

“LIKE A DOUBLE, TRIPLE HATE”: MUSIC EDUCATION AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF
RACE, RELIGION, AND SEXUALITY IN THE BIBLE BELT

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Music Education—Doctor of Philosophy

2019

ABSTRACT

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With the purpose of better understanding how a population of multiply marginalized teachers navigate their professional and personal lives, this narrative study focused on the following research question: How do K-12 African American LGBTQ music educators who teach in the Bible Belt describe their negotiation of various identity markers (race, sexual identity, religion, and other social norms that stem from religious beliefs)? In order to honor the voices and experiences of the three participants Andrew, Zion, and Alex (pseudonyms), this study embraced the emergent design of narrative inquiry and ethnographic techniques.

The experiences of these three music educators revealed the importance of intersectionality in understanding complex and interlocking layers of identity. Four main categories of themes emerged related to participants' layers of identity considerations: family, race, music education, and resilience. The topics of each participant's interviews all centered around similar themes—the importance of faith in their lives or at least in their childhoods, battling with their families' conservative religious beliefs in general and in relation to sexual identity, the (assumed) closeness of family, racial microaggressions and stereotypes, music education advocacy and representation, and resilience through every tough experience. The theoretical lenses labeling theory and queer theory illuminated connections between how and why participants navigated their personal and professional lives in their respective ways. Labeling theory guided analysis of how people in dominant roles used labels to demean the character of participants who reflect identities incongruous with dominant identities. Queer

theory aided in examining participants' experiences and choices in how they deconstruct labels attached to their interlocking identities.

Based on participants' experiences and perceptions, implications emerge for how families and education personnel might provide support and mentorship for minoritized populations, and how music educators can help drive needed changes in music education. Education professionals can make policy changes that better support minoritized teachers and students alike. Better and more professional development that focuses on identity considerations is needed for all music educators.

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Dedicated to my grandmother Carrie Elizabeth Jones, my first music teacher and the person who introduced me to the importance of telling stories.

May the Lord watch
Between me and thee
While we are absent
One from another

ACKNOWLEDEMENTS

Thank you to the three teachers who shared their stories with me—Alex, Andrew, and Zion (pseudonyms). You are important, and your contexts matter. Thank you for just being you.

To my cohort - Amy and Adrienne #yr3bb. I am so grateful for our many hard but real conversations. I know that the bonds that we have built in our time at MSU will continue, and I cannot wait to see the amazing things each of you will do.

To my committee members - Sandra Snow: thank you for being a strong woman, for your encouragement along the way, and for believing in me to sing a solo; Michael Largey: thank you for being such a quiet storm. I have learned so much from you in the simplest ways. May I forever remember to drive the car; Ryan Shaw: you came here and happily jumped in to provide direction and guidance on my committee as well as in the classroom. I could not have done this without your listening ear. I appreciate so much your willingness to say, “Here’s something I never knew.” Thank you so much; and Juliet Hess: There are not enough words to express just what you mean to me. You have somehow always seen the greatness within me. You have always believed in me, so much so that I started believing in myself. In my time here at MSU, not only have I gained such a thoughtful and supportive advisor but also a really dope friend who just gets it. I appreciate the ways in which you connect with the whole student, not just the things that are important for school. Thank you for your guidance and the phrase “take care of you.”

To Sarah Minette and DeeJay Robinson: thank you for sharing your expertise with me and being a listening ear.

To friends and Family - small group of friends who have always believed in me and supported me living as my true self. Wonderful, loving, supportive, and patient parents who gave

me my start in life and encouraged me to be kind, thoughtful, and opinionated. Daddy, thanks for pushing me to become a doctor—I finally became one! Mama, thank you for demonstrating how to be a person of faith, always seeking for ways to help the next person. Bim, you were probably the first person to help me love school. Thank you for sharing with me the things you learned at school well before I was of school age. Mom and Dad, from the moment we entered each other's lives, you have been a huge support, especially throughout this PhD process. Thank you. To my dearest Kristen, none of this would have been possible without your love and support. Through all the tears and many times I truly believed I could not finish this degree, your loving arms were always there to hold and comfort me. You let me read to you when I needed to read aloud and practice my presentations. You offered suggestions and critique. No amount of words could ever express how much I love you. You gave up so much of your life to launch out into the scary unknown with me. You have fought so hard in these three years just so that I could live out my dream, and I am forever grateful. Thank you, my love, for sharing life with me.

I dedicate this work and all that it symbolizes to those who have felt invisible and to those who continue to believe in a dream even when life is dismal. “Though hope is frail, it's hard to kill” (Mariah Carey). David, Daniel, Chariot, and Micah, I love you all. I hope that in time you can understand that I had to leave to show you that who we are is not determined by where we grew up or our past selves. Yes, we can! “Come celebrate with me that everyday something has tried to kill me and has failed” (Lucille Clifton).

I also want to dedicate this work to those who always supported me but are not here to watch me realize this dream. Thank you for letting me stand on shoulders.

Finally, I dedicate this work to the survivors of sexual violence in its many forms. We are many in number and the world still refuses to hear us, but I see you, I hear you, I believe

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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow (Walker, 2013, p. 17).

I was raised in a devoutly religious home. Three-fourths of my immediate family attended church every time the doors were open: Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night services as well as choir practice. When there was a revival, we were at church every night of the week. This type of commitment to church characterized my childhood years and the early part of adulthood. The style or denomination of church in which we maintained attendance had a predominantly African American congregation and would likely be classified as Southern Baptist and further as an evangelical fundamentalist church. It is in this sect of Christianity that I learned what a child's place is in the world, how to date the opposite sex, how to be a wife, how to be a mother, and above all – how to be the best Christian I could be. Religious leaders and my family emphasized the importance of leading a Christian life, which included reading the Bible daily, attending church often, giving tithes and offerings to the church, doing for others, not having pre-marital sex, praying daily, and listening to God for myself. In fact, all of these practices and behaviors could be described as “ways to develop a relationship with God.” Not only was I expected to profess certain beliefs in church, but I was also encouraged to take these beliefs into every aspect of my life. As a child and young adult, I was supposed to “be in the world but not of it” or to “hate the sin, love the sinner,” which meant that I should not associate myself with anyone who was not following the teachings I learned in church. I was to be kind to perceived sinners while simultaneously distancing myself from them. During this time in my life, I asked copious numbers of questions in order to develop my faith, but I was often silenced and convinced that to ask questions was to lack great faith. Eventually, I stopped asking questions,

an act that has infiltrated other sectors of my life. I completed high school clinging to these beliefs – beliefs that demonstrated the “right” way to be a Christian.

Throughout college, I continued to drive back home from where I lived, an hour away, to attend church on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. When I moved to attend graduate school, I found myself four hours away from home. I made that drive home for church several times, but I went less than I had before for two reasons: (1) I could not afford in time or money to make that drive every Sunday, and (2) something happened on one of those trips to my home church. I had left around 7 a.m. one Sunday morning to make the morning service at 11 a.m. It was a warm, sunny morning, and I was excited to see my mother and brother, who still attended the same church. As I walked through the doors of the church and into the sanctuary, I was greeted by a minister. She hugged and welcomed me, which made me feel warm and loved. A moment later, she said something that stripped away the warmth I had felt only a few seconds prior. While still embracing me, she whispered in my ear, “I wish you would come back to God.”

Someone else might have been able to let these words go, but her words that day stuck to me and seeped into every part of my being. For a woman who had lived all of her life focused on trying to be the perfect version of Christian that she had been taught, desperately seeking affirmation from clergy and adults in the church, the minister’s words cut me in a way that made me question who I was and why I was trying so hard to be the best Christian I could be.

This minister demonstrated the religious approach I had witnessed my whole life – one that empowers people to comment on, monitor, and police other people’s lives. This incident was but one small part of what I had endured. She knew nothing of my life struggles at that moment, neither did she ask about my life. All she knew was that she was not seeing me at church as often as she was used to seeing me, and that emboldened her, gave her the authority to tell me the

ways in which I was wrong and sinful. This kind of religious critique and monitoring was the religious environment in which I formulated my ideas about self-worth, love, and faith.

The vignette above is an example of the type of religion-based scrutiny and judgment prevalent in the Bible Belt for queer people. This experience parallels the stories of countless people who endure confrontations based on religious mores with people who demean others and their life circumstances (see for example Barnes & Meyer, 2012; Barton, 2010/2012; Bean & Martinez, 2014; Lapinski & McKirnan, 2013; Taylor & Zeke, 2018; Walton, 2006). Because religious beliefs often dictate the ways in which people live their lives, these beliefs can have implications for relationships, career choices, or what political party to support. For example, one might be drawn to a political party because of legislation based on a certain religious text because of that party's conscious association with specific religious values. Similarly, a person may despise a female teacher who shows intimate affection for another woman because of religious beliefs about homosexuality. How does that same-gender loving female teacher navigate balancing her career, her sexuality, and palpable hatred from the public? Do her experiences outside of the classroom influence her actions in and her considerations for her classroom?

Questions like the aforementioned serve as the foundation upon which I construct this project. The purpose of this study is to share stories of people who embody multiple non-dominant identity categories to highlight a hidden but important perspective in music education—that of K-12 African American LGBTQ¹ music educators who teach in the Bible Belt.

¹ Many researchers elide gender and sexuality when using LGBTQ. Throughout this study I use LGBTQ to focus on sexuality and not on gender as in “T,” which is for transgender. Though the current project is concerned with the LGBTQ population, the included studies discuss queer issues with terms *LGBTQ* and *LGBT*. I will use the terms as they exist in the literature cited.

Highlighting these experiences provides a way to detail the mistreatment and confrontations similar to the ones I described in the vignette above.

Though the kind of mistreatment of which I write is not limited to a specific faith, some negative behaviors are often associated with specific beliefs. The ideology linked to the actions in the vignette above is that of evangelical fundamentalism, a sect of Christianity that characterizes the Bible Belt—a term that I explain below—and the context for my experiences and the current project. In the sections that follow, I detail the historical underpinnings of how the region acquired the moniker “the Bible Belt,” define how I will use the term Bible Belt, and describe how my definition of this term both parallels and contradicts other scholars’ definitions. In the following discussion, I explore the ways in which the Bible Belt reflects evangelical fundamentalist beliefs that constrain and enable different identities. I conclude the section with details about how these layers of identities function both individually and intersectionally and focus on the navigation of sexual identity in the Bible Belt in the context of education and music education.

Defining the Bible Belt

The American South has been the site of much turmoil and wrongdoing, with many of the negative qualities associated with it stemming from colonialism and slavery. Based on its religious history, cultural critics characterize the South as a place “for all that is backward and hurtful in the United States, past and present” (Law, 2001, p. 3). In the mid-18th century, Anglican beliefs dominated the religious scene in the colonies. Inspired by evangelical revivals in the North, small groups sought to travel south and spread a new belief system. This religious revival of the 18th century is known as the First Great Awakening (Balmer, 2010).

In the late 1740s, Presbyterian preachers from New York and New Jersey began proselytizing in the Virginia Piedmont; by the 1750s, a group known as the Separate Baptists moved from New England to central North Carolina and quickly extended their influence to surrounding colonies; and in the late 1760s, the first English Methodist missionaries began preaching in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. (Heyrman, 1997, p. 11)

These religious groups aimed to convert both non-believers and Anglicans to a newer, more overtly charismatic faith, the “language of Canaan” (p. 11). That “language” was not a language at all but a lifestyle that centered the need to repent for one’s wrongdoings and to live a new life reflective of a superior moral code (p. 4). By the time the U.S. won independence from Britain, evangelicalism had overtaken Anglicanism in the southern colonies as the dominant religious system. However, a major split eventually divided evangelicals as well, mostly based upon how believers expressed their beliefs. From the Greek for “good news” or “gospel” comes evangelicals’ mandate to spread the gospel of Christ. However, major schisms developed from disagreements about how a believer should evangelize or spread the good news, which led to different classifications of evangelicals. Evangelicalism, then, serves as an umbrella for four slightly different religious identities: “fundamentalism, neoevangelicalism, the holiness movement, and pentecostalism – as well as others defined in racial or ethnic terms” (Balmer, 2016, p. xii) such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) or Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

Fundamentalism developed out of a need to offset liberal Protestant beliefs. *The Fundamentals*, a collection of nine essays written in the early 1900s by various authors who represented Protestant Christian denominations, defined key tenets of the faith: (1) the Bible’s

supreme authority as the reliable and true Word of God to be taken literally, (2) the necessity of Jesus's death to atone for "the fall"² of mankind, (3) the importance of spreading the gospel of Christ³, and (4) the importance of conversion and rebirth (Marsden, 1991; Soper, 1994). Many characterize fundamentalists as militant toward strains of faith that endorse more liberal beliefs than the ones listed above (Ammer, 1997; Barton, 2011; Brunn, Webster, & Archer, 2011; Marsden, 1991; Smith, 1987). Neoevangelism retained the same basic principles as fundamentalism but was expressed in a less combative manner (Balmer, 2016, p. xiii). Instead of the message of hellfire and brimstone, emphatically telling people that they would burn in hell for their sins, the neoevangelical message was one of encouraging people to accept Jesus as their savior so that they could go to heaven with Jesus when he returns; this message was based on John 14:2-3:

In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (King James Version)

John Wesley of the holiness movement asserted the necessity of a Christian's conversion or "rebirth."⁴ To be reborn meant to turn one's life toward the teachings and convictions of Christ and away from sin.⁵ According to John 3:3, being born again is the only way for a person to be

² The fall refers to the story of Adam and Eve in the third chapter of Genesis. In the story, Adam and Eve ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God forbade them to eat. Their disobedience to God is now known as the fall of man. Many believe that because of this disobedience, God unleashed many consequences upon the Earth (Soper, 1994).

³ Evangelicals take their call to spread the gospel of Christ from Mark 28:19, in which Jesus instructs his disciples to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." This call is the Great Commission (Balmer, 2016, xii).

⁴ The belief in rebirth comes from the third chapter of the Gospel of John in which Nicodemus inquires of Jesus how he can be worthy of entering heaven's gates. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be "born again" (Balmer, 2016).

⁵ According to Soper (1994), sin is deliberately disobeying God's will or plan.

admitted to heaven. Finally, pentecostalism has been characterized by people being used by God, speaking in tongues, and other spiritual gifts (Balmer, p. xiv-xv).

These sub-categories of evangelicalism spread throughout the South and influenced social norms with moral requirements, which led to the region being nicknamed the southern Bible Belt, but often simply referred to as the Bible Belt. Mencken first used the term Bible Belt to characterize the southeastern and south-central areas of the U.S. (Shapiro, 2006). He branded the region as the Bible Belt in 1924, just before the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925. The trial that took place in Dayton, Tennessee pitted a teacher against the State of Tennessee (Israel, 2004). The State of Tennessee used biblical justification for policing science content in schools. The crime in question was teaching Darwinism—the theory of human evolution. Because many believed that Darwinism went against the story of creation from the Bible, local government passed the Butler Act which forbade the teaching of human evolution.

While I acknowledge Barton's (2012) definition of the Bible Belt and define it historically, others argue that the term reflects a non-region-specific meaning, as the same calcified rigor of religious beliefs presents itself in other pockets of the United States, such as the Midwest (Brunn, Webster, & Archer, 2011). My first understanding of the Bible Belt centralized its "place-ness", but I have since come to understand the Bible Belt as a state of mind as well as a place. Broadening the Bible Belt to include other regions allows for the consideration of different places that reflect the same evangelical fundamentalism. However, while I agree with situating the Bible Belt in a particular place, I assert that the Bible Belt is simultaneously placeless, something that one cannot point to on a map. Rather than developing meaning from a specific place, the Bible Belt is also a *structure of feeling* (Williams, 1977) and a *habitus of learning* (Becker, 2004; Bourdieu, 1977).

Williams defines a structure of feeling as:

a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension...which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating...These are often more recognizable at a later stage, when they have been...formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations. (p. 132)

This definition of a structure of feeling parallels the nature of the Bible Belt because people in the region govern themselves in unspoken but understood ways of thinking and being. People in the Bible Belt follow assumptive rules of which the previous generation would likely approve. While residents of the region update religious law to balance social movements, the core of these rules remain consistent. The Bible Belt, then, becomes a mentality that people constantly renegotiate and redefine.

Built into the fabric of everyday ways of being, Bible Belt mentality has become a culture in the ways that it has influenced laws, education, and social norms. For Bourdieu (1977), a *habitus of learning* replaces the term *culture*, where culture describes “structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition)...systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*” (p. 72). Becker (2004), further explains a *habitus of learning* as

an embodied pattern of action and reaction, in which we are not fully conscious of why we do what we do; not totally determined, but a *tendency* to behave in a certain way. Our “*habitus of listening*” is tacit, unexamined, seemingly completely “natural.” We listen in a *particular* way without thinking about it, and without realizing that it even is a way of listening. Most of our styles of listening have been learned through unconscious imitation

of those who surround us and with whom we continually interact...Our perceptions operate within a set of habits gradually established throughout our lives and developed through our continual interaction with the world beyond our bodies, the evolving situation of being-in-the-world. (p. 71)

Both *habitus of learning* and *structure of feeling* are terms that are flexible enough to encompass the beliefs and practices of an area, space, or group of people. Both terms, therefore, define and describe the way that the Bible Belt mentality operates. The work of Becker (2004), Bourdieu (1977), and Williams (1977) put forth terms that can be used to account for multiple meanings of the Bible Belt—historical place, state of mind, and beliefs and practices. Because the denotation and connotation of a structure of feeling are not static and impermeable, in this project, using the term allows one to consider participants' varied understandings of the Bible Belt and their experiences of similar structures.

The Bible Belt mentality is staunchly conservative and often unaccepting of diversity across many aspects of identity, including but not limited to religion, politics, race, family structure based on gender, and sexuality, hence the research population for the current study. The mentality or structure of feeling is one that has rejected anything that bore any semblance of liberal theology and painted the Bible Belt as religiously homogenous (Woodberry & Smith, 1998). This image of the Bible Belt continues today. As a concept, the Bible Belt is flexible, and elements of racism, sexism, and homophobia are built into the foundation of the concept so that each person is affected differently based on their layers of identity. Spangenberg (2019) traced the foundation of racism in the Americas back to when Christians in power concluded that Christianity should supplant Judaism. Christians in power began degrading Jews, thus sowing seeds of discord between people associated with the two religions. According to Spangenberg,

“These beliefs created fertile soil for the development of racism in the Western world...religious convictions fed into the sociopolitical and economic policies of the Western world” (p. 1).

Beliefs about the importance of Christianity and Christians above Judaism and Jews became rules and prejudiced actions against Jews. Evangelists, seeking to spread the “good news” of Christianity, traveled south to the region scholars now identify as the Bible Belt (Balmer, 2010/2016). Once there, they set into motion the supremacy of Christianity, which not only led to intolerance of religious differences but also a disdain for identities that do not reflect a White, Christian, and heterosexual society with men making and executing law, as outlined in the Bible. The constrictive nature of Christianity of its ridicule of the Jewish faith helped spur further other oppressions, namely racism (Spangenberg, 2019).

The habitus of learning that is the Bible Belt is one of an ideological weight that informs policy; there is no separation of church and state. Social beliefs are linked with religious beliefs. As a structure of feeling, the Bible Belt is a worldview or ideology that is not fixed, “is what is actually being lived, and not only what is thought as being lived” (Williams, p. 131). It incorporates “meanings and values as they are actually lived and felt, and the relations between these formal or systematic beliefs” (p. 132). The Bible Belt is a palpable space in which evangelical beliefs permeate and define the social aspects of home life, education, government, church attendance, musical consumption, and patriotism.

Positioning Myself

As I delineate this area as the context for this project, the subject becomes deeply personal. It was in the Bible Belt that I first developed beliefs about love, faith, and self-worth. Looking upon the world with situated knowledge based on this area, it is necessary to openly acknowledge my ties to this project. I am unable to *bracket out* (Creswell, 2007) or remove my

ways of knowing from this study. Indeed, it is my ways of knowing that compel me to do this work, which uses people's narratives as a foundation.

Scholars have addressed the need for narrative researchers to explicitly state the ways in which they are positioned in the world, as researchers' biases influence the way they approach their work (Clandinin, Connelly, & Chan, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lyle, 2009).

Moreover, Patel (2016) encourages researchers to consider how they "are entangled in the research they conduct" (p. 58). She urges researchers to reflect on the experiences that make researchers qualified to carry out a particular study, answering the question "Why me?" Patel writes, "Central to my discussion of 'Why me?' is a responsibility to consider one's place within and among longitudinal and vast patterns of who has been researched, by whom, and from what theoretical frameworks" (p. 58).

I have always pondered the concept of difference. At a pre-teen age, I began noticing the concept of sexuality, what was accepted and what was labeled *unacceptable* or *different*. As I struggled to understand my own sexuality in relation to dominant discourses (music, television, church, teachers, friends), I knew that the people around me would label me in negative ways if I failed to act on my attractions in an acceptable manner. For the next decade, I hid my bisexuality in many ways, mostly by only acknowledging my attraction to the opposite sex. I learned strategies of identity management long before I knew there was a term for the ways in which I masked parts of my sexual identity. I had heard horror stories about teenagers and adults who lived with their parents telling their parents of their non-normative sexual identities only to be disowned and abandoned, so I feared those circumstances as the worst things that could happen to me if I ever spoke about my attractions. Someone once told me that people will generally tolerate you if you are different from dominant society in one or two ways, but they will dismiss

or shun you if you are different in three or more major ways. Thus, my identity as an African American, queer woman rendered me worthy of dismissal. I had learned this “fact” almost as well as I had learned to drive on the right side of the road.

Over time, I realized the toll that hiding parts of my identity was taking on my mental, spiritual, and physical health, and at 24 years old I openly acknowledged my queerness; I “came out” as bi⁶ to my parents and a few close friends. I viewed coming out as the most difficult thing I had ever done, as it meant facing possible backlash from friends and family for my “lifestyle choices” being amoral and wrong. The next few years of my life revealed what Ward and Winstanley (2005) found, that coming out is a reiterative process, and that there are negotiations that one considers when facing the decision to come out or what level of out one should or could be in a given environment (Griffin, 1991). My experiences likely resemble those people with whom I share identity markers – the research population of this study.

As a graduate student, deciding that I wanted to focus on music education research topics that dealt with gender and sexuality, I feared that the very acknowledgement of interest in these topics would reveal my non-normative sexual identity to a new group of people. Further, I knew that this type of sexual identity was not something one openly spoke of in the area in which I had lived my entire life—the Bible Belt. I knew the Bible Belt to be a staunchly conservative area in terms of religion and politics. Through friends, reading, and personal experience I understood the risks of being different in a conservative area. As I tried to put this research topic out of my mind for fear of outing myself, my own experiences compelled me to consider other queer music educators. Were their experiences like mine? Did they struggle with issues of race and sexuality? How did the restrictions of the Bible Belt influence their methods of identity management? Did

⁶ I prefer *bi* to *bisexual*, as the former is more reflective of the language the community uses.

their own religious beliefs influence if they were out? Had they found a community that welcomed their so-called difference?

I approach this study as an African American bi woman who has struggled to accept her interlocking identities in the face of racist and homophobic discourses. As these discussions often require a particular amount of (White) privilege and power to effect change, dominant forces in society should use their social capital to fight for the increased rights of minoritized people. As Brown (2019) said, “The people who are targeted by racism and homophobia and heterosexism and gender bias are not responsible for initiating these conversations and building the tables where these should be happening.” However, as those efforts seem limited at best, I put forward this project to highlight voices like mine, that can speak to the lived experiences of being Black and queer in the Bible Belt. I see this study as a way of “talking back” (hooks, 1989) to systems of power that would keep this population powerless. Motivated by the often-ignored realities of queer people of color in music education research, I strive to create a space that takes into account the experiences and narratives of being Black and queer in a restrictive region like the Bible Belt. Through this study, I hope to allow participants to construct their own narratives and write alongside them (Hess, 2018). Finally, though I write here the ways in which I approach this study, I am mindful of the dynamics of being in an authoritative position, and throughout the study I will strive to give agency to participants. It is my sincerest hope that in using my position and social capital to address axes of power and oppression that my participants and I can work to change the systems that compartmentalize our “complex wholes into disparate pieces” (Patel, 2016, p. 19) in order to dominate us.

I am concerned with multiple layers of identity, including religion, race, sexual identity (with attention to gender), and music education as a career choice. I draw upon my own

experiences because I suspect that others who share my identities grapple with similar issues in this region. As this type of specificity regarding identity has not been explored in the literature, I believe that hearing the stories of this population paints a fuller, more accurate picture of music education.

Theoretical Lenses

In order to understand participants' multifaceted narratives surrounding identity as African American LGBTQ music educators in the Bible Belt, I will employ two frameworks in this study. The first, labeling theory, will guide my analysis of how people in dominant roles use labels to demean the character of people who reflect identities incongruous with dominant identities. The second, queer theory, will aid in examining participants' experiences and choices in how they deconstruct labels attached to their interlocking identities.

Labeling Theory

In today's society, labels dictate the ways in which people conceptualize knowledge. According to McConnell-Ginet (2003), "labels often identify social, political, and attitudinal groupings into which people quite self-consciously do or do not enter" (p. 70). In this way, labeling helps us to remember people and things. While labeling can be a neutral or positive attachment, such as *brave*, *mother*, or *student*, labeling can also be negative, such as *unhealthy*, *dirty*, or *criminal*. When a person commits a crime, society labels that person a criminal, and the person is regarded in that way for the foreseeable future, which could include outright humiliation for the crime committed or shunning that person from certain parts of society, a more passive form of humiliation. A similar process occurs for those that society sees as a blight on its identity. For example, the dominant people in early American society deemed same-sex

attraction *bad* and pursued laws that prevented equitable treatment of same-sex-loving people (Fejes, 2008). This negative aspect of labeling can have damaging consequences.

Used in many criminology studies, labeling theory gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. The theory has mostly been used to answer two questions: “Why are some people rather than others chosen for official labeling? And what is the effect of official labeling on future behavior?” (Farrington & Murray, 2014, p. 1). Here, “official labeling” means labels that later reflected laws. For example, during the 1940s and 1950s, not performing one’s gender through clothing – male and female impersonation – was considered immoral and distasteful (Sullivan, 2003, p. 27). From this labeling, dominant society enacted laws that gave police officers the right to arrest those who were found without at least three articles of clothing representative of their gender (p. 27). During the 1960s and 1970s criminologists used labeling theory to think of reasons why certain people were labeled as a threat to society, resulting in government entities enacting laws to discriminate against people of whom they did not approve.

