Krista Williams
Doctoral
Candidate Boston
University
kfe@bu.edu

Appendix E

Focus Group Invitation Letter

STUDY TITLE: Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American
Female Band Directors at the Secondary Level

Dear Prospective Participant,

Thank you for participating in the individual interview. For the next step, I would like you to participate in a focus group interview with six other African American female band directors. I will conduct two focus group interviews; based on your availability, you will attend only one of the focus group interviews. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom for approximately 45 minutes. For the focus group interview, I will audio and video record for transcription. After the completion of the study, the computer files for the interview recordings will be deleted. Because there is an increased risk of loss of confidentiality and anonymity due to the nature of the focus group, please be advised that you must not repeat to others any confidential information discussed during the focus group interview. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time and choose not to participate in this portion of the study. If you are interested in participating in the focus group interview, please email me dates and times of your availability. Once I receive your response, I will send you a link to join the Zoom meeting. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Krista Williams
Doctoral
Candidate Boston
University
kfe@bu.edu

Appendix F

Individual Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself, in particular about your experiences as an African American female band director at the secondary (middle and high school) level.
2. What do you understand by the term “counterspaces”?
3. Please tell me about how you implement or use counterspaces in your band program.
 - a. In what ways do you utilize counterspaces to encourage your African American female band students to share their individual and collective experiences, form positive relationships with each other, and form positive images about themselves and the band program?
4. How do you create and teach lessons/activities to reflect your African American female students’ cultural and individual experiences/traditions?
 - a. How do you create and teach lessons/activities to dismantle negative images and promote positive images of your African American female students and the band program?
5. Who or what were the influences on your decisions to major in music education and to become a band director?
6. Tell me about any of your role models in middle and high school and how they influenced you.
7. In what ways are role models important in the lives of your African American female band students?

- a. To what extent do you consider yourself a role model to your African American female students?
8. Please tell me about any obstacles or resistance you faced in accessing or being enrolled in a secondary level band program.
9. What challenges do your African American female students face in band programs?
 - a. How are these similar to or different from challenges that you have faced?
10. How do you build positive relationships with your African American female band students?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss?

Appendix G

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. As African American female band directors tell me about your experiences in band programs at the secondary (middle and high school) level.
2. In what ways do you utilize counterspaces to encourage your African American female band students to share their individual and collective experiences, form positive relationships with each other, and form positive images about themselves and the band program?
3. What challenges do your African American female students face in secondary level band programs?
4. How are your African American female students' experiences similar to or different from your experiences in band programs?
5. How do you promote positive images and dismantle negative images about your African American female students and the band program?
6. How are your African American female students' experiences similar to your experiences in band programs?
7. In what ways do your band programs reflect your African American female students' backgrounds, traditions, and experiences?
8. How are role models important in the lives of African American female band students?
9. How do you build positive relationships with African American female band students?

10. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss?

Appendix H

Institutional Review Board of Approval

Charles River Campus Institutional Review Board
25 Buick Street, Room 157
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
T 617-358-6115 / www.bu.edu/irb



Notification of IRB Review: Exemption Determination

April 27, 2020

Krista Faye Willaims, MS
Boston University School of Fine Arts
855 Commonwealth Ave
Boston, MA 02215

Protocol Title: Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American Female Band Directors at the Secondary Level
Protocol #: 5563X
Funding Agency: Unfunded
IRB Review Type: Exempt 2 (II)

Dear Ms. Williams:

On April 27, 2020, the IRB determined that the above-referenced protocol meets the criteria for exemption in accordance with CFR 46.104(d) 2 (II). Per the protocol, the purpose of this study is to understand how African American female band directors create counterspaces for the sustained involvement of their African American female band students. The exempt determination includes the use of: Consent Script, Individual Interview invitation Letter, Focus Group Invitation Letter, Recruitment Script, Individual/focus group questions.

Please note:

- Submission to the IRB for modifications/amendments to exempt research are not required unless the change could alter the exemption determination, or involves a change to the privacy and confidentiality of research participants. Modifications to approved exempt research should be made using the [Clarification Form](#).
- Per [Boston University guidelines](#) no in-person interactions with research participants may occur at this time:
 - The exception to this policy is if it would adversely impact the safety and welfare of the participant if that interaction did not take place. If you are unsure, please contact the IRB office.
 - If you are conducting in-person interactions/procedures, you must contact Ann Zaia, Director of Occupational Health, at azaia@bu.edu or Occupational Health Services at 617-353-6630 to ensure that an appropriate screening protocol is in place.
 - In-person interactions with research participants may occur once the University lifts these restrictions.

If you have any questions, please contact Shayne Deal at 617-358-6116.

Sincerely,

Shayne C. Deal, CIP
Senior IRB Analyst
Charles River Campus IRB

cc: Gareth Smith

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Curriculum Vitae