The way that a reference group labels an individual directly affects how a person defines self in relation to other people, so that a person who is deemed as bad, dangerous, or a criminal by their reference group will also conceptualize self in this way in relation to society at large. George Mead, a philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist, studied how a person defines the self. According to Matsueda (1992), Mead believed that individuals use reference groups made up of family and peers to define their thoughts and definitions of self by entrusting members of their reference group to provide feedback about elements of their life. That person then uses the feedback from their reference group to shape their definition of self. French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1973), like Mead, believed that individuals used reference groups to define themselves in relation to society. She asserted that laws reflect shared meanings and the shared

morality of a society. When a society responds to a crime in an openly punitive manner, that society sends a clear, unmistakable message to the rest of its members that the specific behavior will not be tolerated, which defines what is *right* or *moral*.

The term *social interaction* involves the ways people communicate, including imbedded communication. Driven by the concept of an unfixed society, Blumer (1986) developed a strong interest in the language and symbols people use to communicate and the meanings therein. He was particularly interested in the ways in which people defined and created symbols, as those symbols were then used to interpret different situations and inevitably to produce new symbols. The creation of new symbols and new ways of thinking and being echoed what early social philosophers believed to be true, that society was an ever-changing entity. As people create new symbols and meanings, over time, society concretizes common understandings of said symbols. Thus, those involved in communication describe and define a given situation by the language and symbols they understand. Symbolic interactionists used this principle to deconstruct deviance (see for example Becker, 1963; Matsueda, 1992; Tannenbaum, 1957).

American sociologist Howard Becker (1963) expanded labeling theory to define deviance not as an absolute but an understanding created and carried out by society (p. 9). “Deviance...is not a specific behavior or characteristic of a category of persons. Rather, deviance is a social relation: a set of social institutions, in which such behaviors and characteristics are defined, recognized and processed” (Steinert, 2005). Becker concerned himself with the ways in which labels cause the so-called deviant to seek refuge in groups of people who share a common label. Those groups provide the necessary acceptance and support for the deviant. Because people who have been shunned from society are likely to find common ground between each other, the so-

called deviants are likely to work together in society, acting as a person's new reference group to replace the ones that no longer want them.

Later labeling theorists were concerned with how individuals acquired the label of deviant (Schur, 1984). According to several labeling theorists, labeling a person as deviant immediately limits the deviant's ability to function in society as before because once labeled a deviant, the rest of society treats that person differently, which then encourages the person to see themselves as "bad", which in turn changes the opportunities available to that person, such as careers or hobbies (Becker, 1963; Kroska, Lee, & Carr, 2017; Lemert, 1951; Paternoster & Iovanni, 1989; Schur, 1971).

Labeling theory now concerns itself with how powerful groups in society dominate less-powerful groups. At its core, labeling theory is about two things: (1) power and the conflict between who has power and who does not, and (2) how the powerless person labeled deviant restructures their life to form a new self-identity after being labeled delinquent (Paternoster & Bachman, 2013).

Labeling theory views deviance as a socially constructed meaning and belief that is designed to keep powerful entities in power and to keep the powerless immobile and a non-threat. Deviance, then, is nothing more than a power struggle between those who have power and those who do not. Foucault (1978) explains:

Power is essentially what dictates its law...Power prescribes an "order"...that operates...as a form of intelligibility...Power acts by laying down the rule: power's hold . . . is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law. (p. 83)

In essence, those who have power are the ones who seemingly create knowledge in the form of laws, where power is “the ability to define phenomena and make them act in a desired manner” (Patel, 2016, p. 72). People demonstrate this power by assigning so-called deviants negative labels thus influencing how society “knows” or “sees” the individual. Those in power, therefore, construct knowledge in ways that reflects their own biases. However, knowledge existed long before those in power rose to power (see Patel, 2016, pp. 34-40).

Before the current sources of societal power rose to their positions of power, people embraced indigenous knowledge. The ability to create knowledge and the power dynamic therein intertwines with ownership, specifically land ownership. Several scholars (Harmon, 2010; Newkirk, 1996; Smith, 2012; Strauss, 2014) critique the ways people conceptualize data as knowledge and ownership. Discourses, such as feminist and indigenous methodologies, disrupt and destabilize what the academy or society understands as “data.” Writers in Indigenous and feminist methodologies point to colonialism and the obsession with land ownership as a key link to how society develops definitions of knowledge. Patel (2016) writes, “To sustain any land grab, the peoples already residing there must be eliminated in order for settlers to justify their seizure and the land as vacant, replacing Indigenous peoples” (p. 37). When colonizers seize land and eliminate Indigenous peoples, they also eradicate Indigenous peoples’ knowledge, replacing previously-held knowledge with their own. In order for this “new knowledge” to become *the* way of knowing, “Indigenous peoples must disappear...they must *always* be disappearing” (Smith, 2012, as cited in Patel, 2016, p. 37). Therefore, those in power, who create knowledge in the form of laws, do so because they have removed and replaced previous knowledge.

Though labeling theory dates back to the 1960s, it remains relevant today in the ways it allows one to deconstruct systems of power to see how people make decisions and how those

decisions shape lives. Through a close and careful reading of the theory's history, researchers can understand the racist past of the U.S., substantiated through the demonization of people of color, specifically African Americans (Dawson, 1996; Diversi, 2016), a point to which I return in Chapter 2. Labeling theory's relevance is situated in its application to today's world, specifically in matters of sexuality, as non-normative sexual identities continue to carry stigmas. In my project, I will use labeling theory to analyze the use of labels on the population of K-12 music educators who identify as LGBTQ and teach in the Bible Belt.

Queer Theory

The second theory I will employ as a lens in this project is queer theory. Queer theory is a philosophical movement in which people critique, resist, and transform systems of power and domination regarding identity. Teresa de Lauretis (1991) coined the term queer theory and urged people to critique the ways in which the dominant powers of society constructed identity. She encouraged people to consider who makes labels and whom labels serve. Because of queer theory's basis in sexology, the study of the interaction of the sexes (Merriam-Webster.com), many associate queer theory with lesbian and gay studies. However, queer theory incorporates elements of gender studies, feminist theory, and critical race theory. Queer theory also encourages people to consider identities intersectionally, that is, the ways in which identities and their corresponding oppressions overlap (Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989).

The origins of queer theory span back to the end of the 19th century when Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Hirschfeld began categorizing different iterations of sexuality (Barker & Scheele, 2016; Sullivan, 2003). From this project, society began to see sexuality as a type of person instead of behaviors. Borrowing from labeling theory, dominant powers began labeling homosexuals as bad and untrustworthy people (Sullivan, 2003). Soon after, a few writers and

dignitaries such as Radclyffe Hall and John Sholto Douglas, Marquess of Queensberry helped *queer* become the word of choice to speak about homosexual people (Foldy, 1997). Though the label of *queer* was used pejoratively, these events led to a host of sociologists and philosophers critiquing the definitions of sexuality and describing it in varied ways.

In the Kinsey Reports, American sexologist Alfred Kinsey developed what is now known as the Kinsey scale that indicates degrees of sexual identity ranging from 0 (*fully heterosexual*) to 6 (*fully homosexual*). Although it would take some time to develop, this scale was the very beginning of society recognizing the idea of sexuality as fluid in general, though the concept of sexual fluidity within the individual did not gain traction for some time. However, in the mid-twentieth century, society still viewed homosexuality as an illness, a deviance from the natural, the normal, the legitimate. This was largely because of the research of sexologists Johnson and gynecologist Masters (1966/1970). Their human sexual response studies, primarily conducted on heterosexual couples, defined “normal sex” as sex between a man and a woman, which many maintain today. Their studies also led to reinforced notions of homosexuality as an illness or sickness to be cured. However, some writers decided to question the very sources of power which defined homosexuality as an illness.

Propelled by the actions and growing triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement, the largest group to underscore the socially constructed nature of sexuality and gender defined themselves as feminists. Some feminists focused on sexuality (see Fuss, 1991; McIntosh, 1968; Rich, 1980), while others centered gender or the seemingly indivisible relationship between the two (see Butler, 1999; de Beauvoir, 2009; Sedgwick, 1990; Wittig, 1969). Still others focus on other systems of oppression such as age, race, and class (see Anzaldúa, 1987; Cohen, 1997; Lorde, 1984;). As with sexual identity, society has created and maintained specific levels of acceptance

related to age, race, and class. Ageism, racism, and classism all effect how a person navigates life. The feminists cited above helped shape the queer theory of today. Rich (1980) encouraged thinking critically about all sexual identities, deconstructing them and noting their attached social capital. She advanced the idea of the lesbian continuum and used it to locate ways to combat what she calls “compulsory heterosexuality.” For Rich, compulsory heterosexuality refers to the myriad ways in which women are made to believe that heterosexuality is the correct sexuality, “including the privileges and punishments associated with conformity and deviance” (Sullivan, 2003, p. 120). Indeed, compulsory heterosexuality reaffirms the patriarchy (dominance of men) and heteropatriarchy (dominance of heterosexuality) as *natural* and *right*.

While the historical fights for basic civil rights have propelled queer theory, some critique queer theory’s lack of inclusion of other identity components like race and class. De Lauretis (1986) even rejected the notion of what queer theory became because its uses were not critical enough about gender, sexuality, and all the systems of domination and power.

Discussion surrounding sexuality and queerness represents a single layer of a person’s identity, leaving considerations of other layers, such as race, ability, and class out of the discourse. Not “seeing” themselves in discussions of sexuality, several scholars extended queer theory to incorporate often overlooked components of identity in their work. Author and scholar E. Patrick Johnson (2001) developed “quare studies” to examine the experiences of queer people of color. Scholars such as Crenshaw (1989), Collins (2004), Murphy et al. (2009), and hooks (1981) centered intersectionality. Intersectionality accounts for systems of oppression (e.g., race, class, gender, age, sexual identity, and (dis)ability) and how they work together to produce interconnected marginalization. For example, in employing intersectionality, one realizes that the only way to approach understanding a Black queer woman’s experiences is through looking at

how the dimensions of race, sexuality, and gender overlap and complicate each other. Without noting the intersections of each dimension, one can only glimpse a fragment of the marginalization she experiences (Lorde, 1984). It is through an intersectional lens that I seek to use queer theory in the current project. Queer theory will aid in understanding how participants think and act outside of binaries and social norms to deconstruct labels associated with their intersecting identities.

Combining Labeling Theory and Queer Theory

Heretofore, I have traced the histories of labeling theory and queer theory separately. However, for the current study, I will employ them simultaneously. As both theories call into question axes of power and domination, using both will allow me to draw attention to the powers at play in participants' lives. Earlier, I mentioned the notion of homosexuality as an illness, something from which to be cured. As negative actions based on this belief continue, it will be important to use both theories to "queer" or critique labels associated with African American LGBTQ music educators. Like Pat Griffin (1991), I will also use the theories to examine the role of labels in participants' identity formation and management. For example, some people might resist public acknowledgment of their sexual identity for fear of the labels and stereotypes associated with these identities. Perhaps, negative labels associated with LGBTQ identities compel some people to come out, thinking that positive examples of LGBTQ people could help destroy negative labels. These considerations will inform interview questions and help frame participants' overall narrative. Queer theory will help me deconstruct the fundamentalist view of what constitutes a family or a relationship to uncover barriers and microaggressions (Sue, 2010) that prevent African American LGBTQ music educators in the Bible Belt from being their "true self" in their workplace (Thomas-Durrell, under review).

Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative study is to understand how K-12 music educators in the Bible Belt navigate their lives in relation to axes of power and domination, specifically related to identity. I am concerned with multiple layers of identity, including religion, race, sexual identity (and its association with gender), and music education as a career choice. I draw upon my own experiences because I suspect that others who share my identities grapple with similar issues in this region. As this type of specificity regarding identity has not been explored in the literature, I believe that hearing the stories of this population provides a fuller, more accurate picture of music education. In order to have a better understanding of how this population of teachers navigates their professional and personal lives, I will focus on the following research question: How do K-12 African American LGBTQ music educators who teach in the Bible Belt describe their negotiation of various identity markers (race, sexual identity, religion, and other social norms that stem from religious beliefs) in their professional environments? With this main guiding research question is, I will attempt to ascertain how participants perceive that their identity markers intersectionally impact each other. In highlighting these varied experiences, I hope to encourage allyship, believing that when more teachers become aware of hardships this particular population faces, they will choose to be in solidarity with this multiply-marginalized population of teachers. Further, it is my hope that this allyship will result in more teachers feeling safe to live in radical honesty (DeJean, 2007) – to bring all parts of their identity to the classroom, not hiding or diminishing any aspect.

Content Warning

As this work engages with racism and homophobia embedded into conservative religious practices, I present potentially challenging topics. I include participant stories that reveal traumas

that influenced participants' identity construction and management. These stories might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, or anxiety. This work deals with sexual abuse and suicidal ideation. I thus urge the reader to proceed with this potential in mind.

CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this review of literature, I discuss the ways in which the Bible Belt constrains and allows different identities through surveillance that often leads to self-surveillance. I detail how religion, race, gender, and sexuality function separately and intersectionally in the region, with particular focus on sexual identities, explore the issues that teachers navigate in relation to sexual identities in the Bible Belt and across the U.S. Finally, I contemplate other considerations that emerge when focusing on music education. The present project explores the experiences of K-12 LGBTQ music educators who identify as African American and teach in the Bible Belt; this chapter, therefore, analyzes and reviews the literature in relation to religion, race, gender and sexuality.

The Panopticon

To hold people under scrutiny is to monitor everything about them – where they go, what they do (Lyon, 2007). Countless stories (*1984*), movies (*Enemy of the State*, *Equilibrium*), and television shows (*Person of Interest*, *Scandal*) portray the nerve-racking and unsettling feeling of being watched. When people know they are being surveilled, out of fear, they often modify their behaviors to assure safety (Marthews & Tucker, 2017; Snyder, 1974). This type of intense surveillance manifests in the panopticon. In this section, I invoke Bentham's (1791) panopticon that was later used by Foucault (1977) to begin to explore how the Bible Belt allows and constrains certain identities. From the Greek *pan* meaning "all" and *optikos* meaning "of or for sight," a panopticon is a circular prison watched by a central guard. The central location of the guard is effective in that it allows the guard to watch the prisoners' behaviors at any time. Because the prisoners do not know when the guard might focus on their cell, they manage their own behaviors, practicing self-surveillance. Many times, they also manage the behaviors of their

fellow inmates. For example, if a prisoner saw that another prisoner was doing something that warranted suspicion, the first prisoner might alert the guard to the suspicious behavior in an attempt to gain favor with the guard. The signaling prisoner might also alert the guard because they do not want another prisoner to obtain a privilege that they do not have. In other words, if one cannot partake in a certain behavior, then no one can.

Much of the U.S. already exists in a panoptic culture like the one described above. Electronic government surveillance exhibits key characteristics of the panopticon metaphor, in which high-ranking government officials use wiretaps and access user information in an effort to thwart possible threats to U.S. denizens (Greenwald, 2014; McStay, 2017; Stoycheff, Liu, & Wibowo, 2018). Lio (2014) focused on the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) and “how the presence of video cameras and the diffusion of its images through the mass media” (p. 129) result in social control. Invoking the idea of a “rural panopticon,” Philo, Parr, and Burns (2017) indicate another interpretation of panoptic methods that speaks to people from small communities’ “constant inspection of everyone by everyone else, accompanied by a chatty insistence on tale-telling about wrong-doers” (p. 237). The rest of this section take up elements of each of the aforementioned panoptic circumstances, especially the last one, in which people observe each other daily; “They constituted among them a network of permanent observation” (Foucault, 1977, p. 295). In the place of electronic government surveillance or CCTV or rural panopticon, I show how the practices in the Bible Belt operate panoptically.

Extending the surveillance metaphor, the Bible Belt serves as a panopticon in the ways in which some of those who subscribe to fundamentalist beliefs police other people. Some dominant groups in the Bible Belt population establish their knowledge as norms, creating a by-product of approval and appreciation for acceptable conduct and stigma for undesirable

lifestyles. Galvanized by an interpretation of a Bible verse⁷ that commands them to spread knowledge of the moral way to live and to convert the unbelieving sinner, dominant evangelical fundamentalists seek to spread their dogma and equip people with religious rhetoric in order to produce a society that reflects their conservative religious beliefs. As developing norms concretize, more people behave in normative ways and begin to police the behaviors of other people under the guise of discipleship (Hudson, 2018). The monitoring of religious beliefs and practices often forms the basis for other kinds of management (of race, gender, and sexuality, for example).

The actions of staunch evangelical fundamentalists in the Bible Belt parallel Bentham's (1791) description of the panoptic prison because of the ways in which some groups who live in the Bible Belt manage certain aspects of everyday life, most notably religion, race, gender, and sexuality. Invoking the panopticon and prison discourse reflects common experiences of many African Americans. The prison metaphor is particularly apt given the ways in which law enforcement surveils the African American community (Hendrix et al., 2018). Police departments, mostly comprised of White officers, often monitor African American communities because senior-ranking officers socialize newer officers to believe that African Americans fit the labels "problem" and "high risk" (p. 54). Associating African Americans with negative and threatening labels allows officers to feel justified in policing Black behavior that they feel could threaten their authority and dominance. According to Hendrix et al., "surveillance technology operates as a form of social control that is differentially applied to racial minorities to manage what is perceived to be a greater proclivity toward criminal behavior" (p. 53). Ultimately, police

⁷ Matthew 28:19 (NIV) reads, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

officers surveil African Americans in an endeavor to maintain power, that is, to control knowledge and influence on societal norms.

Some scholars characterize the Bible Belt as an area driven by religion and assert that its denizens internalize what is considered acceptable behavior and deviant behavior (Sheehan & Vadjunec, 2016; Whitehead & Perry, 2017; Zawoysky, 1972). Feelings of what defines acceptability enable and constrain certain types of identities, specifically constraining identities that pose a threat to the hegemonic powers that regulate human behavior. When certain behaviors or ways of being are not accepted, they may be wholeheartedly rejected or tolerated, in the latter case the behavior is allowed without the full support of being considered valid. Intolerant of thoughts, behaviors, and identities that differ from dominant discourses, leaders and officials in the Bible Belt label and stigmatize behaviors that they would like to see eliminated as “bad” or “dangerous,” thinking that most people will turn away from the behaviors. This system of labeling works well, so well that some manage other people’s performance of the unwanted behaviors, and over time, some people start to monitor and manage their own actions.

African American Families and Sexuality

In the previous section, I discussed a heavily racialized form of surveillance on the part of White power structures toward Black people. In the current section, I continue to invoke the idea of self-surveillance while dissecting the ties between African Americans and church, showing how the Black Church perpetuates heteropatriarchy and heterosexuality as the dominant and normative sexuality, as defined under the umbrella term of *compulsory heterosexuality* (Rich, 1980). I highlight how the ties between African Americans and church reveal a similar surveillance of Black people by those in power in their own community which sometimes produces self-surveillance. As the current project focuses on the experiences of African

Americans, it is particularly important to note specific factors that impact many of their lives. This section discusses constrictions of sexuality and associated gender roles for African American women and men that lead to self-surveillance. Though there are many similarities between the two groups, specific differences emerge for each.

I painted the picture of the Bible Belt's function as a panopticon (Bentham, 1791) in thinking through the ways in which fundamentalist religious beliefs form the foundation of many normalized identities and behaviors in the region. To leave the critical analysis of the Bible Belt at that point fails to recognize the diversity in fundamentalist beliefs and portrays fundamentalists as a homogenous group. Religious beliefs and traditions vary within fundamentalism and some beliefs stem from different ethnic groups. For example, the Black Church, defined as a conglomerate of churches that are composed of mostly African American or Black congregations (Adkison-Bradley et al., 2005), espouses a different message than other ethnic groups (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). This ethnic group's theology infuses common Christian beliefs with a focus on "a unified community, equality, and being free from oppression" (Ledet, 2017, p. 790). With its central message of liberation through Christ, the Black Church, from the time of legalized slavery to the Civil Rights Movement and on to now, has served as a vital source of cultural heritage empowerment (Ward, 2005) and a hub of information on matters such as family and community values (Fountain, 2010). As such, nearly 80% of African Americans state the importance of religious beliefs and demonstrate this priority with regular church attendance (Pew Research Center, 2009).

Regular visits to religious services serve to create and cement norms about sexuality and the construction of family for much of the African American population. As religious African Americans are often conservative in their religious beliefs (Ledet, 2017), the Black Church

“espouses a profoundly conservative theological position on sexuality” (Greene, 2000, p. 246), one of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980). In this atmosphere, “theological homophobia” (Monroe, 1998) pervades and is built on the concept of the ever-important, dominant, and superior man juxtaposed with the “devaluation of women, lesbians, gays, and transgendered [sic] persons” (Greene, 2000, p. 246). Many church leaders use derogatory language to openly condemn homosexuality (Smallwood et al., 2017), thereby bolstering heterosexuality as the moral and acceptable sexuality, with men ranking above women. Congregants internalize this message and teach, perform, and perpetuate these norms. In teaching these “divinely ordained principles of hierarchy and patriarchy” (Burdette, Ellison, & Hill, 2005, p. 182) to their families, churchgoers assign specific roles for men and women. The beliefs that men outrank women in society and perform better than women in leadership roles form the basis of complementarianism. Sheldon (2017) explains, “Complementarianism insists that the modern world has eroded the natural, and rightful, leadership roles for men” (p. 978). Under this patriarchal system of thinking, followers privilege men as the pillars of society and reject any contexts, such as homosexuality, that might diminish men’s biblical gender roles—strong, dominant, and complemented by women. Because of the pervasive role that the Black Church plays in some African Americans’ lives, when some queer African Americans openly acknowledge their sexual identity to their families, they are denied access to their families, the same unit through which they learned how to love and how to be loved. The family is where they learned how to navigate racial prejudice and discrimination, but when a family disowns a queer African American person, those persons often exist without their primary reference group, a source of support, comfort, and protection against hatred (Garcia-Preto, 2005; Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996). This navigation of family dynamics might add additional pressure on Black

LGBQ people to remain in the closet so as not to lose the primary source of support from the family from the racial discrimination prevalent in the U.S.

Roles assigned to African American women. Messages about identity to African American women often take the shape of messages heard and felt in church. In church, women are second to men (Greene, 2000; Burdette et al., 2005). Moreover, the role of a woman in a church resembles her role in the home (Harvey & Ricard, 2018). African American women's upbringing grooms them to be strong and resourceful mothers and wives. According to Harvey and Ricard (2018), however, parents and other members of this ethnic group often present only one option for marriage – to a man. To desire another woman goes against the biblical hierarchy for how life should be lived, according to the teachings of many Black churches. Greene (2000) explains how this strong disdain of women attracted to other women may be a result of self-surveillance manifested as internalized racism:

African Americans who have internalized the negative stereotypes, particularly sexual stereotypes of African Americans, may regard any sexual behavior outside of dominant cultural norms as reflecting negatively on African Americans as a group and threatening their chances for acceptance. (p. 245)

Because the notion of a female-female sexual relationship is incongruous with the norms of the dominant society, women who are attracted to other women are often treated as an embarrassment to the African American population whose ideals about sexuality align with those of the dominant culture (Cohen, 1999; Greene, 2000; West, 1999). In many African American families and communities, the only recognized relationships are those of a man and a woman, reinforcing that a woman's role in society is to be with a man. African American women who reject the female-male relationship norm often hide their sexual identity from their family, given

the strong link between African American families and the Black Church. Because of the surveillance of their lives, this population of women engage in self-surveillance in order to stave off racial embarrassment and familial rejection.

Roles assigned to African American men. The type of masculinity put forth by society is one of rigid expectations. These expectations maintained by families and communities sometimes leave Black gay men at an impasse with members of their reference groups who enforce oppressive normative roles. Black families reinforce heteronormative tropes that have been passed down for decades, originating in the Black Church (Quinn & Dickson-Gomez, 2016). The Black community experience is intertwined with the Black Church because of the Church's role of support during the 1950s and 1960s. As the Black community is one of the most devout communities, the teachings of the Black Church have an enormous influence on the daily life and beliefs of Black families. This is sometimes problematic for Black gay men because of the Black Church's adherence to conservative and fundamentalist teachings, namely that homosexuality is a sin. And not only that, but that there are certain performative expectations of men: "sexual prowess, physical dominance, aggression, and antifemininity" (Fields et al., 2015, p. 122).

A gay identity undermines these hyper-masculine strictures (Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Lemelle, 2010; Lemelle & Battle, 2004; Ward, 2005). A Black gay male in the sexuality panopticon (Bentham, 1791), comprised of his family and the Church, learns that in order to keep his relationships intact, he must be a "man's man," tough, stoic, misogynistic, and homophobic (Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Lemelle, 2010; Lemelle & Battle, 2004; Ward, 2005). As one of LaSala and Frierson's (2012) study participants and father put it, "Being a man does not mean you sleep with other men. Being a man means you have a woman and you procreate

and continue the family name” (p. 431). Men who do not fit this mold struggle to accept themselves and find acceptance in society. Hutchinson (1999) describes it this way:

Black gay men continue to feel like men without a people. They carry the triple burden of being Black, male, and gay. They are rejected by many Blacks and barely tolerated by many White gays. They worry that the hatred of other Black men toward them won't change as long as they (heterosexual Black men) continue to believe that gay male identity subverts Black manhood. Black gay men feel alienated from the Black community, from the White gay community, and broader society. (p. 304)

African American men are under constant pressure to live up to the standards set by their ethnic communities. Many queer African American men struggle with negotiating rejection from their families and take extra care to monitor their sexual identities, especially around their families.

The Intersections of Religion, Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Bible Belt

Collectively, religion, race, gender, and sexuality contribute to the disdain and surveillance of certain types of people: those who do not reflect a White, evangelical, cisgender, heterosexual country. Taken separately, the identities in the Bible Belt diminish the quality of life for people who threaten the status quo of what is considered acceptable. Many people would like to believe that this level of hatred disappeared with the passing of specific legislature aimed at equal rights (Garam & Brooks, 2010; Giroux, 2009). However, the studies below show a different reality.

Religion. Religious conservatism might present as an intolerance to differing religious beliefs or beliefs that stem from religion, such as what constitutes a family or a marriage. Earlier in this chapter, I described the southern Bible Belt as an area of conservative evangelicalism that is known for its high levels of religiosity which, according to Vazsonyi and Jenkins (2010)

includes “frequency of religious service attendance, prayer, reading of religious texts, and the importance of religion” (p. 563). With a significant number of people relying on religion for social cues, Bible Belt religion paints a picture of conformity, which is often viewed in opposing ways, positively and negatively. The positive picture of the area’s religious fortitude is one of moral superiority, one that sets an example of how religion can work to take into account all facets of life. However, the negative view of Bible Belt religion is often one of fundamentalism that does not celebrate differences but instead seeks to raise children to be religious conformists who, by internalizing religious teachings, thereby demean and reject beliefs that do not match their own, such as those of non-Christians (Carter, 2007). Goodburn (1998) examined one of her student’s classroom responses to an assigned reading about cultural differences in the U.S. In the college composition course, the student, Luke, demonstrated his reliance upon fundamentalist rhetoric. Goodburn deduced that for Luke, to “tolerate difference undermines his faith that an individual must be saved in order to be accepted” (p. 346). In the recorded interviews for the study, Luke continues, “...not everybody’s tolerable” (p. 346). Vincent, Parrott, and Peterson (2011) explain that religious fundamentalists:

do not adapt and change their beliefs to accommodate new information. Rather, they assimilate contradictory information and doubts into their existing religious belief systems (Hunsberger, 1996). As such, high fundamentalists tend to evidence rigidity in their resistance to arguments and data that contradict their...beliefs. (p. 386)

Many who espouse the tenets of evangelical fundamentalism struggle to be tolerant, but tolerance, which does not seek to understand or make space for something, is not the end goal (Oswald et al., 2017). According to Twenge, Carter, & Campbell (2015), the goal is acceptance, wherein one supports another’s right to believe a certain thing or act or exist in a particular way

without attempting to change the other's mind. Oswald et al. (2017) argue that, "to support difference is to believe that individuals, families, and communities are better off when people are valued *for* their differences, rather than despite them" (p. 42, emphasis in original). With acceptance, there is no sense of superiority or "condescending tolerance" (Schope & Eliason, 2000, p. 69). On a continuum, tolerance, then, is one of the low rungs on the ladder to acceptance, as tolerance does not compel one to be in solidarity with another person. As Carter's study shows, some of those individuals who ascribe to religious fundamentalism find tolerance to go against the core of their faith. Without acceptance of different religious views, it becomes easy for one to view another person as "bad" if that person does not proclaim the same faith. If left unchecked, those thoughts and feelings can become actions that monitor and manage differing religious views.

Race. As U.S. history is a required subject in schools, the majority of the U.S. school population is at least familiar with the South's racist past. All of the regions and states in the Bible Belt have sordid histories of discrimination against people of color. Bell et al. (2016) explored how Africans were deemed inferior on the basis of skin color. This hatred hid under the guise of spurious biological evidence for why Africans were inferior. Carson, Lapansky-Werner, and Nash (2011) explain how lawmakers created a legal basis for enforcing the inferiority of Africans in terms of freedom and rights. House's (1999) qualitative study asserts that racism is "deeply embedded within the national identity itself, built into the American character by history and experience" (p. 3). He further expounds on the construction of what it meant to be White:

Early colonial Americans defined themselves as "White" and "free" in contrast to those who were not, especially slaves and Native Americans. As early settlers escaped the class systems of Europe, they redefined themselves along racial lines, yet another hierarchy of

human worth. The first colonists were mostly English, and they held strong beliefs of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, beliefs that the English displayed throughout their colonies. (p. 3)

House traces continued racism through the post-U.S. Civil War history of educating African-Americans in the South:

Americans have defined their educational system in such a way as to ensure that African Americans (and often other minorities) are treated in an exclusionary way—which is to say that they are saddled with an education which is inferior, and this inferior education contributes to Whites seeing them as having undesirable attributes and as being unable to govern themselves. (p. 10)

Although House conducted his study 19 years ago, these problems and many more persist, specifically covert racism tactics such as racial profiling (Coates, 2008) and colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2002), which I explain below.

Racial profiling involves differential treatment and singling out of non-White people (Coates, 2008). Racial profiling frequently appears in police news stories in which the police officer is White, and the supposed criminal is a person of color. In these stories, Jacobs and O'Brien (1998) write that police are more likely to use deadly force. Often police officers and politicians use racial codes to pair an ethnicity or race with a particular crime. For example, “crime and welfare” usually refer to African-Americans (Gilens, 1996). Piliawsky (1984) refers to racial profiling as “subtly expressed...code words of merit” (p. 141). These racial codes became the mode of choice in which to speak of crimes and other deviant behaviors, such as drug use, broken homes that lead to “illegitimate” children and necessitate welfare payments (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Himmelstein, 1983). While racial profiling is not region specific, it

contributes to the self-surveillance and self-monitoring of African Americans in the Bible Belt, so that racism is compounded by one's other layers of identity and fundamentalist beliefs.

When people claim that they “do not see color” or “do not see race,” they are practicing colorblindness, a type of covert racism. Colorblindness reduces and nullifies problems that people of color face based on race (Walsh, 2004). To say that focusing on our differences (i.e. pointing out race) is what divides us overlooks that “minoritized groups are already divided from one another by virtually every measure” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 189). Halstead (1988) writes that colorblindness “leads to...the disadvantaging of Black people by ignoring or marginalizing their distinctive needs, experiences and identity but may also involve racial injustice” (p. 139). Colorblindness disguises racial hostility so that White people can appear fair and just when “talk[ing] nasty about Blacks” (Bonilla-Silva, 2002). In a region like the Bible Belt, colorblindness is especially rampant, backed by religious claims that race does not matter because all are created in God's image and thus equal in God's sight. In this type of atmosphere, it is easy to overlook the ways in which people of color fight against racial discrimination. The popular children's song “Jesus Loves the Little Children” melts all races together— “red and yellow, Black and White/they are precious in his sight”—to impress upon people's hearts that all are the same to God. Therefore, this religious interpretation affirms that people should not acknowledge difference either.

Unfortunately, though people are often knowledgeable about the South's racial history, fewer people are aware of the continued effects of racism. Some scholars believe racial discrimination to be a thing of the past, yet studies show that racial discrimination persists. Wilson (1978) argues that a lack of advancements in employment and education coupled with poverty have replaced race in determining socioeconomic success and progress of African-

Americans. However, Pager (2007) dispels notions of race as less of a determinant for discrimination. Her study explores the hiring considerations of over 1300 employers based on the perceptions of race in name type, for example, John Stockton versus Kawhi Leonard. Results show that well-qualified “African-American sounding” names received fewer callbacks than their equally qualified White counterparts. More specifically, Pager discovers that African-American men were taken out of consideration for employment before they made it to an in-person interview. In fact, the only information employers were privy to was applicant name and qualifications. From this, Pager concludes that “race has large effects on employment opportunities, with a Black job seeker anywhere between 50 and 500 percent less likely to be considered by employers as an equally qualified White job applicant” (p. 114). A general perception of African Americans being less qualified for a job than their White counterparts can result in measures of surveillance if the African American applicant obtains employment.

Gender. Just as religious beliefs of the Bible Belt inform interfaith and race relations, they similarly define normative gender roles, as I described in an earlier section about Bible Belt roles for women and men. In a list of stances associated with the Bible Belt, Brunn et al. (2011) highlight creationism, which is thought to be a religiously-based response to evolutionary theory. Creationists believe that God created the earth as well as man. From man, God created woman, whose purpose was to help the man fulfill his earthly duties. This story appears at the beginning of the Bible, putting into place a hierarchy for social order that is re-emphasized throughout the Bible (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-33). Those individuals who read the Bible literally, believe women to be inferior to men (Smit, 2018), not taking into account the lack of women’s rights during the time when the first Bible was written. Smit historically details how women essentially had no power and were not considered to rule over anyone or anything.

However, fundamentalists often read the Bible ahistorically and view the performance of gender as described in the Bible—women complementing men (Sheldon, 2017). In doing so, those individuals who perform normative gender roles tend to withhold recognition of people who deviate from normalized concepts of gender (Sheehan & Vadjunec, 2016; Butler, 2004). The refusal to recognize non-normative gender roles leaves those who do not conform to heteronormative roles lacking and searching for social stability. What they find is an elaborate system of power made up of people who seek to monitor and manage societal influences. Specifically, they regulate the influence of people who exist outside of the gender binary.

Though the current section focuses on gender, it is near impossible to discuss the common connotation of gender without also speaking to sexuality. For instance, people in the Bible Belt who believe in conservative gender roles might look down upon a woman who works in construction because her field of work lacks a feminine edge. Likewise, some might reject a man's interpretation of gender if he does not work with his hands, perform manual labor of some kind, or display strength or authority over others. For example, though popularity for stay-at-home-dads has increased steadily (Livingston, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), for men to relinquish their careers for fatherhood was to invite the following critique: "Men are raised to value work as their main source of worth and self-esteem. Society's underlying message is that men who make sacrifices and choose family over career advancement do it because they can't succeed at work" (Landes, 2012). The same is true in relation to sports. Generally believed to be a man's domain, society widely accepts male professional athletes, whereas many people question why a woman desires a career in sports, as sports do not often highlight feminine characteristics, such as gracefulness or flexibility (Grindstaff & West, 2006). People who do not

perform their gender role as assigned (Butler, 2004) are ostracized then described and labeled in a way that make surveilling their lives easy.

Sexuality. For many years, people conflated sexuality norms with gender (Carr, 2005; Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000; Phelan, 1993; Ponse, 1978). “Sex/gender/sexual conflation is a fusion or confusion of terms, including beliefs that sex is the same as gender, that gender connotes sexuality, or that sexuality is equal to sex” (Carr, 2005, p. 119). Phelan (1993) writes of this terminology fusion as, “a presumed natural and inevitable connection among sex, gender, and sexuality, where deviation from gender...is an indication of deviance, either latent or actual, from heterosexuality” (p. 775). This common conflation makes sexuality almost a by-product of gender. In the Bible Belt, the heteronormativity that bolsters the construction of gender is the same normativity that constructs sexuality; men are expected to show attraction to women and to perform masculine tasks and women are expected to openly show attraction to men and to perform feminine tasks and duties (Basow & Johnson, 2000).

The term *compulsory heterosexuality* centers heterosexuality as the normative sexual identity, ignoring the experiences of people who self-identify with the descriptors *lesbian*, *gay*, *bisexual*, and *queer* (Rich, 1980). Additionally, Rich defines compulsory heterosexuality as patriarchy, with a focus on male power and governance as the dominant discourse. One can conceptualize Rich’s term, then, as heteropatriarchy, where there are normalizations surrounding “mothering, sex roles, relationships, and societal prescriptions for women” (Rich, 1980, p. 201). As a system, compulsory heterosexuality perpetuates men in positions of power, and further operates as a mechanism of restriction within the Bible Belt.

With the obligation of appearing strong and stoic, heterosexual men often shy away from any possibility that anyone would think them effeminate or gay (Herek & Glunt, 1993).

Baunach, Burgess, and Muse (2009) hypothesize that heterosexuals' contact with a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ) person would reduce negative attitudes towards LGBQ people, which could then lead to the deconstruction of heteronormativity. However, because associating with a gay man could lead people to label heterosexual men as gay, heterosexual men are unlikely to have contact with gay men, meaning their attitudes about gay, bisexual, or queer men are unlikely to change simply by having contact with a gay man (Berkman & Zinberg 1997; Herek & Glunt 1993). Because heterosexual men fetishize LGBQ women, heterosexual men have more positive attitudes toward them (LaMar & Kite, 1998).

According to a 2017 poll, Americans are more accepting of LGBT people and homosexuality, a 12% increase in the last decade (Pew Research Center, 2019; Statista, 2019). However, Barton's (2012) personal account demonstrates the thinking and beliefs of a large part of the Bible Belt. She details her experience with her neighbor, a White heterosexual man. Once the neighbor learned of Barton's same-sex self-identity, he immediately labeled her lifestyle an "abomination" (p. 2). In fact, all of Barton's participants recount experiences of hiding their sexual identity from others (staying in "the closet") and family rejection once they "came out" (acknowledged their sexual identity publicly).

Though researchers have explored the intersections of sexuality and race, religion and sexuality, and even gender, sexuality and race, little research has explored the intersections of religion, race, gender, sexuality, and location (McQueeney, 2009). One can approach an understanding of the functions of these intersecting factors by looking at them separately. However, it is only by observing and studying the complex interlocking systems that one might envision a more complete picture of the experiences that flow from multiply marginalized identities (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1998). That complete picture would include constraining

identities through surveillance that often leads to self-surveillance, which is magnified because of the intersections of marginalized identities.

Teacher Sexuality in the Bible Belt

Though the United States was supposedly founded on principles of religious freedom (Rasor & Bond, 2011), religious leaders cultivated its southern colonies around evangelicalism (Balmer, 2010; Heyrman, 1997), which infused all aspects of everyday life in the southern colonies that became the Bible Belt, including education (Burton, Johnson, and Tamney, 1989). Heretofore, this chapter has magnified the ways in which different identities function in the Bible Belt. The Bible Belt, with its hyper-heteronormativity (Ferfolja, 2007), surveilles and suffocates non-normative identity markers while celebrating those that reinforce gender roles and the sexuality assumptions that stem from them—what Rich (1980) calls “compulsory heterosexuality.” This section explores literature about non-normative teacher sexuality in the Bible Belt.

Griffin’s (1991) group of participants, 13 queer teachers who teach preschool through 12th grade, describe a spectrum of strategies for how teachers negotiate or practice self-surveillance of their sexual identities at work. These strategies, which I detail later, include passing, covering, implicitly coming out, and explicitly coming out. All participants felt that it was of the utmost importance for them to clearly define their personal and professional lives so that the two never intersected, fearing a host of repercussions should their sexuality become public knowledge at the schools in which they taught. Griffin highlights how these calculated steps of self-surveillance wore on participants’ mental and physical health, manifested in acute isolation and lack of connection with students. Griffin’s study draws on two theories, feminist theory and labeling theory, to look at assumptions about gender that lead to assumptions about sexuality and

deviance from those assumptions. Likewise, Jackson (2007) examines and explores nine lesbian and gay educators' identity disclosures that center "individual feelings of comfort with being gay at school...at all levels—individual, family, school, local community, state, and nation—which interacted in complicated ways to facilitate or inhibit gay teacher identity development" (p. 49).

Woods and Harbeck (1992) report that lesbian and gay educators who do not conform to heteronormative gender roles are often subjected to various forms of homophobia. The researchers describe the 12 lesbian participants' identity management strategies and techniques as carefully maintaining their identity. The strategies manifested themselves in three particular ways that link to self-surveillance: masking their sexuality so as to appear heterosexual, separating themselves from people while at their schools, and further separating themselves from any possible instances in which their sexuality might come into question while at school. All participants feared job loss if students and colleagues knew of their sexual identity. Blount (2006) finds, like Woods and Harbeck, that teachers in positions not traditionally associated with their gender (female P.E. teachers) are typically assumed to be gay or lesbian, and therefore subjected to hostile behaviors. Landi (2018) traces the research on the association between physical education and female sexuality, wherein women associated with physical education are assumed to be lesbians. As such, most research about homosexuality and physical education focuses on the experience of the female-identified teacher.

In recent years, support for the queer community has grown, but schools remain trenches of marginalization for LGBTQ people (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013), reinforcing heterosexual ideologies (Youdell, 2011; Sikes & Piper, 2010; Wharton, 2009). Therefore, teachers continue to practice self-surveillance and negotiate their sexualities while at school or at school-related functions. Like Griffin (1991), Bower-Phipps (2017) explore the construction of deviancy, but

Bower-Phipps goes a step further in employing queer theory to deconstruct “non-normative as unsafe” (p. 34). Often people stereotype non-normative sexual identities as unfit and view the teachers who hold these identities as unsafe. The stereotype of LGBTQ teachers as unsafe often takes the form of a concern that queer teachers will mistreat students (Blount, 2006).

Music Education and Sexuality in the Bible Belt

Many of the specific struggles of LGBTQ teachers enumerated in the previous section apply to music educators as well. Just as the study about lesbian and gay physical education teachers conjured up subject specific issues with stereotypes, the same is true for LGBTQ music teachers. First, people have stereotyped music-related skills as feminine, especially singing (Adler & Harrison, 2004; Koza, 1993) and playing the piano (Abeles & Porter, 1978; Knight, 2006). Men associated with these musical skills might be quickly labeled as effeminate, which points directly to homosexuality (Connell, 2008). Conversely, women in dominant roles within music are seen as masculine and therefore thought to be attracted to the same sex (Abeles, Hafeli, & Sears, 2014). Other musical stereotypes include preconceived notions about single music teachers. The male performer or teacher is understood to be “working on his career,” whereas career women in the music field who put off marriage or motherhood (Monteflores & Schultz, 2010) could be considered homosexual with negative consequences because they are in no rush to add those elements to their lives. Other considerations emerge when focusing on how LGBTQ music educators in the Bible Belt negotiate their sexualities. Though this intersection of identities often makes their lives difficult, their identities also offer powerful opportunities to shape the future of music education.

Cultivating multiple identities. Using Jackson’s (2007) theory of identity development, Palkki (2015) makes sense of how educators continually practice self-surveillance in navigating

their personal and professional selves and the intersections between the two. Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2010) explain identity in terms of intersectionality. According to Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (1998), intersectionality addresses how social powers and identities weave a complex web of interconnections wherein one identity cannot be understood absent of the other identities. For example, one cannot fully understand the experiences of an African American female conductor without noting the importance of race, gender, and the context of the life of a conductor and the ways that these identity markers both interact with and define the other identity markers. This concept aligns with Blackburn and McCready's (2009) findings about queer LGBTQ youth who negotiated class, religion, and race in urban settings. In the study, participants described all of their identities woven together so that they could not separate one from the other. Each identity impacted and influenced the others so that sexuality influenced religion, class, and musicianship, and in turn, all those ways of being in the world influenced sexuality as well. Sometimes the identities intertwined in harmony. At other times, however, participants struggled with an ongoing battle of clashing identities, in which one conflicted sharply with one or more other identities.

Participants of Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2010) place music central to their identity development because of music's creative opportunities. One of their participants experienced friction between his race and sexuality. Many researchers have found that the African-American community has strong disdain for gay, Black men describing them as "the worst there is" (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2010). Blackburn and McCready (2009) state that when working with a queer population, "one has to embrace the complexities of their multiple identities and develop the capacity to understand the intersections among them" (p. 228). Sexuality is but one part of their identity, and to understand their experiences, one must look at all aspects of their identity.

Unfortunately, LGBTQ teachers in the Bible Belt often are not permitted to express all aspects of their identity because of the constant feeling of surveillance from people who espouse evangelical fundamentalist beliefs and practices. Many people learn of an LGBTQ identity and make decisions about that person based on stereotypes or in general, a lack of information about that person, and never experience all a person has to offer.

Identity disclosure. Music educators who self-identify as LGBTQ must overcome many adversities in the teaching field. Central to the experiences of LGBTQ music educators is the negotiation of identity disclosure. Several studies highlight teachers' methods of identity disclosure (Furman, 2012; Griffin, 1991; Jackson, 2007; Natale-Abramo, 2011; Palkki, 2015) focusing on teachers' perceived need to mask clues about their sexual identity to be socially classified as heterosexual (passing). Similar to passing but without deception, camouflaging one's sexual identity involves avoiding places or conversations that might point to their sexuality (covering). The stage of implicitly coming out involves implied narratives about one's sexuality, in which the LGBTQ person would not use a label to define or discuss their sexuality. The final stage is definitively stating one's sexual identity or explicitly coming out. In this stage, people use labels such as "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "queer," or "questioning" when speaking of their sexual orientation. With the high possibility of being dismissed from one's job because of being explicitly out, this stage is considered "high-risk" (Griffin, 1991). Some LGBTQ music educators in the Bible Belt work diligently at passing or covering for fear of the repercussions that could result from their coworkers or students knowing about their sexual identity. Though scholars commonly report findings about four stages of coming out, coming out is actually a continual process (Ward & Winstanley, 2005) in that each time that an LGBTQ person makes the acquaintance of a new person, they must come out again. Whether by word or in deed, in order

for the LGBTQ person to “live their truth” (Thomas-Durrell, in process) that person needs to come out continually, a ceaseless task.

Research suggests that when LGBTQ music educators feel the need to practice self-surveillance and keep strict boundaries between their personal and professional selves to the extent of strategically avoiding conversations about relationships and loved ones, the result is often an internal struggle that manifests itself in several ways, including feeling isolated or isolating oneself from others, which leads to frail relationships with colleagues, students, and parents at school, and can lead to strained personal relationships as well. Several studies highlight the discord in relationships with non-heterosexual people (Ferfolja, 2009; Griffin, 1991; Jackson, 2006, 2007; Kissen, 1996; Lipkin, 1999; Mayo, 2008; Sanlo, 1999). Furman (2011) observed that a participant’s struggle with acknowledging her sexual identity “had caused years of emotional distress, feelings of detachment, loneliness and isolation, troubled relationships in her personal life, [and] distant relationships with students and colleagues” (p. 11-12). Once she realized what was causing her so much pain, she felt compelled to embrace her sexual identity. She had no choice. It was either embrace herself or drown amidst all the internal and external struggles of rejecting part of oneself. Sadly, once she embraced her identity, she was fired from her job, the fear of many LGBTQ music teachers, especially in an area characterized by conservative religious stances.

According to Woods and Lucas (1993) many LGBTQ people have experienced homophobia in the form of job discrimination, and many more fear the possibility of job discrimination. For many music educators, this fear is enough for them to closet themselves at school or even leave the profession altogether while others use their non-normative sexual identities as a way to influence their teaching in positive ways. Many music educators have

begun to risk job discrimination for the sake of their students. Jackson (2007) explores how LGBTQ educators use their identities to inform their teaching practices. He finds that coming out in the classroom can lead to an increase in confidence in one's teaching ability, which allows educators to connect with more students because these educators are not constantly negotiating their identity. Freedom from this negotiation allows teachers to focus more on students' needs.

Furman (2012) seeks to understand how three lesbian band directors negotiate their personal and professional life experiences in relation to their sexuality. Participants express that their sexual identity impacts the ways in which they teach in their music classrooms. One participant reports that parents of her students dislike her because of her sexual identity because they "jumped to conclusions" about what her sexuality meant in terms of teaching. The same participant describes the great lengths she goes to conceal her sexual identity at school and at home. School concealment ranges from having her clothes appear "more feminine" to balance out her short hair to not talking about her long-time partner to colleagues as many others would talk about their husbands or wives. Fear of losing her job even makes the music teacher uncomfortable addressing sexuality slurs like "that's so gay." Her story shows that she had much to fear, as parents complained about her to the superintendent because of her sexuality. Happily, the same music teacher spoke of being supported by teachers, administration, and parents. One administrator explicitly told her that her sexuality was not the focus and that she need not worry. This is the freedom of which Jackson (2007) spoke that allows LGBTQ teachers to focus more on their students and less on negotiating their sexualities in the classroom.

With all the possible consequences for allowing one's sexual identity to be public knowledge, not all of them are negative. To be sure, sexual identity disclosure often leads to changes in relationships with people, but these changes can be positive. Some music teachers

found their colleagues to be quite supportive post-disclosure and were then used as a resource for other faculty to ask important questions to help them understand the implications for non-heteronormative identity in the world (Palkki, 2015).

Mentorship. Many LGBTQ people have found refuge in music education, some from being able to express themselves musically and have a place to fit in and feel accepted. Many queer people, including students and teachers, express feeling safe within music culture. They see music as a safe space, accepting and celebratory of different identities, making music classes a space in which they can visualize their place in society. In a place like the Bible Belt, where some people push LGBTQ people to the margins of society already, music can serve as a space of belonging, which opposes the finding that queer students do not find community in their schools (Grossman et al., 2009). Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2010) explore the experiences of undergraduate gay and lesbian students who were in a music program in high school. They observe that music students use music in several socializing (community-based) ways: expressing themselves musically, bonding with peers, and breaking down barriers of race, class, gender, religion, and sexuality, among others. For their participants, music serves as a safe space in which they can feel accepted and celebrated. Most of their participants seek community in musical activities as do the participants in the Grossman et al. (2009) and Payne (2007) studies. Further they find that queer youth used activities to bolster their missing queer connections.

However, others sometimes use music as a place to hide (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2010; Natale-Abramo, 2011). One participant from Fitzpatrick and Hansen's study physically hid in the band room when she was publicly outed, an action that places the outed student in danger of physical and emotional homophobia at school. Another used his ability in an orchestral setting to mask his sexuality to the greater student body. Payne (2007) puts it this way: "Finding a group

lends protection to developing adolescents as they try out different aspects of the personalities and explore their own potential” (p. 70). Likewise, one of Natale-Abramo’s (2011) participants described the musical paradox when he expressed that he could only be himself in music but that he also used music to hide his identity. In fact, he maintained that paradox when he became a music teacher, adapting his public identity to each classroom environment like a chameleon.

No matter the degree of openness students embrace, covering or flourishing in acceptance, music programs play an increasing role in LGBQ students’ lives through mentorship. When LGBQ music educators feel safe from any physical or psychological threat, they can be proud of their identity and show it outwardly by simply being themselves. Without the need to cloak their identity, LGBQ music educators can serve as models for their students. With more LGBQ teacher visibility, students who identify as LGBQ can start to see themselves as productive members of society, confident and courageous. Many music teacher education programs now include frequent discussions about inclusion on many levels, especially of LGBQ students who also deserve to see themselves in the context of the classroom and on a global level. In this way, music teacher education programs provide mentorship for navigating possible friction in the teaching arena (Palkki, 2015).

Haywood (2011) uses a methodology of phenomenological case study and grounded theory to explore and explain to readers the experiences of LGBT self-identified music educators in their efforts to be an empowering model and mentor for their students. Participants expressed that they wanted to be that model and mentor that they never had as well as to allow students to visualize and interact with a positive LGBT model. One participant expressed that the goal of decentering heteronormativity was not to make their students think and behave just like the participant, but rather simply getting students to understand heteronormativity and point it out

wherever they encounter it. Simply stated, the goal is to make students more aware of the dismissive and disheartening ways in which society works to silence those who dare to operate beyond the gender binary and the heterosexuality that accompanies it. The overarching theme of the findings was that each participant sought to show more of themselves in an effort to “be an example for their students”: a music educator who creates a space where students—*all* students—are celebrated and empowered to be the best musicians they can be.

Inclusion. Music educators have a long history of commitment and dedication to students with the responsibility to nurture and support students’ needs via music. Sexual minorities deserve to be considered when thinking of students’ needs (Bergonzi, 2009). Instead of well-intended sympathy, which passively shares grief but does not extend to a person imagining the depth of what another person is experiencing, teachers need empathy that understands why and how schools are breeding grounds for heteronormativity and so work to decenter the system of heteronormativity. Bergonzi implores music educators to develop an awareness of privileges that benefit the heterosexual educator and therefore impede the advancement of LGBTQ teachers and students alike. Similar actions should follow for recognizing location-based privileges that detract from LGBTQ music teacher and student life.

Palkki (2015) and Robinson and Ferfolja (2001) both note a lack of inclusion of topics related to LGBTQ issues. Many programs shy away from “hard conversations” about race, class, gender, privilege and sexuality that inform teacher philosophy and identity, thereby reinforcing and perpetuating “silences and invisibility” (Ferfolja, 2007). Several studies highlight the positive effects of having LGBTQ teacher role models and their varied methods of including LGBTQ-related curricula (Palkki, 2015; Paparo & Sweet, 2014; Talbot & Hendricks, 2012; Taylor, 2011).

Garrett (2012) writes practically on inclusion techniques for teacher education and how those techniques are transferable to music education. He provides several strategies for inclusion that have direct implications for preservice music teachers. Fostering dialogue about LGBTQ topics as a way for preservice music teachers to interrogate their preconceived ideas about what it means to be an LGBTQ music educator presents one of the biggest actions the in-service music teacher can take. These discussions allow preservice teachers to become aware of their “personal biases and prejudices,” an important piece of identity for all teachers. Garrett positions music as being uniquely situated to take on the challenges of LGBTQ inclusion. Historically, music and music education have valued inclusion in many forms. Similar inclusion techniques can be used in the Bible Belt to highlight norms based on religion.

What remains for LGBQ music educators in the Bible Belt is an uncertain future. Music educators must weigh the positive effects that can flow from the public knowledge of their sexual identity with possible negative ramifications of coming out at school in an area so charged with homophobic thoughts and actions supported by religious dogma. Research suggests that school policies in the Bible Belt will continue to expand to embrace LGBQ music educators’ sexual identities. However, no one can provide a timeframe for that level of acceptance. Until that day, LGBQ music educators in the Bible Belt must live a life that prioritizes their goals. If their goal is to advocate for and stand with other LGBQ music teachers and students, then they must take those actions that allow for that platform; this advocacy is admirable and necessary. If their goal is simply to be who they are unapologetically, setting a “quiet storm” model for other LGBQ music teachers and students, then they must nurture those connections; this action, too, is admirable and extremely necessary. Certainly, LGBQ music educators can play an influential role in breaking down misconceptions about queer teachers and queer people in general. LGBQ

teachers who come out serve as models for their students. Because music teachers usually spend more time with their students than teachers of other subjects, often seeing them multiple times a week, LGBQ music educators can foster healthy and necessary connections with students and over time can decenter antiquated stereotypes of queer teachers. Additionally, music teachers engage students beyond school hours with concerts, competitions, festivals, parades, and performing at sporting events. These afterschool meetings provide even more opportunity for LGBQ teachers to be positive role models and beacons of hope.

Need for the Study

The corpus of LGBTQ literature in music education focuses on the experiences of those who self-identify with a non-normative sexual identity (DePalma, 2013; Elze, 2005; Palkki, 2015). However, most of the highlighted experiences focus on White, gay male perspectives, excluding and ignoring the truths of queer people of color, which further suppresses and masks this already hidden and marginalized population. Further, Palkki (2015) calls for more studies that work to articulate regional differences that play a vital role in determining social norms that constrict queer music educators' identities, including but not limited to religion, sexual identity, and race. Because it is insufficient to attempt to understand the impact of multiple layers of marginalized identities separately, more scholarship should address the intersectional nature of identities, as these layers influence and impact the music education classroom (Butler, Lind, & McKoy, 2007). To that end, this study seeks to highlight narratives of K-12 African American LGBQ music educators who teach in the Bible Belt. It is my hope that this study will create a space in music education research for queer voices of color.

CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I define and describe the project's purpose, overarching researching questions, and its two-part design. I further articulate what is made possible by employing this methodology. Having explicitly detailed my positionality in Chapter 1, in this chapter I state my role as researcher in this study. Ultimately, I explain the recruitment and data collection procedures and data analysis methods that I employed. While tending to these techniques, I address confidentiality, trustworthiness, the limitations of this project, and introduce the participants.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

With the intent of increasing visibility for an often-overlooked population in music education research, this study explored how K-12 LGBTQ music educators who live in the Bible Belt and identify as African American or Black negotiate the intersections of their identities both professionally and personally. The main guiding research question was: how do intersecting identities inform and influence music teachers' life negotiations, which then influence classroom negotiations? With this grand tour question, I will address the following sub-questions:

1. How do participants perceive that their sexual identity impacts their classroom actions and considerations?
2. How do participants perceive that their race impacts their classroom actions and considerations?
3. How do participants perceive that religion impacts their classroom actions and considerations?
4. How do participants perceive that their role as a music educator impacts and influences their other identities?

5. How do participants perceive the intersections of their multiple identities as they impact their actions and classroom considerations?

Design

Narrative Design

This study employed a narrative design coupled with techniques of critical ethnography that honored participant voices and experiences and used those experiences to advocate for the inclusion of a marginalized population in current research and teaching practices. While researchers typically agree that narrative research falls under the umbrella of qualitative research (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Chadwick, 2017), researchers have differing definitions for narrative research. Narrative as a methodology refers to the procedures through which one analyzes and highlights the stories participants tell (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connely, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). According to Creswell (2013), “it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (p. 70). Csarniawska (2004) augments these definitions of narrative research, adding the element of time, asserting that events in the told stories are “chronologically connected” (p. 17). Webster and Mertova (2007) state that narrative expresses “the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (p. 1). Narrative research explains what is currently happening by focusing on stories that describe and define people’s lives.

Caine et al. (2018) point to narrative inquiry’s philosophy of pragmatism as linked with Dewey, who was concerned with how people interpret various experiences and how they inform future actions and experiences. Dewey (1938) asserts that an experience has the power to necessitate viewing the future in a different light, with new consideration. Several researchers explicate how Dewey’s pragmatism connects with narrative research: as a constant focus on “an

individual's experience in the world" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42), in a desire for "ways of enriching and transforming that experience" (p. 42), in "some form of action within the stream of experience" (Rosiek, 2013, p. 695), and in changes for participant and researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) that result from an ever-changing world (McKenna & Pratt, 2015). Such discourse prompts one to consider the components of narrative research and how they work together to achieve a focus on personal experience.

Ethnographic Techniques

Ethnography is also nestled under the umbrella of qualitative research and is concerned with studying a culture or certain salient aspects of a culture (Van Maanen, 2011) with the aim of analyzing and describing the culture studied (Popkewitz, 1981). Several have described ethnography in similar terms. For Bielo (2009), "ethnography is a means of knowledge production" (p. 21). According to Spradley (1979),

Ethnography is a culture-studying culture. It consists of a body of knowledge that includes research techniques, ethnographic theory, and hundreds of cultural descriptions. It seeks to build a systematic understanding of all human cultures from the perspective of those who have learned them. (pp. 10-11)

Patel (2016) points to ethnography's focus on studying people and the ways in which researchers write about people. She and Hess (2018) argue that research produces a certain kind of knowledge—a researcher-shaped knowledge rife with bias and authority.

Because all cultural groups develop shared meanings and ways of being (Bielo, 2009), ethnography seeks to take note of the intact cultural meanings (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972). Ethnographer and participant embrace a co-constructed yet asymmetrical definition of power. The participant dictates what information they share based on if they feel safe with the researcher

peering into every aspect of their culture. Therefore, it behooves the researcher to demonstrate care for participants and their truths. However, despite the participant's ability to steer the foci of what audiences will read later, there remains an asymmetrical researcher-participant relationship in that "someone is doing that writing and another being written about" (Patel, 2016, p. 52).

While some aspects of the researcher-participant relationship become less strict and less formal, the power dynamic will remain throughout the study that the researcher is the person who holds the power in the relationship. It is the researcher's responsibility to be aware of and to address the issues of power dynamics diligently.

Selecting Narrative Research

As each research design works to elicit information in different ways, researchers often use narrative research to highlight unexplored information and phenomena. Researchers must decide what information they would like to explore and how they would like to collect data before they can decide which design works for them. In phenomenology, the focus is describing an experience that all participants have in common with one another or how they experience a specific phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). As I was interested in the different and varied experiences of participants, phenomenology as a design did not allow for variance in participant experience. Creswell (2013) states, "While...phenomenology emphasizes the common experiences for a number of individuals, the intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory" (p. 83). If I had employed grounded theory for this project, I, as the researcher, would have had to create an explanation of what had happened in my participants' lives, which would have led to a reduction in participant agency. In ethnography, researchers experience a particular culture and create an interpretation of that culture (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). The purpose of ethnography is to figure out how a

particular culture works. A case study explores a specific thing (phenomenon, action, etc.) that is bounded by a specified place and time (Creswell, 2013). The way I defined the Bible Belt in the current study demonstrates that case study was not an appropriate design for the project. The project was neither bounded by time nor place, as the Bible Belt is beyond the scope of one given place. I chose narrative inquiry because of its flexibility in accounting for variance in participants' experiences.

Hanrahan and Cooper (1995) assert that narrative inquiry's flexibility allows for understanding multiple truths. Allowing for multiple truths means that the researcher feels no pressure to squelch confounding data. Hanrahan and Cooper write (as cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007):

[Narrative inquiry] freed me from the traditional constraint of reporting the research as though it all belonged within a single paradigmatic structure, and was reported by a single voice. A narrative inquiry research design could incorporate change as an integral and even necessary part of the process of constructing knowledge. It also seemed to me to represent a truer model of how most complex knowledge is constructed than the neater, theory-practice-conclusions, linear model suggests. (p. 18)

In narrative studies, outlier data do not exist, rather the narrative researcher takes data that do not easily correspond to a particular category or code into account and uses it to further explain the phenomenon or experience. In this way, narrative inquiry is well suited to embrace a complete picture of the data.

Researcher Power and Responsibility

Left unchecked and unacknowledged, the inherently imbalanced power dynamic between researcher and participant could leave a participant feeling exploited. A focus on stories, a

narrative methodology has the ability to explicitly highlight participants' voices over the researcher's voice, thereby ceding some power in the imbalanced participant-researcher dichotomy. Narrative methodology and ethnographic techniques, with the focus on the complex issues embedded in an event (Webster & Mertova, 2007), can help ameliorate this unbalanced power-dynamic. A narrative methodology allows the researcher to share the appropriate context to help readers understand the participant's story. The narrative researcher highlights the raw emotion a participant expresses by using expressive and pictorial language in the re-telling of the story. Because of this ongoing communication between the researcher and the participant in re-tracing this important narrative, Riessman (2008) and Carless and Douglas (2017) describe the nature of narrative inquiry as co-constructed. However, the best of intentions sometimes still lead to compromising situations for participants (O'Neill, 2002), so researchers must critique their methods repeatedly throughout the process of working with participants.

The research paradigm also presents intrinsic risks for the researcher to consider and lessen. Webster and Mertova discuss "intersubjectivity" and "smoothing" as two ways in which a researcher could abuse their power (p. 108). Intersubjectivity refers to investing in the participant's story by gathering the structure of the story, then portraying the story that the researcher wants to write rather than reflecting on the participant's desires. For instance, a researcher spends time listening to a student-participant's stories about some difficult experiences they had in an educational program. The researcher, who grows resolute in their desire to mar the reputation of the program, might intentionally embellish and overstate the details that the student revealed. In this case, the researcher portrays the story that they want audiences to read rather than the overall truth of the participant.

Smoothing, like intersubjectivity, alters participant meanings. Smoothing refers to doing away with the outlier data in a participant's story so that the account finishes in a tidy, positive way even if the actual story does not end in that way. For example, if a teen participant tells of their experiences with bullying in school and speaking up for themselves and by telling the authorities at the school in question. A researcher practicing smoothing might concentrate on the fact that the teen spoke up instead of highlighting that the teen's situation worsened after telling the authorities about their experiences. Smoothing replaces reality, however neutral or negative it may be, with "a positive result regardless of the indications of the data" (p. 109). The researcher must be able to adjust their methods to ensure the participant's safety throughout the study, which requires a keen sense of self-awareness and self-reflection to protect participants from researchers' biases.

Because of the emergent nature of both narrative inquiry and ethnography, a researcher finds at their disposal tools necessary to safeguard participants' well-being such as acknowledging the inherent power structure of the participant-researcher relationship and focusing on complex, embedded details, thereby highlighting participant meanings and truths. When a researcher pursues multiple methods of care and protection for how they work with participants and represent participants' narratives, they exhibit an understanding of power and responsibility within the participant-researcher relationship.

Role of the Researcher

In this narrative study guided by ethnographic tools, I acted in the role of non-participant observer, as I did not directly interact with participants while they taught in their classrooms. This role allowed for "an intense immersion in daily rhythms and ordinary concerns" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 22). As Creswell (2013) states, "ethnography involves extended

observations of the group...in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people” (p. 90). As such, I focused my observations on the following: elements that comprise the physical environment, significant events that transpire, participants’ actions and interactions, and the order of certain actions. By acting as a non-participant observer and focusing on the aforementioned layers of data, I “cast[ed] a wide net” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 28); I noted many things that could have been important in understanding the observed culture.

Further, I held both insider and outsider status during this study. When attempting to gain access to a hidden minority population, a researcher’s identity and perceived identity have implications. A researcher who shares cultural knowledge, such as language, expressions, and beliefs with her participants is perceived as an “insider” (Chereni, 2014). Self-identifying within the African American LGBTQ music educator population, afforded me a level of insider status that aided in building connections with participants. However, as I did not participate in class activities, I simultaneously also occupied an outsider role. As an outsider, I took care not to highlight my own understandings but instead worked to focus on those of the participants.

Participant Selection

I recruited participants for the study through a combination of two techniques – snowball and purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique in which the researcher uses their judgment to find participants who embody or represent a particular phenomenon (Patton, 1990). Because I was interested in K-12 teachers at the intersections of sexuality, race, and religion coupled with the importance of place, I used my judgment and the following criteria to guide the participant selection process:

- The music educator self-identifies as LGBTQ, with the “Q” being reflective of their sexuality as opposed to gender identity.

- The music educator self-identifies as African American or Black.
- The music educator teaches at the K-12 level.
- The music educator teaches in the regions described as the Bible Belt.

Data Collection and Procedures

Participant Recruitment

After gaining IRB approval, I used social media (Facebook) to post a recruitment statement to a broad range of music educators and friends, with an added interest in finding music educators from varied backgrounds (general, instrumental, choral, etc.). The recruitment statement briefly listed the research criteria desired and encouraged the audience of colleagues and friends to follow the weblink provided to express interest in being a participant in the study. I also encouraged colleagues to share the statement with their contacts who fit the research criteria as well as with people in their special interest groups who could have been interested. In this way, I employed snowball sampling, a recruitment method that “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). As the desired participants were from a multiply marginalized and hidden population, snowball sampling aided in reaching members who otherwise would not be aware of the study.

The provided weblink took interested persons to a survey where they could read detailed information about the study (purpose, procedures, potential risks and discomforts, benefits, confidentiality, right to withdraw, consent) and, if they chose, could provide specific information about themselves, including contact information so that I could contact them to invite them to be a part of the study. While I eventually chose participants who taught in Bible Belt states, the survey was not geographically restrictive. Those people interested in the study provided the state

in which they taught, and I chose participants who taught in Bible Belt states following the survey.

Observations

Observations, an integral component of data collection, provided a realistic picture of participants' contexts. Between January and May 2019, I observed participants teaching in their music classrooms twice. Observations helped me to ascertain how participants negotiated their layered identities within the music classroom, and I used jottings to note these negotiations and developed the jottings into fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Additionally, observations helped to answer the following questions: How is the physical environment structured (posters and other items on the walls)? Who is featured in classroom materials? How do participants make connections with students (eye contact, proximity, interactions)? What kinds of teaching strategies do they use? In other words, observations allowed me to see how participants behave in the classroom as music educators.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews served as the major source of data for the study. For each interview, I invited participants to share their stories with me (Taylor & Zeke, 2018), noting what they chose as most important to include. While interviews were emergent in nature, with the order and content of participants' storytelling determining the path of the interview, I was prepared to prompt participants with open-ended questions about identity and identity management in their personal and professional lives (see Appendix C). Subsequent interviews served to follow up on the first interview, covering topics that needed further clarification and/or addressing new material that participants wanted to share in addition to addressing events or situations that occurred during my classroom observations of their teaching. I completed a total

of three one-hour semi-structured interviews (Leavy, 2014) with each participant, which I audio recorded, transcribed, and sent back to participants for review. One participant made revisions to the transcript.

Focus Group

Researchers often use focus groups to uncover a deeper level of data. Qualitative research sometimes yields low numbers of participants, especially if the participants are from a “hard to reach” population. Because my call for participants yielded more than one person and each participant consented to have their identities known to each other, I facilitated a group discussion through the video conferencing program Zoom™ based on topics that stemmed from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. For instance, if all participants raised a specific topic in the interviews, I invited each participant to discuss the topic together, which generated additional thoughts and feelings and revealed some experiences not previously stated. If there was a topic that participants raised only a few times or that only one participant raised, I sometimes used that topic as a discussion prompt as well.

The focus group (Creswell, 2013; Leavy, 2014) served two purposes: (1) to support, clarify, and/or confound information gleaned from observations and interviews, and (2) for community building. Often multiply-marginalized populations (LGBQ African Americans) express the necessity of remaining anonymous for fear of the consequences of public recognition, especially when speaking out about the levels of oppression they face (Kivel, 2017). Because of this need for anonymity, the community may appear smaller than it really is though researchers can only estimate the population’s actual size. One way to build community is to connect members with other members. My hope was that any community members who allowed me to initiate the connection could see and feel that they were not and are not alone.

Additionally, I hoped that participants would find strength in being able to talk with people who share levels of intersecting identities, as many of Rhoads' (1997) participants describe in the context of community service and higher learning. Kiselica (2004) writes, "When we share our struggles, we become coping role models with whom others can easily identify" (p. 847). As my study followed an emergent design, the number of focus group meetings was dependent on what participants revealed in other layers of data collection.

Participant Journal/VLOG

I asked participants to keep an electronic participant journal in order to record important details about the goings on of their lives between classroom observations and interviews. The content of the journal was left up to the discretion of the participant, which could have included topics ranging from their daily schedules, significant interactions with people or entities, or specific thoughts or feelings. The participant journal added to the overall "picture" of their lived experiences.

Because teachers often have busy schedules, I took into account that they may have had limited time to contribute to a typed participant journal. With limited time in mind, I also offered participants the option of keeping a video log (VLOG), which would have allowed them to quickly record and save what they would like to document. Participants could have used the camera in their cell phones or webcams on their computers to record themselves and send files to me via email. In the event that participants preferred to type their journal entries, they had the option to send entries to me daily or to save a week's worth of entries to a single file and send them to me at the end of each week. Because videos typically save with each recording, I considered that it might be easiest for participants to send VLOGs as they finish recording them. Initially, I wanted participants to send me journal entries at least once a week, but upon learning

that participants felt that they had little to report from week to week, I changed that to schedule journal transmissions every other week. I reviewed the typed journal or VLOG entries as participants submitted them.

Confidentiality

Each participant who took part in this project agreed to allow me access to their personal knowledges and truths, some of which were hidden from other people. As such, I took the following steps to ensure participant confidentiality: (1) shared no personally identifiable information, (2) stored information on a password-protected computer, to which I had sole access, and (3) changed the names of participants in all project-related files to protect their anonymity. Current research practices affirm these checkpoints of confidentiality, but “confidentiality extends not only to writing but also to the verbal reporting of information that the researcher has learned through observations and interviews” (Bresler, 1995, 34). Even with pseudonyms, the possibility of figuring out a participant’s identity remains. To address this risk, I carefully and thoughtfully chose quotes and described participants in a way that someone in the same school district would not be able to identify participants. Because participants consented to a focus group during which their faces would be displayed on a computer screen, I was careful to refer to them by pseudonyms, so as not to give away searchable personal identity information. Additionally, I asked no location-specific questions but only prompted participants with broad reflective questions. Though I took measures to protect participants’ confidentiality, each participant chose to allow the other participants access to social media presence.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Memos

Just as I had participants document their ongoing lived experiences for the duration of the data collection period, I, too, traced the origins of my thoughts and reactions throughout the study in the form of memos. For qualitative researchers, “analytic memos are somewhat comparable to researcher journal entries or blogs – a place to ‘dump your brain’ about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more about them” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44). Clarke (2005) explains memos as an internal conversation about the data that the researcher exchanges with herself. I added memos in the margins of interview transcripts as well as in a separate document. This document and notes held reactions and thoughts that reflected on the study as a whole. Memos also served as a space where I considered missing information participants’ stories; they formed the basis from which I asked follow-up interview questions.

Coding

Often in qualitative studies, open coding (Emerson et al., 2011) occurs in a series of loosely defined steps throughout the data collection process. This kind of coding uses the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998) in which I become more familiar with the data by breaking them down and examining them (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As I “lived” in the data, turning jottings from observations into fieldnotes, transcribing interviews, reviewing analytic memos, and completing more interviews and observations, I began to notice relationships among the data, and grouped these relationships by codes (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In an early stage of open coding, after printing out all interview transcripts, I went through each transcript and labeled sections with codes, writing memos along the way to

guide my follow-up questions. At the beginning of the coding process, I relied on In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016) as the source of many of my initial codes. Employing In Vivo coding, I drew directly from participants' language for codes. I also used affective coding (Saldaña, 2016) methods to maintain participants' emotions and beliefs.) Emotion coding functions particularly well in studies "that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of social relationships, reasoning, decision-making, judgment, and risk-taking" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 125). I then cut out each statement associated with a code and nestled them together. These codes and corresponding parts of participant interviews, I taped to a wall in order to visualize their connections. It was at this point in the later stages of coding that I realized that each piece of information participants shared was connected to the next piece. Bulmer (1979) and Katz (1988) refer to this simultaneous inductive and deductive analysis as "retroductive." Finally, after re-reading the data, I grouped codes into themes that summarized the focus of the specific set of data. At this stage, I began to see how each participant's experiences paralleled the other participants' stories.

Trustworthiness

I approached and established trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) first and foremost through the rigorous data collection procedures and design listed above. Additionally, suitable time in the field, the analysis of transcripts and memos, and member checks of said memos and transcripts helped to establish trustworthiness. Member checks gave participants agency in structuring their narrative by verifying, expanding upon, or discounting data (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). I engaged in several rounds of member checks, in which participants expressed how they would like me to alter my characterizations of them. Once I had changed the way I presented certain material, I checked with participants again to ensure that they had the final

word on what I had written. Finally, I consulted colleagues who have expertise in the research area. They provided feedback about my analytic choices. These multiple levels of corroboration strengthened the trustworthiness of the study and its results.

Limitations (Reframed)

Patel (2016) and Hess (2018) argue the need for a new way of considering the limitations of a study by “actively [valuing] specificity in research” (Hess, 2018, p. 13) rather than envisioning how the results of a study might apply to a different study with a different context. In doing so, researchers “honour the uniqueness of each context and acknowledge that research participants can only implement strategies that pertain to their specific time and place” and “resist research paradigms that assume we can generalise context specific findings” (p. 14).

While I did not expect the results of the study to generalize to any population, I did expect to make relevant transfers to the larger LGBTQ community, “...to inform action, enhance decision making, and apply knowledge to solve human and societal problems” (Patton, 1990, p. 12). In the ways that I have defined the research population as K-12 African American music educators who identify as African American or Black and teach in the Bible Belt, this study could not and did not focus on other racial and ethnic groups, collegiate music educators, or other geographical regions. Though I addressed multiple levels of identity with this study (race, sexuality, religion, profession), this study did not account for other identity markers that affect teachers’ lives. For example, this study did not explicitly explore the effects of gender on teachers’ experiences though gender emerged as a by-product of looking at other identity markers because of their intersections.

Participant Introductions

In this section, I introduce the participants of this study. These brief introductions establish each person's personality while providing essential background information, including childhood musical experiences that served as foundations for their music teaching careers, their family contexts, and expressions of how each participant sees themselves. The participant introductions that follow lay the foundation for their individual chapters. Chapters 4 through 6 offer detailed descriptions and narratives of participants one at a time.

Andrew⁸

Andrew is a tall, slender African American man with locs⁹ who was born and raised in Tennessee. Andrew is no stranger to hard work. He graduated from high school third in his class, and, a first-generation college student, later graduated with a music education degree. The oldest of six children, Andrew took on a lot of responsibility in caring for his siblings when they all were younger. As the oldest of two sisters and three brothers who frequently stayed at home by themselves, Andrew was tasked with cooking, cleaning, and making sure his siblings did their homework. Andrew affectionately recalls, "My mom instilled in me at a young age 'don't open the door for nobody', and I didn't!" With smiles and laughter, he speaks highly of his mother and how she weathered the struggles of raising children alone. While he remains close with his mother and brothers, his connections with his sisters are tenuous at best. Despite the strained relationships, because family is important to him, Andrew continues to reach out and check up on his siblings to let them know that he loves them.

⁸ All names are participant-selected pseudonyms.

⁹ The term locs is short for dreadlocks. Here I use locs to honor how Andrew describes himself.

Andrew describes himself as “an open book”, and the stories that he shared with me demonstrate that fact. Within moments of meeting him, Andrew was sharing details about his current teaching position, personal strengths and weaknesses, dreams and aspirations, and family background. We discussed faith, his love life, his hair journey, and even his unfortunate experiences of sexual abuse. The conversation was serious yet not as dismal as the subject matter might suggest. One outgrowth of that conversation included talk about his status. Learning of his HIV positive status a few years ago lit a fire inside him that made him ready to live his “best life,” which he describes as pursuing his dreams and doing what he loves to do: teaching music, traveling, starting a family.

Andrew’s journey to teaching music was not one of predestination but one of fortuity. In the tenth grade, his music teacher encouraged him to audition for a regional competition. At that point, he could not read music. His teacher taught everything by rote. This fact did not prevent him from making a top ensemble and traveling to rehearse and perform with that ensemble. At his high school, they sang Gospel music exclusively, but something inside him made him feel that there was more to singing than just Gospel music. During the first rehearsal with the top ensemble, when he heard the first warmup, he was pleasantly overwhelmed to be a part of an ensemble and an experience beyond his comfort zone. He said, “And when I heard us warming up and I heard a true alto and a true soprano from all of these women and men from different schools, I knew at that point that I wanted to be a music teacher.” Andrew loves choral music and is partial to a Gospel style of singing. He reflects his love for this style of singing when working with his high school choirs, modeling musical passages with rich, velvety vibrato and smooth falsetto. Teaching and performing music allows him to express his deepest joys and his greatest sorrows. He attributes his start in teaching music to that high school music teacher who

encouraged him to audition and carries that experience into the classroom. Always concerned with paying his privilege forward, Andrew's goal in life is to leave a legacy, "and the only way to do that is by touching the lives of the students that we teach... You'll live on through them and they will talk about that to their children" (Interview, 2/2/19).

Zion

Raised by his mother and grandmother, Zion's story began in Virginia and later took him to Georgia and North Carolina. Though he is the second of four children, he was treated like the oldest child for most of his life. He recalls the family's expectation that he would guide his siblings through life while simultaneously trying to figure out his own life: "If they mess up, it's your fault too 'cause you didn't stop them." Being the emotional and moral compass for an older sister and two younger brothers might have felt heavy and unfair at times, but Zion embraced his role. Because of this accountability, he grew accustomed to the responsibility of being a role model, and said it played a fundamental role in the development of his personality.

Zion's life has been filled with musical experiences. He started violin in the third grade and saxophone in the fifth grade. Additionally, he sang in church throughout his childhood. With his background in orchestra, band, and choir, Zion always felt like teaching music was a calling and a passion that he could never escape, but he did not surrender to a career in music easily. When he applied for college, he had dreams of being a psychiatrist, and he followed that path by choosing to major in psychology. Days before classes began, he switched his major to music. After receiving disapproval from someone who said, "You should do something so you can make money," Zion changed his major again. This time he chose business. Still wrestling with the decision of what to study in college, Zion once again returned to music. Music always felt like "home" to him. The 36-year old music educator currently serves as an instructional

specialist in a southern state. His job takes him to various music classrooms where he divides his time between giving clinics and observing and then providing feedback to local ensembles and their music directors. Sometimes, in a hands-on approach, he rotates around the classroom, providing specific performance help to members of the ensemble. When he is not in the classroom, Zion writes curriculum documents in the performing arts. Additionally, he is an adjunct professor at a state college, where he teaches music education courses.

When asked how he self-identifies, Zion described himself as Black male and said that his sexuality is “complicated”, as he is attracted to both men and women. While many might categorize him as bisexual because of his attractions, Zion does not identify as bisexual. He rejects that label altogether. He simply explains his sexuality as, “I like what I like. I’m fluid to an extent” (Interview, 2/26/19), something that people in his life have misunderstood. They have only seen one part of him – that he has been involved with other men. While this fact is not inaccurate, he says, “But that’s not where my sexual attraction and desires strictly lie. It doesn’t work that way.” At the time of data collection, Zion described the intersections of his layers of identity as “growing and changing”, including spirituality and how he sees and accepts himself.

Alex

Sporty, confident, well-read, and often clad in African heritage clothing and jewelry, Alex is a thinker who speaks freely and in great detail about identity. Of identity, she noted, “To understand a person’s identity is to understand the core of a person.” With this thought she approaches connections with people by trying to understand how people think and feel. As far as her own identity, she said that she is comfortable switching back and forth between Black and African American but describes herself as a “woke Black woman,” where woke means that she understands “knowledge empowerment and knowledge evolution.” Alex is a fount of informed

opinions, where each opinion is an outgrowth of her varied experiences with people. She considers herself an “extroverted empath, a people person who absorbs other people’s emotions and appreciates alone time but doesn’t require a ton of it” (Interview, 3/6/19). Because of navigating multiple targeted identities, Alex is quite comfortable navigating life “behind the scenes.” Though systemic oppression has forced her to keep many thoughts and feelings to herself, Alex uses this stealthy approach to highlight other people without having to be the center of attention.

Alex displays her burgeoning confidence in several different ways, but one way stands out—cherishing and embracing her innate physical and psychological characteristics (natural hair,¹⁰ face free of makeup, assertiveness, inquisitiveness). At 27-years old, she is comfortable in her own skin and attributes that confidence to the many things she has endured that “dimmed her shine” for far too long. As the result of religious repression, racial injustice, and emotional and sexual abuse, Alex’s self-esteem and confidence dwindled to almost nothing across several arduous years. However, these difficult experiences afforded her a plethora of opportunities upon which to reflect. That reflexivity helped her realize that she was only defining herself by other people’s minimizing characterizations. Now she resolves to approach life as if she has something to offer because she now believes in her greatness.

Throughout the chaos of her life, music was one avenue of expression that she explored to help her process difficult situations. Music was an ever-present part of Alex’s childhood. Her childhood was rich with musical experiences that started at home and expanded to church; she sang with family at home, sang in the church choir, exploring improvising harmony parts to

¹⁰ Natural hair means unaltered or untreated; “Natural” refers to the way the hair would grow if not acted upon by chemicals that aid in removing coils and curls (see Dawson, Karl, & Peluchette, 2019; Miles, 2018; Thompson, 2009).

church songs, explored sounds of different items by tapping on them using different parts of her hands. She and her older brother used to create musical compositions together. He would create the melody, and she would create the beat. She enjoyed piecing together different sounds and record them on a tape player. She boasts, “I was making beats and doing mashups long before GarageBand or any of this other stuff. I just did it in my head. Now that I think about it, it’s a wonder I didn’t become a DJ!” She said she is open to taking some audio engineering classes and DJing classes one day, but for now she is content to focus solely on teaching.

Alex became a music teacher because she wanted to give back to a community that had given so much to her. When she joined band in the fifth grade, she discovered “a magical place where people understood [her].” Being a band director and music teacher was not her childhood dream, but after joining band, making music became a passion. Though she is early in her music education career, she looks forward to carrying this passion for making music and teaching throughout her teaching tenure. In her current teaching position, she teaches middle school band and general music.

The previous pages laid the foundation necessary for understanding a deeper depiction of participants’ stories. In the three chapters that follow, I provide a closer review of their lives by reporting their perceptions of the ways in which race, religion, and sexual identity influence their lives as music educators and the ways they navigate those influences. Each participant chapter includes the data that participants felt were most essential for understanding who they are, how they view themselves, and how they navigate their lives in regard to their intersectional layers of identity. Additionally, I organized each chapter in the order that participants requested, with the exception of the discussions of music education and their visions of an ideal church.

CHAPTER 4—“LIKE A DOUBLE, TRIPLE HATE”: ANDREW’S STORY

Dare to look at the intersectionalities. (hooks, 2011)

The Scene

I set out for my quick commute to Andrew’s school, stopping at a gas station for breakfast. Though traffic was fairly light, the closer I got to the school, the more traffic picked up as people had begun to leave for work. I drove by moderate-sized houses with small yards and a few small businesses. Forty minutes before school started, I pulled up to the high school and parked in a big parking lot, not knowing that it was the student lot. As students trickled in, I got a good look at the racial demographics of the school, or at least how I perceived students’ racial identities: mostly African American, followed by a significant Hispanic student population. I noticed that some parents drove what I considered to be luxury cars (Mercedes, Lexus, BMW), but most drove average brands (Ford, Chevrolet, Mazda). This observation gave me an idea about the socioeconomic status of the families that attended this large high school. Once the student arrivals diminished, I made my way to the main office, where I met Andrew.

Andrew glided into the office wearing fitted black dress pants, a floral button-down shirt, black dress shoes, and glasses with his locs pulled back, and his presence filled the office as he spoke to everyone. Once we exchanged pleasantries, we walked to the choir room, talking briefly about the schedule for the day and in which topics his classes were currently immersed. Arriving at the choir room, I saw that the choir room was minimally decorated with tasks written on the board and an “Andrew’s Corner” section, in which Andrew displayed facts about himself as a way for students to get to know him. Built-in, carpeted risers, the focal point of the room, spanned the vast length of the classroom with Wenger chairs evenly spaced on each step.

Soon, students filled the classroom for a Music Theory turned General Music class. The class of mostly African American students sits engaged, asking questions and stating opinions in a discussion about the origins of Black spirituals. The next class, Beginning Men's Choir, showed Andrew in a different light, one of a serious yet lighthearted nature. Andrew was serious about the music, but not in a rigid way. I noticed a difference between the mixed choir and the other classes, especially the performance classes. A student led a physical warmup in which members of the ensemble did various quick exercises to loosen up their bodies. Andrew then took the choir through several vocal warmups. From there, the choir launches into rehearsing their repertoire. It is in this space that Andrew is really in his element, directing the ensemble with clear passion and rigor. The students reflect this passion and are completely engaged. They move to the music because they feel the meanings, not because they are instructed to move. They emotive a variety of feelings through singing and dancing. When Andrew is not sure if he wants a hard "T" in the word "better" or more of a "D" sound, students enthusiastically weigh in with their opinions. Andrew has fostered an environment in which students feel that they are important. Through body language and the things they say, I observe that students really love Andrew. Because he has shared his personality and interests with the students, the students embrace who Andrew is in the classroom. Nothing reflects this fact more than when Andrew demonstrates a high passage for the sopranos using his falsetto. The students applaud his singing, and Andrew responds, "Oh yeah, I got the sauce!" (Fieldnote, 1/7/19)

Andrew's Layers of Identity Considerations

Sexual Identity

Walking with Andrew to his classroom, I silently observed his walk; there was something unique and yet familiar about it. During interviews I observed Andrew's speech. Again, there

was something about it, the tempo and inflection of his speaking. As people typically associate a special kind of walk and inflection with queer men, I immediately understood that Andrew did not easily pass as straight. He confirmed this fact during our talks, saying, “I have other colleagues and friends that if they don’t tell you, you would never know [their sexual identity]. But that’s not my reality. That’s not me” (Interview, 2/7/19). When talking with him about if he has come out to his students, he said that he did not feel he had to tell his students. Andrew went on to say,

It was one day in rehearsal I had brought a friend, and he was literally a best friend. He wanted to sit in on a rehearsal. So the kids were like Mr. Andrew, who is that? I said this is my best friend. They said, best friend...mmhmm...So they know... (Interview, 2/7/19)

Not feeling like he needs to conform to societal standards of what straight men do, Andrew simply maintains who he is at all times in all of his grandeur. “When my hair is down, I throw my hair... Things that norms have taught us that men don’t do” (Interview, 2/7/19). His actions betray his silence and diminish any need to come out to anyone, but as Andrew often reiterates, “What’s understood doesn’t need to be said” (Interview, 2/8/19).

However, this sense of being is something Andrew had to grow into, as he has navigated sexuality since a very young age. As he remembered his first memories of being attracted to the same sex, he said, “I’ve always known. Even in kindergarten me and these boys used to go in the bathroom and hunch¹¹ and all those different things” (Interview, 2/7/19). In high school, Andrew came out to his classmates after being teased:

I had a guy teasing me cause I had started wearing rainbow paraphernalia. I had a crush on him. He was cute. He was like, “You got ya gay shit on today, huh?” and I was like,

¹¹ Hunching is synonymous with dry humping, in which people move in sexual ways on one another while staying fully clothed.

“You gon let me be gay!” He said, “I already know you gay. I just want you to say it so everybody else can know it.” I was in AP US history, and I yelled at the top of my lungs “You gon let me be gay!” and the teacher stopped teaching. He said, “What the hell?!” That was first period. When I was in high school you went to homeroom for 15 minutes, and then you did second period. By second period, everybody in the whole school had found out I was gay. (Interview, 2/7/19)

Andrew’s story of coming out in high school, that most of his classmates received well, concludes with a declaration of his sexual identity. While Andrew’s declaration symbolized a shattering of barriers in his ability to acknowledge his “true authentic self”, the fact remains that the stigma and surveillance surrounding his non-normative sexual identity compelled him to publicly announce his truth.

Labels

In sociology, labels aid in identifying and grouping things and people based on a specific criterion. Labeling proves to be both helpful and harmful when associated with people. Because of Andrew’s more effeminate nature, throughout his life he has had to openly navigate societal labels and expectations that relate to sexuality and tie his sexuality to gender norms. Andrew recalls some of the horrifying comments hurled at him during middle school:

There were times, people used to say things... It would be the stupid guys in school that don’t go to class, smoke, and do all those other things. They would make rude and offensive comments, calling me gay, sweet booty, and all this other stuff. “Put some bass in your voice” was a classy thing in 8th grade. (Interview, 2/11/19)

Because men typically have low-sounding voices, to tell a man to put bass in his voice is to tell him that he is behaving like woman. In other words, the classmates that instructed Andrew to

“put some bass in his voice” were questioning his masculinity because according to societal labels of men, men should not be effeminate in any way. These labels and expectations of masculinity also influenced how Andrew navigated sexuality at home. He was required to maintain strict grooming expectations as they related to gender.

I didn’t have hair when I was in my mom’s house. Well, I had waves. I had to keep my hair clean cut. My mom wouldn’t let me grow it out. I used to love my fingernails long. When they grow out, they grow out white and strong, so I naturally had pretty nails and my mom made me cut em. And one day she told me to cut em, and I was just like, “Well, mama, I don’t want to.” She got some clippers and made me cut em because I guess to her, men weren’t supposed to have long nails. (Interview, 2/7/19)

This strictness surrounding grooming led him to express himself through hair. He said:

My hair, I just needed, I was at a low point in my life, and so when I grew my locs out, it gave me a new mindset and a new outlook on life. Basically, since I felt connected to something. I needed to go through a change, and it ended up boosting my confidence. I wasn’t as depressed as I used to be. My hair is definitely a movement, an expression of who I am. So you get to see the different sides of me through my hair. I’m very particular about it too.

Throughout his life Andrew has had to navigate his sexuality in many different ways, and most of those ways define sexuality by societal gender labels and expectations.

Family Context

The concept of family is different for each person. What constitutes a family has grown and changed to include friends and mentors, especially in the queer community. However, when Andrew talks about family, he reverts to the old standard definition of family as lineage and

bloodline. To him, family is the community that provides crucial feedback throughout life's difficult decisions. Connections and relationships within families sometimes cause physical and mental grief and sorrow. Some of Andrew's familial ties resulted in distress; his family life was complicated. Andrew's mother, knowing that her son would have to navigate difficult decisions and situations, tried her best to foster a spirit of resilience and determination in Andrew when he was younger. Andrew recalls, "My mom had already instilled in me that people can say what they wanna say. Ignore them as long as they don't put they hands on you" (Interview, 2/7/19). He shared other nuggets of wisdom from his mother: My mom taught me you don't waste time worrying about something you can't change" (Interview, 2/7/19). This statement came during a discussion of romantic interests, a man who had told Andrew that whether they were officially married or not, he would always refer to Andrew as his friend in social situations. Andrew's mother became that primary giver of feedback for her son. She listened to his frustration and heartbreak and advised her son not to spend precious time trying to change things or people who show that they will never change. Even though his mother does not agree with all the choices her eldest son makes, she expresses her constant support of him:

She'll tell me, "I don't agree with your lifestyle." She doesn't say it anymore, but it's known that she doesn't agree with it. But I still call her, and I can ask for relationship advice. I can talk about guys 'cause in her philosophy she says, "I'm your mom and God put me on this earth to love you. I'm going to love you." (Interview, 2/7/19)

Andrew defined family as a group that one is born into and noted that family members also provide unsolicited critique simply because they believe they have that right. Andrew loves his family but had to endure harsh criticism and persecution from his family from a young age.

My grandmother and my auntie used to make fun of me when I was younger. My auntie used to call me sissy and stuff. They would tell my mama, “You think Andrew gon be gay? I think he gon be a sissy.” They used to always mistreat me. I was telling a story one time to my grandmother. I was like, “Yeah, I’m a get married to a woman.” My grandmother had company over there, and she said, “You mean a man, don’t you?” I remember correcting her, and I said, “Naw, I said what I meant and I meant woman.” (Interview, 2/8/19)

Though Andrew learned to stand his ground at a young age, the constant reproach and castigation left Andrew at odds with his family, not knowing if he could rely on them to provide a safety net while navigating sexuality. “I never could talk to anybody about it, in fear, because of what was already transpiring as a teenager” (Interview, 2/7/19).

With early experiences of family members teasing him about his sexuality, Andrew learned to navigate familial rejection often, both overt rejection such as his family calling him out in front of house guests and more covert rejection like in the following quote:

I recall hunching a guy in headstart. We were in headstart and I remember getting caught. I remember them sitting us down and them calling my mom. We stayed in some apartments, and I remember my mom having a belt, and I don’t know if she whooped me or not. I just remember her walking away, and I said, “but he’s my boyfriend.” And my mama said, “You ain’t got no damn boyfriend!” and that was it.

In one statement she communicated that it was not acceptable for Andrew to have a boyfriend or to even entertain the idea of having a significant other of the same sex. She did not have to explicitly tell him that that behavior would not be accepted. Instead she communicated with

indirect but firm words and left her tone to remove any ambiguity. On the other hand, Andrew's mom has also provided moments of acceptance:

My auntie used to call me sissy and stuff. My mom and my auntie got to fightin' one day 'cause she kicked me in my neck and called me a sissy. My mama went over there and whooped her ass.

In this circumstance, she took up for her son in a major way; Andrew's mother told her sister that her words toward her son were not welcome, and then backed it up with physicality.

Secrets. Another aspect of family that influenced Andrew's navigation of sexuality was how his family kept secrets. Some of the hidden information that his family neglected to disclose directly involved Andrew, while other information mostly concerned other family members. Andrew grew up hearing "what goes on in my house, stays in my house," and therefore protected his family's reputation from scandal and humiliation. This sense of protection muted Andrew when, in adulthood, he discovered some secrets about himself and his family.

I found out when I was 22 that my mom, who she had been telling me was my dad may not be my dad. And that it was another guy that could be my dad. I have a big nose. All his kids got real large noses. They all can sing. My grandmother can hold a note, but other than my grandmother, I'm the only person in the family that's really musically inclined. That guy and his kids can sing, but the issue is that he's a cousin. I don't know if they knew they were cousins or they were just doing whatever at the time, but my mom told me I could never say anything because of what it would do. And I agreed not to because at the end of the day, me knowing wasn't going to make anything better, and I didn't want to potentially break up a family. (Interview, 2/7/19)

This quote shows the massive weight that Andrew's mother placed on his shoulders. First, he found out later in his life that his father was someone else and that he is actually family member. Then, his mother told to never speak of it because it could potential hurt the family. The secrets do not stop there.

Grave and relentless family secrets coupled with individual family members' insistence that Andrew maintain the same level of secrecy burdened him with a great deal of anguish. In addition to this agony, Andrew also learned the nature of the relationship between his grandparents.

I found out a few years back how my grandfather passed away, and how he cheated on my grandmother. He used to beat on her, and they fought, and she would cheat on him.

One day she wanted to leave and he didn't want her to, and he tried to kill her. And the gun that they had was real raggedy, and he pulled the trigger but it backfired.

Andrew's knowledge of his grandparents' marital difficulties dealt him a hard blow because he was rather close with his grandmother; she had helped raise him, so he felt a special connection with her. Knowing that his grandmother had suffered this level of violence at the hands of his grandfather, made him angry. The same way Andrew learned about his grandparents' violent relationship, he uncovered more secrets about his grandfather.

I found out that my granddad used to get in the bed with my mom's oldest sister and touch her and stuff like that. Now my mom's relationship with him was completely different. He was her best friend. She loved him. She was only 12. My auntie was 13. A lot of incest runs rampant on my granddaddy's side, sex demons, as my mama say.

(Interview, 2/7/19)

The news that Andrew learned about his grandfather put Andrew at odds with the memory of the man. Moreover, this influx of family secrets brought to light his family's sexual proclivities, which necessitated that Andrew confront his own sexual abuse. Andrew shared that he was molested when he was young and did not feel that he could discuss this abuse because he had been advised at an early age to hold secrets that might bring shame upon the family's reputation. Therefore, he remained silent about the abuse he endured for several years.

Concealed truths complicated Andrew's relationships with individual family members. The elders of Andrew's family embraced a code of secrecy, wherein they knew about hidden family facts but refused to discuss them. Because they declined to discuss various difficult topics, the children of the family bore the burden of continuing that pattern of silence. Not only does this story demonstrate the sometimes negative aspect of family, but also shows the power dynamics implied and maintained in some families. These sometimes tacit strictures wield incredible power over people because the mandates for secrecy often come from one's reference group. In this case, the adults of Andrew's family swore him to secrecy about certain issues. This directive constrained Andrew and blocked possible avenues of healing surrounding his own sexual abuse in addition to dealing with painful truths about other members of his family.

Resilience

People who are resilient respond to trauma, tragedy, stress, and adversity with a resourcefulness and a malleability that allows them to persevere no matter the circumstances (James, 2015). In resilience discourse, people must acknowledge their pain and the damage enacted upon them and then create a resource for themselves from the damage (James, 2015). In navigating sexuality in relation to the family context of secrets and criticism and societal labels for people who fall outside of norms, Andrew has learned to be resilient. In a way, he almost had

no choice in the matter. Either he would be resilient or he would fold under pressure, a luxury not afforded to the oldest of six children. At first, he was resilient because other people depended on him. Later in life, that resilience became a way of life, how he made decisions. Now, Andrew exudes resilience-inspired boldness in which he completely embraces who he and what he brings to any situation. He said, “What you see is what you get...What you see is my reality.”

(Interview, 2/11/19). Andrew no longer attempts to hide the parts of himself that people have opposed in the past. When I asked Andrew what propelled him toward this level of self-acceptance, he said:

I would say the many attempts of me trying to date and convert myself to other people's likes and standards and not being true to who I was...I just got tired of not standing up for what I wanted. And I realized that I'm a Black male with no criminal record, I have two degrees, I pay my own bills, drive my own car, I'm independent, I'm outgoing, I'm charismatic, I'm dependable, I'm giving, I'm sensitive, I'm loving. I deserve to have my cake and eat it too to a certain extent. So if you can't accept or overlook the fact that I'm positive, or deal with the fact that I may be feminine or I love *RuPaul's Drag Race*...if you can't see my worth—so when I realized what I was capable of and the fact of the matter was that I was that bitch, in so many words, it's either you take me as I am or fuck you! (Interview, 2/11/19)

Andrew said that his struggles have molded him into the person he is today. Perhaps the most pivotal moment when he decided to live for his own interests and to his own standards and expectations was when he found out that he was HIV positive. For him, that one fact changed his outlook on life; it made him grateful for each breath and for the opportunity to present himself

and his life as a gift to the world, and it convinced him that he was worthy of having everything his heart desired. He said:

I think the straw that broke the camel's back was finding out that I was positive and that reality that no day is promised to us. And I just don't have time to not enjoy this life that I have 'cause I only get one shot at this. So I'm going to be my true authentic self. And that came from—I had to isolate myself from everybody...to realize who I was and what I wanted people to take away from a conversation with me or seeing me. What am I going to stand for? What am I going to be unapologetic about? And that's who I am...I have been ridiculed in my in my younger years, and sometimes even you come across it in the adult life. But once I got to a point where I knew who I am whose I am, then it was nothing that was going to stop me from being my true authentic self. (Interview, 2/11/19)

That revelation allowed him to be open and honest about his sexuality with his mother and those around him. He continued:

I didn't really care about anything anybody said or thought about me but my mom. And so once she found out and how strong our relationship was and I didn't have to hide it anymore, I didn't give a flying flip who knew. (Interview, 2/11/19)

Faith

People use many names to refer to their beliefs about a higher power and life-guiding principles. Andrew's chosen term is faith. While Andrew simply identifies as Christian, his grandmother attends a Baptist church and his mother a Nazarene church. As I was familiar with the Baptist denomination, I understood that his grandmother went to a church that believed in God, in Jesus as the Savior of the world, in the Bible as the Word of God, in taking communion to reaffirm their commitment to live a godly life, and in baptism by full immersion. Andrew

added that Baptists uses praise and worship to offer unto God thanks for the many blessings in their lives. Unfamiliar with the Nazarene definition, I asked Andrew to describe what Nazarenes believe as best as he understood. Andrew said:

Nazarene is basically, they believe that you don't have to wait to get to Heaven to live a rich, successful, lucrative, blessed life. So they believe in the Trinity. They're somewhat similar to Methodists. If they had to be family, I think Nazarene and Methodist would be cousins... At the Nazarene church that we went to here, yeah, people was speaking in tongues. They would pray with oil. People fall out, catch the spirit. All of that.

(Interview, 2/7/19)

His mother's turn toward Nazarene beliefs, or the desire to "get saved", when Andrew was a teenager, so his earlier childhood was not inundated with religious customs and traditions.

Andrew said that his mother was taking care of a patient that patient invited her to church. She went and later joined the church. When I asked Andrew to explain "getting saved", he said:

I guess it's when you renounce fleshly desires, when you decide that you want to live life in the way that God and the Holy Bible has intended you to do. Basic instructions before leaving earth [what BIBLE stands for]. Following those principles. I guess that's what's being saved, knowing that there's the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that Jesus died and rose on the 3rd day...all of that. (Interview, 2/7/19)

I wondered if by those standards if he thought of himself as "saved", and it turned out that he did, but this answer was complicated for him. He spoke about the difficulty of knowing that he was gay by the time he was 16 when his mother joined a church. Ministers of the church preached that "hell fire" was the punishment for being gay. He internalized this idea and desperately tried to be straight, "trying to pray off the gay" (Interview, 2/7/19). Andrew has

struggled with the combination of faith and sexuality most of his life. Around the age of 16, he tried to change his sexuality, but by age 20, he had made peace with who he was and started to validate himself. He found that he believed in most of the things he was taught, but he just could not believe that God would send him to burn in hell for eternity simply because he was attracted to men. However, before he arrived at that conclusion, Andrew struggled through many excruciating circumstances.

At 17-18 I was trying to change. Had friends in high school that would pray over me.

We'd speak in tongues and try to pray the gay away. Be in church and they done put oil on me... My stepdaddy would try to force the spirit on me, he's a minister. (Interview, 2/7/19)

Not only did Andrew receive negative reinforcement at home with family and at school but he also faced disapproval at church. No place served as a haven for him. He could find no refuge from the constant reproach of the world anywhere. Though he has established self-love that allows him to worry less about what anyone thinks of him, especially church members, he admits that he still wonders about the afterlife:

Now, the only time it becomes a struggle for me with religion is after hearing so many times that you gon go to hell, I still have moments in my life when I feel as though it's a possibility that I may go, but it's just better for me not to think about that aspect of religion at all. I completely erase it, that aspect of it. (Interview, 2/11/19)

He continues, "And at this point in my life, if I even hear you preach a sermon about homosexuality, I'm gettin up, I'm not even stayin. I don't let religion take away who I am as a person" (Interview, 2/11/19). For Andrew, each day a new adventure begins in how to navigate

faith and sexuality. The journey has not gotten easier. Rather, Andrew has determined what he will not accept when it comes to religious practices and beliefs.

Andrew's Ideal Church

As the basis for rules in his mother's house and in societal norms, religion played a huge role in Andrew's life situated in the Bible Belt. Andrew absorbed the religious teachings that span his lifetime, both the positive and negative messages. He has had to make some difficult decisions about what he believes and how he wants to act on those beliefs. With plenty of opportunities to abandon religion altogether, Andrew hold fast to the positive and affirming messages that he has heard. During interviews, I asked him about the kinds of church and religious experiences that might have made his life a bit easier, specifically, how he would describe his perfect church, and he responded:

If I could build a perfect church, I would want all types of people. Having too many of the same type of people can be problematic, I think. So, I would want some of everybody, but the message would have to be that of love, acceptance, and righteousness. The messages need to encourage us people who need encouragement and convict us when we are not living life according to God's word. I wouldn't want the church to be too big because then it becomes difficult to have personal relationships with your congregation. Having personal relationships would be imperative. The perfect church would do outreach that caters to everyone. I would want my church to volunteer at the local gay and lesbian community center, nursing homes, rehab facilities, domestic violence centers, etc. I would like a church that is very diverse because the world is diverse. Of course, the music would need to be diverse as well. I would also like for the pastor to be a woman because I am a true feminist. (Interview, 4/2/19)

This quote represents the most accurate picture of Andrew and the role faith and church now plays in his life. He continues to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of his traumatic church experiences and promote a new kind of Christian. He subscribes to many evangelical beliefs but refuses to couple those beliefs with the hate that he has learned in his lifetime that he associates with evangelicalism. He was made to feel like less than a person, not worthy of consideration, but has only internalized love, which he expresses through connecting with his students to help them know their worth and live up to their greatest potential.

Music Education

Andrew holds fast to his convictions about faith and how he should live his life. Where church leaders and family members have sown pain, sorrow, and heartbreak into the fertile soil of his life, Andrew has resiliently fought to sow love back into the world. One of the biggest ways he achieves this love is through teaching music. While he does focus on teaching music, he achieves musical greatness with his choral ensembles by focusing on students, acknowledging what they are going through and honoring their backgrounds. He truly wants the best for his students and tells them that often; he remembers what it felt like to be a youth who endured harsh circumstances. Andrew says:

I didn't love myself. I was going thru life just day by day because when you truly love yourself you just don't put yourself in situations or allow people to treat you or do you any type of way. This is why I try to pour that love into them [his students] and to let them know that my standards are high for them. So [as if talking to students] "I don't want you out here getting pregnant at 18/19 years of age before you've had a chance to enjoy life." Not trying to scare them. I think we work so much on the academic, but we don't work enough on the social. That's why I don't mind kids knowing that I'm gay

cause I need them to know that not all gay people fit into that stereotype of what homosexuality is...so we have real conversations in here. I tell my girls that I love ‘em and that they’re beautiful and not to allow anybody to mistreat ‘em. (Interview, 2/8/19)

During my classroom observations, I could tell that students feel the love that Andrew gives and enjoy the supportive environment that he fosters in each class meeting. Because of this welcoming environment, students freely offer opinions and suggestions about the music they are performing and how they feel they should perform it.

I open what I teach as far as musically, I always get the students’ opinions, especially in my choirs. I’ll let them listen to things I’m interested in and I get feedback from them. Cause I found out that if the kids enjoy what they’re singing, or if you make them feel a part of what’s going on, they’ll be more committed to it. (Interview, 2/8/19)

Andrew also encourages students to work out their problems with each other. Where some choir directors might overlook the ensemble’s internal issues, Andrew prioritizes students’ emotions:

The biggest thing is that when there’s drama going on in choir, most choir directors will ignore it, like “We ain’t got time for that” and push forward. I stop the rehearsal, during school hours, and we have what I call a lemon squeeze. So whatever situation that’s going on, the person gets that off their chest, we talk about it. The hope is that after, lemons are very bitter, so you squeeze all that bitterness out and hopefully, we have lemonade. (Interview, 2/8/19)

Andrew’s overall teaching philosophy is to make students feel seen, heard, and understood and to give them the support he did not know in high school. He draws upon the social lives of his students—students’ backgrounds and interests—to enhance his music teaching.

This pay-it-forward philosophy of teaching serves Andrew well and gives him purpose to hold on to throughout the tough days of teaching and navigating sexuality and faith in a place where people practicing evangelical beliefs and practices historically persecute queer people and people of color. Even if evangelicals do not actively participate in the persecution of these people, they leave queer people and people of color unsupported. This lack of support infiltrates teaching as well in different ways. While some states do not have legislation in place to provide safety for queer people in schools, some school administrations have no requirement to consider queer people for any position.

There was a position at a school open that I was gonna apply to, but it basically had outlined that they would not hire a homosexual. And it was because it was a Christian-based school. It was private, and they can do that. (Interview, 2/8/19)

Some schools have protections in place against explicit racist and homophobic practices, but queer African American teachers have to deal with the combination of covert racism and homophobia that manifest in being overlooked for promotions and not having the same access to resources as their White, straight counterparts.

It's a difference in being a Black gay man and a White gay man. The teacher who told me he wouldn't want anyone to be in my classroom was a White gay Caucasian man. He got everything he wanted. Everybody knew who he was. If he had a concern or any issues, it was [snaps his fingers] handled! I would go to administration about that teacher speaking and doing things inappropriate, it just felt like things would fall on deaf ears. I feel like I have to work ten times harder. Not as much now but starting I didn't get the same attention, the same resources as other teachers do. There's a White gay teacher, he's an awesome guy. Just in conversation about the resources that he has at his school versus

what we have here, it's just it's totally different. Being out in public, people see me before they even see that I'm gay, they see that I'm Black first. And because of that it's almost like it's a double, triple hate. (Interview, 2/8/19)

Though queer teachers of color experience really dismal circumstances, some school administrators support their queer teachers of color.

In comparison to what some of my other teacher friends go through, I'm blessed to be in a building where I don't have to deal with that. And I have the support of the administration and I'm not micro-managed. I have full autonomy of what I do in here, and that's with the hair flips. That's with me queenin' out, all of that. I had a student go on twitter and say, "I need my schedule changed because I got a gay ass teacher." And a student that I had taught came back and told me. I took that to the administration, and they gave him a 10-day suspension and they removed him from my classroom. And I just know that there has been situations in other schools where they give 'em a day of in-school suspension or nothing, but they don't play that here. (Interview, 2/7/19)

However, even with administrators' and colleagues' support, Andrew fights racial bias that lies at the heart of music education.

I can probably count on two hands the number of Black teachers we have in the [regional choral organization]. When we have auditions, the chair strategically places one Black judge in each room. There have been times where I'm like, "No, I wanna judge wit my friend, [other African American teacher]." And they'll say, "I can't afford to put two Black judges in one room", only because a lot of people don't favor sound with color. So to make sure that our kids have the opportunity to try, we put Black judges in the room, but when it comes to the All-State auditions when we merge organizations, maybe 90%

White, 10% Black, the kids who actually make All-State, they definitely have a preference of tone. It's always more White kids in All-State. [Regional festival], because there's more Black kids in the organization, it tends to be a nice balance, but going against schools like [school with mostly-White population], they have 30-40 White kids make [regional festival] each year. It's definitely not a lot, but we have our ways to try to combat it behind the scenes. (Interview, 2/8/19)

While Andrew considers it a privilege to fight for the right of his students to receive full consideration at regional and state festivals and competitions, his ability to effect change is severely lessened by his layers of identity. His colleagues see "gay, Black man" before they see a music educator advocating for his students and himself, which means that whatever support he receives at the individual school level does not necessarily carry over to the regional or state levels.

CHAPTER 5— “EASIER SAID THAN DONE”: ZION’S STORY

Black life is often like walking along a balance beam: It requires strategy and concentration, for stability is so fleeting (Jerkins, 2018, p. 125).

The Scene

As I drove up to the school, I noticed that there was one big building that housed two schools. Because this observation took place in the middle of the school day, when I arrived, there was no traffic in the parking lot. Once Zion arrived, we walked a few feet in sunny, 70-degree weather to a side entrance of the large school. This entrance turned out to be the front of the second school although located in the middle of the combined school. Inside the first set of doors, we hit an immediate barrier that required us to proceed to the main office in order to gain access to the rest of that school. The office worker scanned her badge to open the door that led into the halls of the school. Once through the office, we made our way up a flight of stairs and into the orchestra room. Having mostly been in band and choir settings, I immediately noticed that the chairs were evenly spaced in an eight-by-five chair block, so that each student would have their own personal space. Zion informed me that on this day he was assisting in a sixth-grade orchestra class. In other words, he would not be the main teacher. Because he is an instructional specialist, his daily job functions vary from offering full-ensemble teaching to assisting the main teacher. This day would be an assist day.

Before class begins, I talk with Zion and the main teacher Ms. Moon about the focus of today’s lesson. After that, Zion and I briefly chat about the school’s demographics. This arts magnet school has a significant population of African American students, followed closely by a large Hispanic population. There are few White students in the county, and this small number is reflected in the school population. The bell rings and students enter, going immediately to the

instrument storage room for their instruments, then getting situated in their seats with their orchestra materials, and finally, warming up on their instruments. One by one students fill the space, glancing at me as if to say, “Who are you and why are you here?” As more students sit in their seats, Ms. Moon and Zion tune each student individually.

In this classroom of 31 students, I perceive that there are 27 students of color (24 African American students, two Hispanic students) and one White student. Most students present as girls (22). In this melanin-filled¹² space, Ms. Moon stands out because she is racially different than most of her students. She is White and most of her students are students of color. Zion is an immediate role model, his dark skin resembling that of many students in room. He presents a standard of a businessman: dress shirt tucked into dress pants, with a belt and dress shoes, facial hair neatly trimmed. As Ms. Moon teaches, Zion walks around the classroom helping those who look like they need assistance. Some of his advice is about fingering, as he talks with a cellist about using their ring finger to play the F#. Other times, Zion checks bowings, notes, other fingerings, and encourages good posture. Though he just met these students today, he intuitively speaks to them in a way that suggests that he wants to relate. When Ms. Moon gives students time to practice a portion of the music on their own and some of the cello section sits without playing, Zion says, “Y’all don’t need to practice? You good? You perfect already?” The students know these are rhetorical questions and respond by playing through their music. Though Zion’s teaching in the class today is secondary, he uses his shared background with the students to connect with them. (Fieldnote, 4/10/19)

¹² Because melanin is a dark brown pigment, “melanin-filled” means full of dark brown pigment. A melanin-filled space is one that is comprised of many dark-skinned people.

Zion's Layers of Identity Considerations

Societal Expectations

Societal expectations often reflect narrow views of acceptability in terms of identity and behavior that express those identities. When I first talked with Zion, he quickly informed me of how he identifies and his disdain for certain labels. He identifies as a Black man and deems his sexuality “complicated.” He detests the label of bisexual; it does not work for him. When I asked him why he felt the label Black man worked but not bisexual, he explained:

Because of societal expectations, I think. I think people don't really listen or understand or believe the label of bisexual men. Usually if you've messed around with men, then you're gay. Even trying to explain that to people in the gay community, it's hard to get them to grasp that. Like I said, that label to me is kinda “eh.” So as far as me feeling comfortable in my skin, who I prefer to be around, and who I spend the most time around is probably in the LGBTQ community, but that's not where my sexual attraction and desires strictly lie. It doesn't work that way. (Interview, 4/9/19)

I gently pushed Zion to say more about the way societal categories operate how they produce specific expectations for him as a Black queer man. He responded:

I think society expects Black men to be the epitome of masculinity. They expect us to be the strongest, the most fit, the best athletes, of course. All that physical prowess, we're supposed to be that. I feel like society puts us on a pedestal even with sexual prowess. We are demanding or we are the ones that supposedly all women desire. That type of thing. It's the physical part, the sexual part, and of course, we're supposed to be the hardest. And whatever situation that translates into we're supposed to be the strongest in character, and there's no sign of any weakness and femininity and emotion. I think it's

shifting some. I've seen a shift over the past decade where some things have become more acceptable, but I've also lived when it was questionable to even smile. So I think it has progressed, but I think society expects Black men to epitomize masculinity.

(Interview, 4/9/19)

These beliefs about how Black men should perform their race and gender were Zion's deepest beliefs that had developed from childhood, but no one had specifically articulated these unspoken "rules." Instead, Zion believes that he placed these demands on himself because of the ways in which society communicated these expectations. Zion and I discussed possible origins of the belief that Black men must be the epitome of masculinity, including physicality and sexuality. Zion said:

I'm sure it dates back to slavery times. The ways that people wanted to break Black men down. I think that on the flip side of that is when you reclaim that identity and that strength, maybe it's meant to be, "Hey, well, we *are* the strongest." I think it comes from expectations of "we are good for entertainment." Our athletics and being in those positions of masculine characters carries more weight.

Zion expressed that he felt societal expectations required him to perform the stereotype of Black men as strong, athletic, and the best entertainers. This message that he received from the world throughout his life developed from strong belief into a personal truth. Throughout his lifetime, he saw people praise Black athletes and entertainers for their physicality and charismatic performances. He heard the common trope that African Americans naturally exhibit superior physical abilities (Entine, 2000; Hoberman, 1997; Sokolove, 1988) so many times that he began to hold himself to that standard. Societal expectations directly influenced his beliefs about himself.

Sexuality

Navigating sexuality started at a young age for Zion. He was in the seventh grade when he started to notice his attraction to the same sex, and he developed his first same-sex crush on a friend. From that moment, Zion tried to understand what was happening with him, the changes in his thoughts. It stood out to him that his feelings for boys were just as strong as his feelings for girls:

I think my first boy crush was 7th grade. And it was so sad because it was such a good friend. That's what made it kinda stand out. It was like, "These are all your friends. Why do you feel differently toward him?" And it took a minute to understand and digest because I was in 7th grade, so it was attraction to girls and boys and I could clearly say "I feel that way about her. I wanna be around her. I want to do things with her." That makes sense, but it didn't make sense why I felt differently about him. By 9th grade I had admitted to myself...And I could clearly tell then, "Yeah, you're sexually attracted to this guy," and I still had girlfriends and everything else. It was comparable. It was like, "The same feelings I have towards her, is the same desire and curiosity I have about him."

(Interview, 4/10/19)

As he grew older and began to really explore his sexuality, Zion got involved in concurrent relationships with boys and girls. Though he spent time with both boys and girls, his friends and family acknowledged the time Zion spent with girls as "relationship time." This labeling occurred in part because Zion told people directly when he had girlfriends and identified the time they spent together as "relationship time," so people had no reason to suspect that he liked boys. This pattern of labels resonates with what Zion said about people not believing in the concept of a bisexual man.

The first guy that I dated, I was 16, he was 18. He was a college student at the local university. I had a girlfriend at the time. He had a girlfriend at the time. This probably wasn't at the forefront of anyone's mind because I had a girlfriend who everybody knew and it was a pretty good relationship. (Interview, 4/10/19)

Zion continued discussing the excitement of his relationship with a man and the burden of how he worked to keep it a secret from his wise grandmother.

When we started hanging out, he used to drive over to my house and pick me up. And we would just go riding and go wherever. I remember all of my family questioning me like, "Who is he? Why is he coming around so often?" We were hanging out every day. And my brother, who is less than but almost 2 years younger than me, we were so close. He was the hardest person to try to lie to, to make up a story about that he would believe. And I would say, "Oh, I met him in my summer internship program," and he questioned the whole time...And my grandmother, she flat out called it out one day because I wanted to spend the night at his house...It was my first guy, and I was just head over heels, and we wanted to just spend the night. And I remember asking my grandmother could I spend the night over there. It was my spring break. She was in the kitchen cooking, and she literally put everything down on the counter and just stopped, and said, "Why would a grown ass man wanna spend the night with you?" So I was like, "Cause we just wanna hang out. We're friends. I'm on spring break." And she was like, "I don't know him. I don't know his people. I don't know what you'll be doing over there. I don't know what he'll be trying to do to you." It was some comment that she made and the way she said it, made me feel like "okay, she's already questioned this." We never talked about it other than that. (Interview, 4/10/19)

Zion's grandmother might not have picked up on signs that he was attracted to men, but Zion did not share that information with her either. Not knowing how she we would react to that truth, he did not feel that he could say that he wanted to spend time with his significant other. While Zion did not exactly lie about his relationships with his boyfriend, Zion did not divulge all of the related facts.

Zion's insecurity about who to trust with the truth about his sexual identity also manifested during Zion's senior year of high school. Zion, expected to join the track team, would stay after school to go to track practice, but started skipping track practice to meet up with a male student whom he liked. For a while, Zion was able to evade his brother's questions about why he had not made it to track practice. Eventually, he had to tell his brother the truth about his sexual identity. Weary from his brother's relentless questions, Zion explained to his brother his absence from track practice and revealed the truth about his sexual identity.

The next guy I dealt with went to school with me. I was in my senior year of high school, and we used to meet up at the bathroom. I was supposed to be joining the track team, and I would stay back after school to go to track practice. My brother would say, "Okay, well, I'll see you at practice." But I would go meet up with ol' dude. So at the end of every evening my brother would be like, "Why didn't you come to practice?" and I was like, "Oh, I was in the band room. I was having too much fun, and I didn't wanna come." I remember one time, it was like somebody else was looking for the guy, my brother was looking for me, and we both lied and said we were in the band room when we weren't in the band room. And that day on the way home, my brother was like, "No, where were you really? Were you with that guy? And I said, "Yeah." (Interview, 4/10/19)

Zion navigated this tangled web of negotiation from a young age due to assumed constrictions placed upon him that directed how he should present himself to his family and the world. By the time Zion finished high school, he had learned that liking the same sex was a fact that he should keep secret for fear of rejection or worse. For Zion, navigating an attraction for the same sex meant that he sometimes needed to lie about his whereabouts as well as tell half-truths. Unfortunately, lying and telling half-truths continued into adulthood and infiltrated other aspects of his life.

Spirituality as Energy

Zion grew up attending and singing in the Black Church, which he describes as “Baptist or Pentecostal or AME¹³, those type of denominations, where gospel music means a lot to the service” (Interview, 4/11/19). He attended these types of churches once or twice a week when he was young, so he internalized the messages he heard at church at a young age, messages he describes as full of hate and hypocrisy. Zion observes:

There’s so much judgment... you have to be this type of person to get into heaven. Not only do you have to be this type of person to get into heaven, but the hypocrisy that we get a lot of times—“Oh I can do this but I can’t do this? They can get this, but I’m doomed to hell?” (Interview, 4/11/19)

Because family members and clergy taught him that only good people go to heaven, he deduced that if he behaved in a certain way, then God would consider him a good person, and he would, therefore, get into heaven. His deepest frustrations, however, lay in the inconsistent nature of the requirements for heaven entry. Zion felt frustrated that what he was taught about the

¹³ The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) is the first independent Protestant denomination founded by Black people who desired independence from White Methodists.

requirements to live as “good Christian” and get into heaven did not apply equally to all people.

“Today, the requirement is no premarital sex, but tomorrow it’s okay for you because you’re having sex with someone from the opposite sex” (Interview, 4/11/19). He resented that most of the judgment against him was reduced to his attraction to men. From his time spent in church and the negative messages he heard frequently, Zion developed some self-hate that made him judge himself harshly and try to be straight and only like girls. Zion said:

I went through the struggle as a teenager, asking myself, “Why do I have these attractions?” I was trying to pray it away, all of those things. I would be like, “Not only if I do what I wanna do, but if I think about doing what I wanna do, it’s a sin. Why don’t I just do it if it’s a sin altogether?” (Interview, 4/11/19)

Zion felt doomed to let down both the important people in his life and God, though he was unsure how to improve the situation when he could not cease his attraction to the same sex. His internal struggle played out like the clearest battle of “damned if I do and damned if I don’t”, in which a person feels other people will blame them or consider them wrong no matter the outcome of the situation.

Later, in college, as feelings of self-doubt grew more intense, Zion’s critical thinking deepened as well, and he began questioning his closely-held beliefs. He found them rooted in fear and decided that he had fought hard enough to make his life parallel the fundamentalist beliefs he was taught as a boy, which included going to church every week and believing that following the principles of Christianity were the only way to enter heaven. At that time, he began to question everything:

So that’s probably the first time I really started to question, and meeting people from other faiths, who I refuse to believe that they’re going to hell just because they’re Muslim

or Jewish, or because they were born in another country where Christianity is not there. I really started to question and think, and I'm still evolving and just really thinking more about spirituality as a whole and less about organized religion. (Interview, 4/11/19)

This deeply critical time in Zion's life inspired personal changes that caused him to adopt new beliefs about morality and how to be a good person. That critique continues to guide him away from evangelical fundamentalist beliefs and more toward energy. Zion explained what he meant by this idea:

Where I am now, I've really started to consider energy. As days go by, the more I get connected to understand, "Yeah, it's not a coincidence that when I put certain energies out, I get certain things back." Or there are literally people who, if I think x, y, z, I promise I will get a phone call or text message in a few minutes. Or if I'm feeling something weird about, and I don't even think it's intuition, but just feeling a weird feeling about somebody, like something is wrong, then it ends up that something is always wrong. (Interview, 4/11/19)

The energy that Zion describes identifies a belief in a connection with the universe or spirit world, in which he can intuit when something is not right and knows when he needs to reach out to someone to check on them. This belief system suits him better, as he uses this ability to sow positivity back into the world. He honors his intuitive nature and focus on centering with a higher power into every aspect of his life.

Zion's Perfect Church

Zion's childhood was steeped in the principles and teachings of some evangelical fundamentalist churches that stress abstinence until marriage, encourage men's leadership roles, teach women subservience to men, that homosexuality is a sin and morally wrong. The never-

ending and ever-changing criteria contained directives for both actions and thoughts. The church asserted that one could rid their bodies of impurities, and during his formative years, Zion attended churches in which clergy taught that people could also cleanse their minds of impure thoughts. Preachers also taught that homosexuality was a sin and that no person with homosexual thoughts or actions would be eligible to enter heaven. Recognizing that the church demeaned his identity, Zion has moved away from attending church. Knowing his decision, I asked him to describe his perfect church:

Where I feel like the church should be is really like a service to its members in the community. I think that the Black Church was such a big deal in the Black community for so long because of the service to the community because that was our space to gather, our space to love, to get to know, to support one another, philanthropy. Think about Dr. King. That was all in the church. I think it's had an important place in our community, and I think my type of church would focus on that. Not taking up offerings to build a huge megachurch but taking up offerings to help our brother or sister who is going through what they're going through. Prayer, not to say that we're just praying, but sending that good energy toward a person to help them get through something difficult. I think the focus would absolutely be on helping one another, and no glorifying an edifice, not glorifying money. And not judging and chastising and all of that stuff but trying to uplift the community. (Interview, 4/24/19)

Zion continues to articulate why the current Black Church collective is not characterized by the wonderful qualities that make up his perfect church:

Church isn't currently like that because the church doesn't hold the same importance in our community as it used to be. Back when meetings used to be held at churches during

the civil rights movement. Or even, I'm thinking of being a young kid when Sundays were more than just a service. It was about us connecting to these families who were important to our lives. I think it's kinda lost that space. Of course, on top of that, there's so much judgment. (Interview, 4/24/19)

The judgment about how people live their lives that Zion associates with the Black Church is the main factor reason he no longer attends church. He decided that he wants no part of any religious system that he feels destroys people's self-images. Instead, he now focuses on using his negative experiences with the church to continually teach him how to advocate for people in his life and how to send them what he identifies as "good energy."

Music Education

The music classroom presents a special hurdle for Zion. He grapples with the daunting combination of resisting the influence of people's fundamentalist evangelical beliefs and their resulting actions, while also navigating sexuality alongside the expectations placed on music teachers. The same considerations of when and how to tell other people about one's non-normative sexuality in family and church situations reappear in the classroom. At one point, Zion found himself dating the cheerleading coach at his school. Since he was open about his relationship with the woman, his colleagues and his band parents accepted him as straight man because they had no reason to think otherwise. What they saw, however, was not Zion's whole self. He was still seeing men and keeping that fact hidden because of his position and his colleagues.

I remember dating the cheerleading coach, and as we were dating, I had started a long-term relationship with a guy. So here I was in this situation again where she can't know about any of that and you just kinda have to deal with I'm not doing anything physical

with her. We're just kinda talking. So there was that complication, but I was afraid for any of my staff or students or band parents to know that side of me.

The fear of the possible negative outcomes of people knowing about Zion's interest in men forced him to live a double life.

If I was doing anything with my gay friends, I was sure to do it on the other side of town. I was so close to some of the families. I knew their values, and they had all taken me in. They used to bring me food after school, invite me over for Sunday dinners, invite me to church. So I was really close to a lot of those families, and I knew that if they knew that side of me, then I wouldn't have that same support.

Sometimes that fear caused him to choose not to get involved with certain teachers. If he knew of teachers' conservative Christian beliefs, he sometimes avoided contact with those teachers to reduce the risk of any potential actions of hate were they to learn about his sexuality.

I had an art teacher who I was really close to. I wasn't even out to her because she had a strong Christian background, and I didn't feel like going through all that.

Because Zion identified in ways that opposed some Christian beliefs, he had already suffered a substantial amount of trauma at the hands of people who identified themselves as Christian. For this reason, he did not feel safe talking to her about his sexuality even though he considered her a close friend.

Race also affected these decisions and negotiations. Zion was unable to articulate the specific effect that race had on the other aspects of identity he had to navigate, but he had plenty of stories of how race influenced his teaching context and how race combined with sexuality to produce a significant barrier in his professional life. When I asked Zion if he had experienced any race-related tensions in school settings, he said, "There are billions of different

examples... We had a teacher who had a noose around his mailbox. We had a White student say when a Black student died, ‘one down and [random number] to go’” (Interview, 4/11/19). The racist display of a noose hanging around a mailbox sent a clear message about the racial atmosphere of that school—that tensions were high and that certain racial identities were not celebrated there even though African American teachers and students comprised about half of the total school population. Even though racial demographics dispersed rather evenly at that school, racial tension at the school remained high. Zion saw the display as a threat to the safety of every person of color and thus questioned if he should continue teaching in that school.

The above scenario was only one example of the racial tension Zion experienced in school settings. He continued with another example:

The White community had an issue with the show-style band. Anything that we did was “nigger stuff.” The first time I heard anybody use that term in a negative way was my first year of teaching at my second football game. They were calling my kids that at the neighboring high school. (Interview, 4/11/19)

People often recognize show-style marching bands, like the ones in *Drumline* (2002), as links to African American culture and associate them with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (Roberts & Wilson, 2018). In certain communities, embracing this style of marching and associated history could elicit overt expressions of racial tension as in Zion’s experience. Zion directed his marching band in a manner consistent with the culture of his community, and only faced negative critique when the band performed at halftime during a football game against a predominantly White school. Spectators from the opposing school likely embraced a corps-style marching band philosophy that reflects more Eurocentric marching techniques and music

selection. People often associate corps-style marching bands with military bands and patriotism. Zion's show-style band, therefore, represented a lack of patriotism and respect for the military.

Race also played a role in the how Zion navigated his sexuality at school and why he felt he needed to conceal information about himself. In his lifetime, Zion has observed that most inclusive spaces tend to be White spaces. Places in which White people comprise the majority tend to propagate the appearance of inclusivity¹⁴, so it is no wonder that Zion relates inclusivity to Whiteness. Zion said, "If I were in a predominantly White school, I probably would feel more comfortable with [being out], but as the image of the Black man in this Black environment, it's judged differently" (Interview, 4/11/19). Zion sees his racial identity in this particular context as a reason to conceal his sexual identity, as he feels he has a standard to meet at school. He fears that the combination of race and sexuality in the space where he teaches would be too much to accept if he were out at school.

Concerns about one's sexuality becoming public knowledge also influence teacher-student relations (Harbeck, 1992; Kissen, 1996; Sanlo, 1999). Fear can cause queer teachers to keep their guards up so much that they come off as standoffish and cold. While some queer music teachers take pride in and are content to serve as an example for their queer students, Zion is conflicted about how to provide that resource without anyone questioning his sexuality.

I finally noticed that I had a few young men who were struggling with their sexuality.

That was a moment when I thought about where I am teaching and...I struggled with wanting to talk to them and relate to them on a personal level with what they were going

¹⁴ White people hold more power in society than any other race and often have more opportunities to publicly express their displeasure of injustices without negative repercussions (see Emba, 2016; Kim et al, 2017). Because of this ability to be in solidarity with oppressed groups without backlash, some people see White people as the most inclusive group of people.

through. I really wanted to. On the flipside, if I did that, then I'd be outing myself to my program. I talked to him as much as I could without going there, but so much of me wanted to sit down and go like, "Hey, are you okay? Everything okay at home? After that moment, I really started to think "Hey, what kinda disservice am I doing, what kind of hypocrite am I being If I can't have these conversations with him, who probably really needs it, but I can have that with my straight girls and my straight boys, and even my lesbian girls. But I'm not having this with him because that implicates me." That was a big struggle for me. (Interview 4/11/19)

Zion currently works in a space in which he is completely out. However, he splits his time between working in different classrooms and working on state curriculum documents, which includes constructing fine arts pacing guides and lesson plans for his school district. Because of administrative job duties, Zion works in the classroom part-time. In the time that he serves in the classroom, he never gives away any information that might implicate him. He laments that he would not be out at the school if he were he teaching full-time. After having taught in Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina, Zion knows that adolescent students often ask teachers about their personal lives out of curiosity. He has been asked about his love life many times before, so one main question haunts him.

I've wondered how I answer the first question "Are you single?" because it'll happen in a day or two. And I don't know. I feel like I'm personally at the point in my journey where I can say "No, I'm not," and if you ask me another question, then I would say, "This is him." But yeah, easier said than done.

Again, the combination of race, the religious mores of his geographical location, and societal expectations as they relate to sexuality and gender norms make him uncertain. Uncertain of what

might happen if his colleagues, students, and students' parents learned of his sexual identity, he resolves to simply do his job without any nods to or mentions of the other facets of his identity that make him a great music educator.

CHAPTER 6—"BEING KEPT DOWN": ALEX'S STORY

I was not confident in myself as either a Black girl or a woman. I second-triple-quadruple-quintuple-sextuple-guessed all of my thoughts so much that I drove my body to both mental and physical exhaustion...Growing up Black in America, I suppose, you get used to this obsession over who you (might) offend and the consequences of one misstep. (Jenkins, 2018, p. 125)

The Scene

I arrive at Alex's school and notice that I am a full hour early! Rather than waiting outside the school in my car for an hour, I drive around the community to kill time. On my way into town I noticed a few chateau-styled and mansion-styled homes looming large over their immaculately manicured lawns, and I thought to myself, "Does the rest of the town look like this?" As I drive in the opposite direction of those houses, I notice single-family homes with modest lawns, with doublewide trailers interspersed throughout. Eventually, I end up back on the main road and in front of Walmart, Tractor Supply, World Finance, a bank, and a Mexican restaurant. This intersection marks the site of the town's main attractions, or at least the biggest one. Pulling into the front parking lot of the school, I notice mostly White families in the drop-off line. A few minutes later, a school bus unloads a mostly White group of students as well. It seems that the bulk of this town is middle- to upper-middle class, with outliers on either end of the socioeconomic spectrum.

In the office of the middle school, I speak with the office worker about the nature of my business and that Alex is expecting me. The woman gives me directions to Alex's classroom, and set off to find the classroom. As I walk down the hall, peering into each classroom, I see desks in block formation facing a Whiteboard. I only observe two African American teachers in the whole school who enthusiastically welcome me to the building. Up a flight of stairs and past an art

classroom, I arrive at Alex's classroom and find her setting up for general music. Three rows of child-sized chairs face a chalkboard (not a whiteboard), with "Share the Music" books below each chair. Various percussion and Orff instruments fill the rest of the open floor space. The walls communicate that this space is for music and that all are welcome and musical. Bright-colored posters of children and adults singing and playing music line the walls as well as encouraging and inspiring phrases, a word wall with musical terms, and art that students made for Alex.

Today, students work on improvisation and clearly enjoy expressing themselves through singing, dancing, and playing instruments. When some students fear playing by themselves, Alex tells them how great they will do and either offers to play alongside students or allows the student to choose someone to play with them. Bright smiles light up the classroom as students immerse themselves in musical exploration. Unfortunately, these classes only last 35 minutes, and students' smiles and laughter quickly turn to frowns when the time comes for them to clean up and line up to leave the classroom. As students stand in line by row order, Alex prompts them to reflect on what they learned in class. Then, their classroom teacher takes them away. After a few of these classes, Alex transitions to the band room, in a separate space.

The band room resembles Alex's other classroom. Again, posters line the walls of the band room, except this time I notice more diversity in who is represented in the posters. Not only do I notice a section dedicated to the students in her band, with facts about them, but also people of varying age, race, ability, and religion. One would be hard-pressed to not be able to "see" themselves on the walls of this band room. Diversity is important to Alex, and one can see it within seconds of entering her teaching space. Alex and I talk about this as she quickly eats her lunch before her next class enters.

Students enter, take out their instruments, music, and pencils, sit in their seats, and begin warming up. As the class fills in, I notice that the class reflects what I saw earlier in the drop-off line: most of the class is White with three Hispanic students and one Asian student. Throughout the class time, Alex moves around the room almost constantly, providing individual feedback to several students. She also uses “y’all” often when referring to the students or either addresses them by name or sections. Before students leave, Alex encourages the class by saying, “Remember that your choices matter. Be your best selves.” (Fieldnote, 4/26/19)

Alex’s Layers of Identity Considerations

Spirituality and Sexuality

Though Alex prides herself on her newly-formed self-willed and obstinate disposition, she presents as more tender-hearted than this description portrays. Alex is neither given to fits of drama nor bitterness, but because she has taken the time to understand and form an opinion about certain topics, she refuses to equivocate on her beliefs. This refusal to go out of her way to avoid conflict is a marked change from Alex’s previous way to navigate life. Several experiences served as catalysts for this change in Alex’s life, and many of them center around church and spirituality.

Alex identifies as more of a spiritual person rather than a Christian, a fact that she says her parents would hate, but her church background is soaked in southern fundamentalism and evangelicalism, the kind in which seemingly kind and thoughtful statements like “bless your heart” and “I will pray for you” can serve as care and concern, but more times than not, they act as carefully-placed insults. In southern fundamentalism and evangelicalism, people often display shock and disgust upon learning that someone does not have a “church home” (a church that they

frequent). Alex did not describe the southern fundamentalist churches of her upbringing in a very positive light:

The kind of church that I've been in most of my life, people believe in the Bible above everything. The Bible is true. It's fact in the way that it was written. Nothing can stand up against the Bible. It's God's word. It's very conservative, very fundamentalist. Very repressive and oppressive. (Interview, 4/26/19)

Alex's parents set the church as the standard by which she should live her life and required a relationship with God; her parents modeled this level of spirituality at home. Her parents taught her that every aspect of her life should connect to God in some way, but Alex struggled to connect her sexuality to God since people associated with her church and all the churches she knew of believed that homosexuality was a sin. Growing up in a religious household, Alex's entire existence centered around church and learning how to live in a manner consistent with the word of God—the Bible. According to Alex, God required, “a daily dose of repentance for my sins, prayer, a heart of praise, and good deeds and witnessing to show my faith to others” (Interview, 4/26/19). As a child, she tried to represent her family's dedication to God with great pride. She read chapters of the Bible each day, led prayers and sang at church. Everything that she learned at church and her parents reinforced at home, she internalized as the “right way to live,” the only way to live.

Alex knew that the plan for her life was to do her best in school, go to college, find the love of her life, marry him, and start a family while maintaining a career. Of this plan, she observed, “It was the dream sold to every young girl. You could be independent and all that, but you were gonna marry, have kids, and make a life. When people talked about getting married, the man part was implied” (Interview, 4/26/19). However, this plan soon blurred for Alex. She

recalls that at about age 11, she started to notice girls in the same way that she looked at boys. Somehow, she knew that she should not discuss her feelings for girls with anyone. When she had her first encounter with a girl, she felt ashamed but also intrigued. Though all that had transpired was a quick kiss on the lips with a girl she knew from church, that kiss allowed Alex to look at the world differently. All at once, her bewildering feelings started to make sense. She thought that she might be one of those women who liked other women, but she had no terms for that sort of person because it was not something anyone had discussed with her. She reflected:

I was always kinda weird or kinda different, and this was younger than teenage years. You know people have imaginary friends or people imagine themselves as a rockstar or as a whatever? Well, I always kinda imagined myself as an older guy. Not necessarily that I wanted to be a guy, but I definitely saw myself as more masculine than most of the girls of my age and perhaps more masculine than typical women that were in my life at the time. That toughness and butchness really appealed to me, and at that time I only saw men behave that way, so it makes sense to me that I imagined my older self as a dominant, suave, handsome man. (Interview, 2/29/19)

Alex always felt the need to hide her sense of self, however, but these thoughts flooded her mind more frequently.

As Alex had begun to consider what it might look like to be in a relationship with a woman, preachers read scriptures at her and other teenagers that deemed homosexuality as an abomination. She told me a story of one preacher who personalized the message for a small group of adolescents:

There were three main teenagers in the church at this time, and I was one of them. The preacher made it his business to gather us from time to time and talk to us about life stuff

in relation to God. I remember one time he was talking to us about sex. I don't remember the exact words, but I remember that he used a plug and a socket to show how the plug fit into the socket. He made special note that the plug didn't work with another plug. The only way for the plug to get power was to connect with a socket. He wasn't using the terms, but he was basically telling us that there was a right way and a wrong way to have sex, a natural way and an ungodly way. (Interview, 4/29/19)

She desperately prayed about her feelings, trying her best to make them go away because she had internalized that they were wrong. Preachers gave sermons that explained how to treat one's body like a temple of God, which meant no sexual pleasure outside of the bonds of marriage and no lingering thoughts about those pleasures either; to engage in such things was a sin. She explained:

There was a way to live to be an example for people, so I knew I could never express this extra feeling. It wasn't that I didn't like boys or wasn't attracted to boys or think, "Oh, he's cute!" But I also started to develop that attraction to girls. Teenage through college I started to notice girls more and think, "Oh, she's cute!" or "She's got a nice body." And then the older I got and learned about sex and what the body wants and desires. I started to imagine myself with women even though I wasn't acting on it. (Interview, 4/29/19)

The overall message that Alex received at church was that God did not love sinners and that no person who engaged in homosexual acts would enter heaven. Heaven was a place of rest for good people after they died, and hell was for bad people, for whom there would be no rest. Alex desperately wanted to make it to heaven and really struggled during this time.

College was really the time of really seeing and grappling with this whole bisexual identity and still very much active in church. Very active. At that point in time, I would

call myself a Bible thumper, a Jesus freak, because that was what I was taught, and I was taught how to be a great Christian and model for the world. “Be in the world but not of the world.” So that’s what I set out to be all through my life and especially in my early 20s, but I’d also been taught that to think a thing is just like you already did it, so I was like, “Well, I’m damned anyway.” And I really felt like “Great, God hates me!”

(Interview, 4/29/19)

With her thoughts about and attraction to men and women, Alex was convinced that God hated her, and this showed up in a significant way in her life through insomnia, binge eating, dwindling self-worth, plummeting self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts. Thinking about these circumstances, Alex remembered, “I was a ticking time bomb about one negative outcome away from blowing up. I really was circling the drain, and I couldn’t talk to anyone because I already knew how they all felt. So I chose silent pain” (Interview, 4/29/19). Unfortunately, Alex kept hearing the same messages from several churches. She described what it felt like to fall into depression:

So I started to see women and be openly interested in women, but this internal fight between high spirituality and religiosity was kickin’ my butt at the time. It was kinda a warring dichotomy of “how do I be this great Christian and I like women in addition to men?” So I just began to sink and sink and sink. I was going thru a bunch of stuff in my life, struggling with sexuality was only part of it, but it was a huge part of it. And it was just really tough, and I just began to sink into a depression and at one point attempted to take my life because I was failing everyone. I was failing God. I was failing church members. I was failing my parents. I wasn’t the type of person that they would be proud of. I was away in a different state and no one was really checking on me at this time. It

was all hard. I thought, “Let me just put everyone, including myself, out of their misery.”

And so I attempted suicide. (Interview, 4/29/19)

Alex reached her lowest point in life, when all that she had learned about God and church convinced her that it was better for her to no longer take up space on the earth than to continue to disappoint those most important to her.

Alex followed this story by describing her journey to finding peace with who she is. That process meant that she had to leave church, a community she had been a part of since she was born. Leaving church meant that she had to withstand the looks of disgusts when Evangelicals inquired about her church home and learned that she did not go to church. The journey to making peace with who she was also included enlisting the help of a several therapists, which in turn meant breaking away from the fundamentalist belief that to be free of some unwanted feeling or ailment, all one needed to do was pray harder. In order to get the support that she needed, Alex had to be her own advocate. She told no friends or family of her struggles. Instead, she fought each day to find beauty and purpose and living and vowed to “show up” for others.

Alex’s Perfect Church

With so many negative experiences with the church and people in the church, Alex could easily reject anything associated with church or Christianity, but she chooses, instead to have a positive outlook on life. This outlook does not overlook the hate that many continue to spread through fundamentalist, evangelical beliefs and actions, but tries instead to understand the reasons that a person might hold particular beliefs in light of her own history. I asked her to reflect on church experiences once again to see if she could articulate categories of things that did not serve her well and what her perfect church would look like, or the kind of church that would have nurtured her well-being.

My perfect church would be—it wouldn't necessarily have to be a building cause I don't wanna own a church! We can pick a spot and just have people sit around in chairs in a circle and just talk amongst each other and talk about life and get help from each other like a real community and being there for each other. We could even have small breakout groups or spend ten minutes in a group and then go to another group so you can get to know people and people are being real. That's my idea of church. Now, I wouldn't necessarily in my perfect church stem from the Bible. It would stem from love, which I know people say "Jesus is love," but the way people put Jesus out there—it's not love. And so I would kinda harp on "whatever love looks like for you, that's what we're here to celebrate." It would be full of people who identify in different ways: Black, White, Indian, Asian. It's a space where anyone could come whether they are Muslim or Catholic or some other whatever. All people would be welcome there and would feel safe, would know that they *were* safe. That would be a perfect church for me. (Interview, 5/1/19)

Her whole life, Alex concerned herself with being the best Christian she could be and felt that she continually failed because of the demeaning words and actions of people who called themselves Christians that diminished her way of being in the world. While she could easily become bitter and pass on the same rejection that she felt, she chooses the path of love and light in which she focuses on putting as much positivity into the world as she can, encouraging and supporting those people who have felt diminished like she has. When discussing her perfect church, she aims not to do away with organized religion altogether but to take the church, however flawed, and repurpose it to reverse the effects of its negative past and present to possibly create a different future. Her early teaching taught her that she *is* the church, and she

now takes that knowledge into every aspect of her life by fostering environments of inclusivity and listening.

Sexuality by Way of Gender

Many people conceptualize sexuality through definitions of gender, wherein a person acquires a sexual label by how they perform their gender. For instance, society might label a woman clad in a strapless mermaid-cut dress and open-toed, strappy heels, *femme*¹⁵ and regard her as straight, as the woman presents in a way that checks enough boxes under the stereotypical heterosexual column of the assumed gender binary. A second woman, wearing capri pants, a polo shirt, and flip flops, people might label *femme* as well for the same reasons as the first woman, depending on the second woman's choice of pattern and fit of the clothing. However, a third woman dressed in baggy cargo shorts, a plaid button-down shirt, and Keen-brand sandals, people might label *butch*¹⁶ because the woman's clothes resemble what society deems *masculine*. Within the small space between *femme* and *butch*, Alex dresses and navigates her sexuality. She does not hate all dresses but rarely wears them. Her style of clothing suggests moderately-priced comfort, an important vibe that does not draw too much attention to her. We discussed the differences between "covering" and "passing" (Griffin, 1991), familiar concepts for Alex. While covering signifies that one censors what they share in relation to their sexual identity, passing requires more explicit lying about one's sexual identity to make people believe that one is heterosexual. Because of limited acceptance for non-normative sexualities in the U.S., Alex prefers to disguise her sexuality; she would rather say little about her sexual identity and noted

¹⁵ Femme has several meanings, but here I use the term to mean a feminine woman.

¹⁶ In this sense, butch refers to a masculine-acting woman.

that she looks to her clothing choices to say as little about her sexuality as she does when nudged for an official statement.

I would say that most of the time I'm somewhere between covering and passing where I'm not explicitly out in all aspects of my life. Like my family. I cover to seem like what society sees as a feminine woman at times. I don't explicitly say that I'm this or that. I say that I like guys because I do, but I just omit the women part to most people. At certain times of the year or on Sundays back when I was going to church, I would wear dresses or skirts, so actively trying to femme it up a little bit. So that's why I say I'm somewhere between passing and covering. (Interview, 5/1/19)

She went on to describe how she makes conscious daily choices about what she wears, specifically when she needs to dress in more formal clothing:

I'm pretty androgynous. When I dress up, it's never in a dress, but I can wear nice dress pants and a button-down top or some frilly, girly blouse, throw on some earrings. There's nothing insanely overt there. I sorta blend in even though I'm just being myself. Those are all things I like to wear. I have always been drawn to androgyny in myself and others. So I guess it just works. I feel that who I am allows me a level of secrecy where people don't really question who I am or who I appear to be. How I present myself flies just under the radar. (Interview, 5/1/19)

Alex finds this exploration and navigation of her sexual identity to be instinctual like breathing, but even she admits that sometimes this breathing becomes labored. She asked, "Should this be a constant consideration? Probably not, but I see it like, "Which superhero do I want to be today" (Interview, 5/1/19)? Each day she dresses the part of a single superhero. She

notes that superheroes attempt to desperate to keep their identity hidden from the world which necessitates frequent costume changes.

Music Education

Just as Alex's spirituality influences and intersects with her sexuality, race, and others' expressions of their religious beliefs in her southern state shape her professional life. She brings all aspects of herself to her music classes each day. Her beliefs about spirituality show up in the kind ways she interacts with her colleagues and the ways in which she nurtures, supports, and inspires her students. With the idea that "every kid deserves a champion" (Pierson, 2013), Alex uses her classroom as a way to help her students "see" themselves and their peers.

In my classroom I have posters up of musicians of color. When I get people to come work here with my students, I try to get people of color or a minority in some way. I have discussed with my students composers that are in the LGBTQ community just to normalize them to it because once it's normalized, it's not a big deal. And for kids, most of the time it's already not a big deal unless their parents teach them hate. So I try to show different races and ethnicities. I try to show just different levels of identity other than White male. (Interview, 5/1/19)

Her students are her priority, and she spends a great deal of time thinking and planning for how she can best be of service to students. This thinking and planning for Alex also includes considering if she could be more of an advocate for LGBTQ rights and mentor to her queer students.

I think if I were out that I could be there more for students who are trying to figure sexuality out. And I hope to do that later in my career when I'm established and people have been able to see who I am professionally. I feel like once they see who I am

professionally, then this queerness won't matter. They'll overlook it or accept it. That's what I'm hoping for. That's the only drawback to not being out is that you don't get to necessarily, explicitly get to be a role model for students, but I do still think there's merit in just being who you are because life takes all kinds. Kids also need to see, and adults need to see "I also don't have to tell anybody. I can just live my life if I want to."

(Interview, 5/1/19)

Alex finds herself between two difficult decisions. On one hand, she can teach without being out at school and provide a level of support for students. On the other hand, if she comes out at school, she must deal with whatever negative repercussions stem from public knowledge of her sexuality.

Alex admits that it is fear of the repercussions that keeps her quiet about her sexuality. At times when she might use herself as an example of what a queer person may look, dress, act, sound, or be like, the fear of discrimination that may manifest as job loss or lack of support frightens her enough for her to resolve to simply be a silent role model who exists without explanation.

I fear that if I was out at school there would be a lot of consequences with that. There was a period of weirdness with me and my parents, so I fear that same thing happening on a professional level. I've got to provide for myself, so I feel like I can't really risk that right now. And for that reason, I do tend to maintain a pretty strict separation between my personal and my professional life. Where I live, I don't so much go out where I live or entertain guests or anything like that. There's a strict separation. I will hug my students, but it's usually a side hug where nothing can be misconstrued as touching a student. I try to keep myself in good standing: leave the door open and things like that. I do worry that

maybe I'm not reaching enough students, but I really believe in small acts of subversion, so I do the things like promote diversity of people and ideas in my classroom; students have the right to question me and why we're doing certain things. I try to incorporate the why into everything we do because I believe they have a right to know and understand that side of things. Could I do more if I were out to my students and admin? I don't know. I think about it a lot, but for where I am in my life, I think I'm doing what's best for me *and* the school body. (Interview, 5/1/19)

Each different layer of identity intersects with music education in a distinct way. Alex tries her best to explicate how each combination of identities yields a new fear—some new way to experience prejudice and discrimination. As she begins to speak, she speaks at length about how each layer works with the other layers:

I mean race is already one layer that highly impacts my life. As a Black woman in the US I'm seen as a threat to norms of society. There are a lot of things that are expected of me as a Black woman. At the same time, a lot of things that aren't expected of me like just overall greatness and smartness and intelligence and all of that. That's race alone. When you put gender in there—I can't really pinpoint how it impacts. They impact each other but it's kinda like they play off each other where each experience or each incidence is doubly, not that you could quantify it, but it's like doubly hard or negative because you have these two layers. Not only are you Black but you're a woman. There are people who would like to keep you down because you're Black, and there are people who would like to keep you down because you're a woman. And then there are people who would like to keep you down because you're a Black woman. Navigating race relations and gender relations and as an LGBTQ person, as a bi woman, that's just an added layer because you

have race and gender and then you add on top of that being queer. That's just like three levels of difficulty. And people usually accept *a* [one] layer of weirdness or queerness in terms of being different from the norm. When you're a Black bi woman, that's three layers of oppression and you can really start to feel like you're at the bottom of society, and when you look around and see, you know you are. Now music education. You take all of that that's out there in the world that you feel as a bi Black woman and then you funnel it or look at it through the lens of music education, and here in Tennessee, I know that music education is a little more Black in this area, but I know that music education overall is very White so imagine trying to be great or have a career in something that you love but all of it is being kept down, being expected to only succeed at certain things or teach a certain way, things like that. (Interview, 5/1/19)

Alex understands multiple layers of oppression from her own experiences with racism, sexism, and homophobia and because she has read about oppressions that she has not had to navigate. She actively seeks out different perspectives so that she can educate herself and bring that knowledge into her music classroom to help educate her students.

I mean, I just try to teach from a foundation of empathy and love and caring for your neighbor, and I think that comes across. So I just concentrate on normalizing things rather than making a big deal out of the fact that a certain composer liked men or women or whatever. I think the kids of this day and time get that. I hope the parents get that too. Definitely just trying to do what I can with what I have and who I see on a day-to-day basis. It's like I'm teaching all of these life skills through music. Music is the vehicle I connect with them through and they get to see who I am through music too cause we talk

about stuff I like. I try to let them see me as a real person. I think that helps. (Interview, 5/1/19)

Alex's hope for the future is intact, and her resolve is strong. She concentrates on doing as much good as she can while she can, for as long as she can while remaining as real and as honest as she possibly can.

CHAPTER 7—DISCUSSION OF CROSS-PARTICIPANT THEMES

...pregnant with hidden strength and ability in a world bent on bending us silent and powerless.

(Ward, 2018, p. 13)

All participants continuously and simultaneously navigate all parts of their identities. The attempted identity disaggregation in this chapter is false and only for the purpose of discussion. Trying to understand a person without taking into account all the layers of their identity is impossible. While some of their layers of identity do not pose immediately noticeable threats to participants' sense of being, at least two of their identities fall under the classification of minoritized identities. Minoritized identities are those that afford one less power and representation in society. Andrew, Zion, and Alex self-identify as African American LGBTQ music educators. Their racial and sexual identities are minoritized identities that change the ways in which they inhabit any space. When considered altogether, their race and sexual identities intersect with their career field and other important identity markers like religious beliefs to make for unique experiences and considerations. As each layer of identity has its own associated panopticon, each day requires considering how one differs from societal norms. Participants' considerations divide into two categories, personal and professional, though much overlap and many intersections exist between the two categories so that each consideration influences and impacts the next.

Taking into account the intricate and circuitous nature of identities, this dissertation purposefully maintains an intersectional focus and approach to presenting participants' experiences and perceptions of those experiences. To that end, this chapter embraces the spirit of queer theory in the discussion of the findings. Deviating from the standard model of discussion, in which each theme can represent a strict separation and independent part of the overall

discussion, the themes of this chapter demonstrate the interlocking quality of the participants' identities and mirror the crux of this work. Each theme relates to and intersects with other themes, as evident in how participants begin discussing one theme and immediately connect that theme to another one.

In this chapter, I discuss themes that emerged from interviews with each participant as well as topics that emerged in the focus group interview. The focus group interview required participants to weigh in on and relate to the same questions in real time. Because participants provided their feelings about the same material, and this chapter focuses on themes across participants responses, focus group data mostly dictated the content of this chapter. I looked to data from the focus group to either illuminate participants' most salient points or to highlight outlier data—important topics that emerged from one or some participants but not all.

Using music education as the point of arrival for all discussion, I present the topics in an order that builds toward the layer of identity that developed last. The participants' family structure, though it has changed over time, was the first layer of identity participants encountered. After family matters solidified, the topic of race developed in their family discussions. Their families taught them about the construct of race and directly or indirectly about sexuality. Learning about these constructs afforded participants a lesson in stereotypes and the ways in which society associates sexuality with race. Consideration of aforementioned themes branched off and influenced participants music education considerations as well through mentorship and advocacy as well as representation. As I pondered participants' experiences, I realized that in many circumstances in their lives and across the categories and themes that emerged from their interviews, participants' have exuded resilience. To exist in the world as African American LGBTQ K-12 music teachers, participants had to develop and maintain a

temperament that kept them fighting through difficult times. For this reason, I present resilience as the final theme.

Family

Family emerged as a major category of discussion for each participant. When encouraged to share whatever topics they deemed important in framing their experiences, each participant shared a great deal of information about their families. Participants discussed many topics, from the construction of their families to how their families functioned. Only after their initial stories, did I ask specific clarifying questions about how they perceived their family structure. Those introductory discussions demonstrated that participants' families comprised a part of their reference groups, as Durkheim (1973) and Mead asserted (see chapter 1). Across all participants, the three themes presented here emerged most frequently under the category of family: over-protective nature, conservative religious beliefs in relation to sexuality, and acceptance/rejection.

Over-Protective Nature

African American families tend to exhibit strict parenting behaviors that some call helicopter parenting (Cline & Fay, 1990; Zeman, 1991), overparenting (Segrin et al., 2012), parental over-involvement (Givertz & Segrin, 2012), parental over-protection (Klein & Pierce, 2010), or intense parental support (Fingerman et al., 2012) in which parents actively engage in their children's lives by removing difficulties from their children's paths (Nelson, 2010). Often African American parents engage in intensive parenting in an effort to prevent their children from getting into trouble with the law or other social pitfalls (Elliot & Aseltine, 2013). In a society that constructs the images of Black women as hypersexual (Collins, 2000; Littlefield, 2008) and Black men as aggressive and threatening (Collins, 2004; Ferguson, 2000), Black parents fight to protect their children from and give their children tools to fight the racist society

in which they live (Collins, 2005; Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008). Intense parenting for preventative measures often involves constant involvement in children's lives across many different aspects (Furstenberg et al., 1999; Jarrett & Jefferson, 2003). For example, an over-protective mother might keep her children close to her at all times or may limit how they socialize with others, as in Elliot and Aseltine (2013) and Tack and Small (2017), respectively. The concept of family has taken on a meaning of safety (MacKinnon, 2003; Weston, 1991) to where people use terms like "love" and "care" to describe familial expectations (Young, 2016). As such, family members, especially parents, feel responsible to keep children free from danger.

This phenomenon of intense parenting showed up in each participant's life in slightly different ways. For Andrew, his mother's over-protective nature led her to discover that Andrew liked men. Because his mother had begun to worry about Andrew's topics of conversation and desire to get tested, his mother logged into Andrew's MySpace¹⁷ account.

My mom is a smart woman. She had our email addresses under her main account. I had a Myspace page. I had pictures of me in my boxers and stuff. I had been talking to other guys on Myspace. My mom clicked on "forgot password" and went into my email 'cause she had access, and she hacked into my Myspace page and that's how she found out [that he is gay]. (Interview, 2/14/19)

Andrew's mother wanted to know what her son was involved in online and felt it her responsibility to find out by any means necessary. She did not observe any rules about personal boundaries. She felt that there was a possible danger to her son and proceeded in a protective manner.

¹⁷ Myspace is a social networking site which had its heyday from 2005 to 2008.

Similarly, Zion's conversation with his grandmother, in which he asked for permission to stay at an older man's house, also displays a level of parenting that seeks to protect children from all forms of danger at all costs. Zion wanted to spend the night with the man he considered his significant other, but Zion had not told anyone the nature of the relationship.

I remember asking my grandmother could I spend the night over there. It was my spring break. She was in the kitchen cooking, and she literally put everything down on the counter and just stopped, and said, "Why would a grown ass man wanna spend the night with you?" So I was like, "Cause we just wanna hang out. We're friends. I'm on spring break." And she was like, "I don't know him. I don't know his people. I don't know what you'll be doing over there. I don't know what he'll be trying to do to you." (Interview, 4/10/19)

While I shared this data in Chapter 5, here the protective nature of her query shines through. When she said that she does not know the man's "people", she was saying that did not know his family or anything about his upbringing. She thus does not trust him or his intentions with regard to her grandson. Because she does not know this man, she feels that she must protect Zion.

Alex called out the intense protectiveness of her parents when she said, "They're just really protective of me and my soul and whatnot. They're really concerned and worried about my safety and my salvation" (Interview, 4/29/19). This parental concern often presented as questioning Alex's life choices, and sometimes double- and triple-checking that whatever decisions she made she had prayed about them. Every time Alex made a big decision that her parents did not agree with—to travel, move, or make a large purchase—her parents asked her, "Have you prayed about it?" Though asking this question might have seem like parental care and concern, Alex internalized these statements as her parents' disdain for how she lived her life. The

passive-aggressive comments berated Alex incessantly, causing Alex to feel that her parents did not trust her. Their overprotective parenting strategies often led to bitter disagreements. Because of conflicts that resulted from intense parenting, Alex monitored what information she shared with her parents in an effort to limit daily conflicts. She lamented, “I don’t think my parents need to hear me talk about who I’m interested in or dating. They don’t really handle the little stuff well, so there’s no point in dropping the big stuff on them” (Interview, 4/29/19). Because of their over-protective nature and their overreactive responses, Alex felt the need to conceal aspects of her life that related to sexual identity, even though she already came out to her parents.

All three participants had to navigate the scrutiny of intense parenting in one way or another in relation to their sexual identities, mostly in trying to conceal their identities. The participants’ experiences substantiate Ward and Winstanley’s (2005) claim that coming out is a reiterative process, and each participant dealt with coming out in a different way, sometimes made to reveal their sexual identity because of parental policing. Building on Ward and Winstanley (2005), I posit that *being* out is also a ceaseless process of negotiation, as enacted in Alex’s relationship with her parents and their intense parenting behaviors. Each participant negotiated both coming out and being out in relation to their parent’s over-protectiveness. Participants felt forced to engage in self-surveillance due to the interactions between their ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in this case, immediate family and shared values and beliefs. Over-protective parents, therefore, served as a panopticon as well.

Conservative Religious Beliefs in Relation to Sexuality

The family unit has worked to define, describe, perpetuate, and regulate specific rules and assumptions. Young (2016) shows that “the regulatory power of ‘family’ has extended beyond the care and provision of children to include the stabilizing and normalizing—and even

protection—of heteropatriarchal sexuality and gender roles” (p. xv). Because the family often serves as the foundation for what is moral and provides a picture of who a person can be in life, family values and concepts of normative sexuality and gender roles have been transmitted with a deep connection to religion. According to Feder (2007), people internalize the concept of what difference is, how it becomes established, and why it matters. The family unit often establishes the first norms a person learns, including matters of sexuality and gender. All participants in the current study have unique family experiences in relation to sexuality and religion, a phenomenon common to the African American experience (Chatters et al., 2009; Hunt & Hunt, 2001; Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Chatters et al. (2009) show that African Americans demonstrate the centrality of their faith more than any other racial group. As delineated in Chapter 2, extant literature about the Bible Belt shows that the overwhelming majority of self-identified Christians in the area hold conservative social beliefs. These beliefs do not reflect acceptance of non-normative identities, specifically sexual identities that do not adhere to social heterosexuality norms (Greene, 2000).

Fear of disdain for same-sex attractions and behaviors made the lives of the participants difficult. All recounted some struggle between the religious precepts intended to guide their lives and their own sexual attractions. Alex, for example, internally warred with her attraction to men and women, for a time denying any attraction whatsoever to women.

One time, my dad approached me to ask about my “orientation”, as he called it. He said that he was worried about the time I was spending with my girlfriends. I completely lied and said that I wasn’t interested in women. (Interview, 4/29/19)

The messages that she received at church were re-inscribed on her psyche at home as her parents lived out the church messages of heteronormativity and held Alex to the same standards.

For Andrew, the cycle of re-inscription was more intense as his step-father was a minister. The anti-homosexual messages Andrew received happened concurrently at church and at home. Andrew experienced a never-ending battle of character attacks from family that targeted his sexuality. As stated in Chapter 4, Andrew's aunt often made fun of him both to his face and without his immediate knowledge. Andrew's grandmother called out his effeminate nature when house guests visited. His family members wanted to shame him and make him feel bad enough that he would change his lifestyle and start living as the Bible dictated. The conservative religious beliefs that pastors preached at church enveloped Andrew at home. His family deemed homosexuality as wrong, and Andrew internalized that if his feelings for other men were sinful, then so was he. Because his reference group expressed displeasure in his thoughts and behaviors and frequently commented on them, Andrew always felt watched.

Zion also recounted stories of his struggle with sexuality and religion. Based on the teachings of the churches he attended and messages he received at home during his childhood, he desperately turned to prayer as a way to cure himself of being gay. He prayed in secret and he let other people pray for him. He had been taught that if he prayed diligently for any positive outcome or circumstance, that God would hear his plea. As his attractions intensified, he felt that his family recognized his growing feelings. Just as the other participants' families functioned in a panoptic way, so did Zion's family. Because of the way Zion felt scrutinized, he questioned his interests in men and woman, especially his feelings for men.

Acceptance/Rejection

Family reactions to a child coming out greatly affects that young person's sense of self and impacts familial relationships (LaSala, 2010). Familial acceptance and support can be paramount to developing one's sexual identity (Dickenson & Huebner, 2016), protecting against

depression and thoughts of suicide (Ryan et. al., 2010), and promoting mental and physical well-being (Rosario, Scrimshaw, & Hunter, 2008). Conversely, Ryan et al. (2009) and Willoughby, Doty, and Malik (2010) found that rejection can negatively impact a youth's developing sexual identity and can engender feelings of worthlessness and other negative views of themselves.

When Zion came out to his family, they responded with aloofness. He said, "My mom said, 'Well, if anything I thought you were bisexual.' My sister was just like, 'Okay. That's yo' business. It doesn't matter.' And my youngest brother was like, 'You don't have to tell me that'" (Interview, 3/24/19). While they did not display explicit rejection, Zion's family did not show support of his sexual identity. Because his family members did not display explicit support of Zion embracing his sexual identity by coming out to them, Zion felt slighted—somewhere between supported and rejected.

Though Andrew did not have the opportunity to come out to his mother because she found out before he had the chance to tell her, they did have a huge argument about how she found out. Andrew said, "I didn't talk to her for a long time, but we eventually got past it. Then she was like, 'I love you. To be perfectly honest with you, I've always known'" (Interview, 2/8/19). While Andrew's mother did not express support of Andrew's identity, she did express her love for him, an important step in repairing their then strained relationship. However, Andrew also said that after that fight, his mother would remark that she does not agree with his lifestyle, leaving Andrew unsure of their relationship, an uncertainty that he still holds years after his coming out experience. As a result, he pondered his mother's involvement in his future: "I've always wondered if I ever got married, would my mama come" (Interview, 2/8/19). This lingering question substantiates my assertion that anything less than fully explicit support, often functions as rejection.

Alex expressed the most about how she internalized her family's feelings about her non-normative sexuality. Though her parents never rejected her outright, she responded to their lack of explicit support in the same ways that adolescents often respond to explicit rejection (Ryan et al., 2009; Willoughby, Doty, and Malik, 2010), with depression and thoughts of self-harm. When Alex's parents neglected to convey their unconditional and unceasing love for her, Alex felt unsure of her position in her family unit, her reference group. Because they did not say, "We love you no matter what", Alex questioned the extent of their love for her. The uncertainty surrounding her family's support also caused Alex to question her sense of belonging in society because the way that a reference group labels an individual directly affects how a person defines self in relation to other people (Matsueda, 1992). Because Alex's did not feel that her parents deemed her "good," she internalized that they considered her "bad," "amoral," and "wrong."

As each participant's experiences differ, each person relates to and defines support in different ways. While not enacting explicit rejection is important, as it is a form of tolerance, tolerance is not the same as explicit support (Twenge et al., 2015), neither is it the goal (see chapter 2). Oswald et al. (2018) state, "To support difference is to believe that individuals, families, and communities are better off when people are valued *for* their differences, rather than despite them" (p. 42). Each participant's family offered a level of tolerance that communicated exactly what Andrew's mother said, "I love you, *but* I don't agree with your lifestyle" [emphasis added] (Interview, 3/24/19). While it is common to disagree on certain life choices, the need to express that disagreement unprompted can feel like rejection.

For some, any comment or behavior less than reverberant affirmation means rejection. When I followed up with Andrew about his mother's insistence upon declaring her beliefs about his sexuality, Andrew expressed, "I don't get offended because I know people who have had

worse experiences. I didn't have to deal with that, so I accept it" (Focus group interview, 4/22/19). Andrew has conditioned himself to find comfort in his mother's words because he feels that his circumstances could resemble the countless stories of people dealing with tougher rejection. He, therefore, considers himself fortunate to have a mother who does not constantly berate him because of his sexual identity. However, he did not express that his mother's "I love you, but..." response made him feel loved. He said that he chose to accept the sentiment because he knows that he could be suffering worse rejection. Like Alex, Andrew questions the breadth of his mother's love, which is evident when he wonders whether his mother would attend his wedding if he married a man.

When Andrew's brother made it clear that he did not need to know Andrew's sexual identity, that response was a type of rejection. When Alex told her parents, and they remarked that they were "afraid for her soul" because she might go to hell, Alex recalled the teachings of her childhood where she learned that hell was for sinful people. She felt that her parents thought of her as a bad person. Much like in Andrew's case, the parental response to coming out that Alex received was also rejection. In the absence of explicit acceptance and support, participants were left to question where they stood with their families and ultimately internalized the message of rejection.

Family Summary

Familial connections emerged as one of the major considerations for how participants negotiate their intersecting layers of identity. Throughout our discussions about family, participants presented facts and feelings that often did not paint the most positive picture of their families. Each one, however, noted their undying love for members of their family, again demonstrating the importance of family in their lives. In the face of hurt from rejection, invasion

of privacy, and taunting, participants maintained respect for their families. While participants continue to relate to society by how their familial reference group labels them, the shift in power dynamic that adulthood brings allows them more opportunity to practice radical honesty (DeJean, 2007) with their families. Stemming from discussion about teachers navigating their sexual identities at school, radical honesty embraces “language that reveals what is so” (Blanton, 1996, p. 92). With this life philosophy, participants spoke and lived their truths by identifying with existing queer labels, which included both telling other people about their non-normative sexuality and refusing to lie about their sexual identity.

Race

Race emerged as a major consideration for how participants navigate their lives. Though participants discussed a few race-related issues, most instances of racial issues were coupled with other layers of identity considerations, as was the case with participants’ experiences with racial stereotypes associated with sexuality. Because of this intersectional understanding of identity, racial microaggressions appear as the only race-specific theme.

Microaggressions

Racial issues influenced how participants navigated both their professional and personal lives. Their assorted experiences with navigating race relations demonstrate that the United States did not become a post-racial place in the 2000s, as some believed (Sayyid, 2017). All participants dealt with various kinds of microaggressions, described by Sue et al. (2007) as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273). Not only did participants experience this level of racism in day-to-day life but racism shaped their time as students, matriculating through predominantly White

institutions (PWIs) and also as teachers. Navigating “complex social dynamics” (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003, p. 90) became commonplace and participants felt pressured to perform norms associated with musical professionalism such as attending certain conferences and performing specific pieces that demonstrate musical prowess.

At his first teaching placement, Andrew experienced teaching with a lack of resources for students when compared to his White counterparts. Andrew also perceived that his administrators responded to his White colleagues’ requests for behavioral reinforcement at a much faster rate than they did to his requests. Andrew’s perceptions were consistent with Smedley and Smedley (2005), who found that “social race remains a significant predictor of which groups have greater access to societal goods and resources and which groups face barriers – both historically and in the contemporary context – to full inclusion” (p. 22). Andrew felt that his school administrators displayed this lack of full inclusion by providing him less support than his White colleagues.

While Zion was the only one who shared experiences of overt racism when he talked about loud racist comments from the opposing team’s fans at a football game, all participants mentioned race, which means that even if they did not deal with overt and direct racism, race still played a significant role in their professional and personal lives. They navigated social norms and stereotypes of African Americans and struggled with being self-confident when they perceived that people did not understand them because they defied the stereotypes associated with their race. This pushback and critique came from several different sources: family, friends, and colleagues. Alex recounted:

One time, I was riding in the car with one of my friends and talking on the phone. I was talking with one of my Black friends, so I was using all kinds of slang, phrases, and

idioms we both understood. When I got off the phone, my White friend who was driving looked at me and said, “Is that how you talk?” (Interview, 5/1/19)

Alex felt that she could not live her racial truth when she was around her White friends; she felt the need to code switch (Adger et al., 1999; Bakhtin, 1986; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Wheeler & Swords, 2006) and speak in a manner that reflected a higher class and extended education.

Kamwangu (2010) posits that code-switching calls for one to use “two or more languages or varieties of a language in the same speech situation” (p. 116). Scholars who write about code-switching do so in a way that depicts individuals responding to another person’s high regard for standard English and a disdain for any nonstandard version of English, especially African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (Wolfram, 1999), in which speakers drop the “third-person singular *s*, as in *she do* for *she does*” (Hill, 2009, p. 121). Hill (2009) continues, “Another grammatical feature includes the zero copula, or absence of *is* or *are*. Phonological features include *r*-lessness, such as *stow* for *store* and the absence of -g as in *goin’* for going” (p. 121).

Alex used AAVE when talking with her friend on the phone and perceived that her White friend was caught off guard by Alex’s “ghetto side” and that Alex did not “act White” (Interview, 5/1/19). Alex’s White friend’s words were covertly racist, showing a socially passing level of disrespect for African American language customs, causing Black people to become “pregnant with hidden strength and ability in a world bent on bending [them] silent and powerless” (Ward, 2018). This story is only one of a lifetime of similar incidents.

Though Pierce (1970) coined the term microaggressions, with micro meaning small or miniscule, I argue that nothing is small about microaggressions. In fact, Sue (2007) asserts that though microaggressions are, perhaps, thoughtless actions, “these incidents...assail the mental health of recipients” (Sue, 2007, as cited in DeAngelis, 2009, p. 42). Microaggressions wreak

extensive havoc in people's lives. People who experience microaggressions must process ongoing pain from these racial slights and insults. Like the role labels take on in reference groups, in which a person relates to society by how their reference group labels them, microaggressions influence how people view themselves in a larger context. In this way, microaggressions accumulate over time (Nadal et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2008), again, demonstrating their significance.

Racial Stereotypes Associated with Sexuality

Similar to the way that Alex negotiated and eventually internalized how she could speak around certain people and groups of people, all participants navigated racial stereotypes associated with sexuality, which in turn associated with gender norms. As discussed in Chapter 1, some people associate Black males with toughness, stoicism, and hypersexuality. In order for Zion to conceal his sexual identity, he felt that he had to fulfill the stereotypes that Black men were superb athletes and always with a woman (LaSala & Frierson, 2012; Ward, 2005). Because of this, he often associated himself with a girlfriend and was able to pass (Griffin, 1991) as heterosexual. Zion's process of passing was somewhat different than the often-portrayed picture of using someone as a *beard*¹⁸. Zion was attracted to women and men, so though he did not always date a woman just so people would consider him heterosexual, he benefitted greatly from the perception of identifying as heterosexual. It is likely that less people questioned some of his behaviors because they frequently saw him with women and incorrectly assumed that his sexual attractions centered solely on women.

¹⁸ In queer culture, a beard is a person of the opposite sex who appears in public with a queer person to help that queer person appear heterosexual.

Race Summary

For the participants, race played a significant role in how they navigated life. Racial microaggressions served as the only race-specific theme and extended through both their professional and personal lives. Most of the time their experiences with race combined with the racial stereotypes associated with sexuality, so that people expected each person to behave in a certain way as related to sexual identity because they are African American. Racial stereotypes, therefore, limited their expression of their whole truths.

Music Education

Because participants work in the music teaching profession, it follows that music education-related issues emerged as a major category of discussion amongst the participants. Homophobia and the insistence upon heterosexuality are prevalent in schools (Espelage et al., 2008; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). Some teachers and school administrators allow hate-based actions to go unpunished. When the authorities fail to take charge of matters of sexual identity for students, teachers who identify like students can become fearful of the consequences of revealing their non-normative sexual identities. This type of fear put participants in uncomfortable positions, in which they had to choose their safety or advocacy, mentorship, and representation for students. Music classroom considerations necessitated participants' struggle of negotiating radical honesty (DeJean, 2007) and their own physical and mental safety.

Mentorship and Advocacy

Because some school faculty perpetuate compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) by only discussing relationships between men and women or through the rules they enforce, such as allowing heterosexual partners to demonstrate public displays of affection, an immense need exists for LGBTQ mentorship in schools. Experiences of homophobia can negatively impact the

queer student experience in many ways. One way in particular is that experiences of homophobia give LGBTQ students the perception that they are not part of an inclusive and affirming space (Fisher et al., 2008; Wickens & Sandlin, 2010). Like some of Zion's students, Jordan, Vaughn, and Woodsworth's (1998) student participants associated negative feelings with school and developed anxiety related to identity disclosure and management. Both Zion and Alex discussed their accepted responsibility of advocating for and providing mentorship for LGBTQ students.

At times, participants' sexual identities influenced the level of mentorship they could provide. Alex struggled with not being out at school, wondering if she was doing enough for her students. She said, "I do worry that maybe I'm not reaching enough students...I think if I were out that I could be there more for students who are trying to figure sexuality out" (Interview, 4/29/19).

Zion also wrestled with how to provide mentorship for students, but he handled it in a different way. The difficulty, for Zion, lay in negotiating how providing mentorship for a queer student might impact people's perceptions of his sexual identity.

That was a moment when I thought about where I am teaching and the struggle of "I want to talk to you and relate to you on a personal level with what you're going through. I really want to. On the flipside, if I do that, then I'm outing myself to my program. But I see your struggle." I talked to him as much as I could without going there, but so much of me wanted to sit down and go like, "Hey, are you okay? Everything okay at home? I really started to think "Hey, what kind of disservice am I doing, what kind of hypocrite am I being if I can't have these conversations with him, who probably really needs it, but I'm not having this with him because that implicates me." That was a big struggle for me. (Interview, 4/10/19)

Zion's perception of possible negative consequences that might accompany his identity disclosure influenced his perception of how his coworkers and students might question his sexuality if he mentored a queer student. Zion's temporary solution was to talk to the student without any discussion of sexual identity issues. Because of his own masked sexual identity, Zion perceived that he could not provide adequate mentorship, and he later felt intense guilt because of his decision. Both participants were forced to reduce their level of mentorship because of how they perceived that people would think of them.

Sometimes participants' perceptions were learned behaviors they developed from negative experiences with identity disclosure, and at other times, they found themselves in circumstances in which they instinctively knew they should not disclose their sexual identities. For example, in one of his classes Andrew performed a dance move that one might associate with J-Setting.¹⁹ A student videoed him on their phone, and the video made its way to Andrew's principal, which Andrew discovered when he was called in to the principal's office. The principal counseled Andrew to let the excitement about the video die down, and if anyone questioned the video, the principal said, "if anybody asks, we'll just say you were teaching majorettes" (Focus group interview, 4/22/19). However, Andrew was not teaching majorettes at the time that the video was taken. His principal essentially told Andrew to lie about dancing in class so that neither the principal, Andrew, nor the school would face homophobic blowback from the dancing incident. When his principal instructed him to lie, Andrew immediately internalized that his principal's support did not extend to his sexual identity. Because of this interaction with his principal, Andrew's perception of his safety at school changed. He no longer

¹⁹ J-Setting is a high-energy style of dance and prance step that the Prancing J-Settes, the collegiate female dance team of the historically Black college university Jackson State University's marching band made famous in the late 1970s.

felt completely safe. After meeting with his principal, Andrew learned that he needed to “think about how *extra* I am. I exude a lot of norms that classify as feminine, and for where I teach, that could be an issue, so I have to scale that back” (Focus group interview, 4/22/19). This example demonstrates the panoptic nature of the Bible Belt and some of the people therein. The way in which Andrew’s principal policed Andrew’s actions and the future explanation of those actions, led to Andrew’s perception that he needed to police himself.

Zion shared that many of his perceptions stem from in-the-moment experiences. One of the examples he provided was when he was working in a band position. Parents that assist with various marching band duties, “band parents”, would make derogatory remarks about male students that they perceived were gay.

Men assume I’m hetero and make comments about women. As soon as they see a boy on the dance line or a boy spinning in guard or see a boy in the band they’re questioning, they start with the homophobic language. (Focus group interview, 4/22/19)

Just as Zion felt trapped into reducing his mentorship for fear of outing himself, when band parents, specifically “band dads”, made homophobic comments, Zion was unsure of how to advocate for his assumed-queer students while maintaining an undisclosed sexual identity.

[The homophobic comments] catch me so off guard that I wonder if I even have the agency to respond. The hypermasculinity comes so hard and so fast and I’m not prepped for it...Band dads have lots of homophobic comments. It just reminds me that those views still exist. It makes me wonder if they knew how I identify, would they be comfortable being one of my band dads. I felt like if I stand up for those kids, that it would in some way out me and I might lose support. (Focus group interview, 4/22/19)

As in Andrew's situation with his principal, this example with Zion's band parents reflects the panopticism of the community in which he taught. When the band parents spread homophobic thoughts and feelings about students, Zion internalized what they deemed wrong and unnatural and monitored his actions around them. Because he did not want to behave in any way that suggested a non-normative sexual identity, Zion did not challenge the homophobic band parents' comments. In that moment, the need to pass as heterosexual superseded his power to speak up for his students.

Each participant shared experiences that related to the theme of mentorship in music. Though their experiences cluster around the theme in loosely-related ways, they differed in how they handled each situation. Each participant navigated situations that forced them to choose between providing mentorship for their students or risk outing themselves.

Representation

As White female teachers comprise the majority of the teaching field (Farinde, LeBlanc, & Otten, 2015), representation in teaching for people of color, specifically African Americans, remains challenging. According to Ingersoll (2011), the number of African American teachers has declined in recent years, leading to even greater issues of representation. These combined facts influenced the ways that participants approached teaching music. Participants' expressed a desire to give back to the African American community, to provide students with the mentorship they did not have, to provide opportunities to develop specific musical skills at an earlier age than participants, and to help students see themselves in the world.

Each participant's preferred mode of representation reflected both what they saw as a strength within themselves and a need in the teaching community, especially the predominantly White music teaching field (Elpus, 2015). Andrew shared his mantra for teaching and the

acknowledgement of his sexual identity, which he restated several times during interviews:

“What’s understood doesn’t need to be stated” (Focus group interview, 4/22/19). This mantra was the level of representation he embraced in his teaching, which was to be himself, allowing students to form their own unchecked opinions about him. As he asserted,

I’m always gonna be me. I don’t care about the questions. I just keep it 100, and I tend not to have so many issues. You either gon’ deal or you gon’ deal ‘til you find somebody to replace me. (Focus group interview, 4/22/19)

Andrew was concerned with representing the part of the queer Black music teaching community that does not hide their truths. This community practices radical honesty (DeJean, 2007) without issuing official declarations of their identities. They simply exist in the world, a model to those queer people who feel they owe no one any explanation of their sexual identities.

Zion, while he wondered if he could have done more for students if he was explicitly out in every aspect of his job, maintained that he was more focused on being a positive Black male role model. When questioned about his role in the music classroom in his teaching context, Zion responded:

I feel like me being out would jeopardize me having this job and getting to show up for these kids. Besides, I’m more concerned with providing a strong Black male example for these kids who have no fathers in the home or who have some limited view of who Black men can be. (Interview, 4/10/19)

The “absent father” stereotype of African Americans (Anderson, 1994; Marsiglio, 1993; Smith et al., 2005) that Zion referred to remains prevalent and echoes Zion’s experience with his father. Therefore, he views his classroom responsibility as two-fold: the need to provide music instruction and also to provide a different model of an African American man than the stereotype

with which his students are familiar. Few men teach at this school, and those that are present are African American, so Zion feels an added sense of responsibility in adding his influence as a strong Black role model.

Alex, however, concerns herself with two aspects of representation: the representation she provides by being a successful Black teacher and the representation which affords all of her students multiple opportunities to see themselves in her classroom and the world. Alex revealed that if she could restart the first year of teaching, that she would start by simply being herself. In fact, that is how she would advise other queer music teachers:

If it's possible, I would encourage just being out from the get go. That may mean some things may occur but in your classroom, negative consequences and whatnot, but I feel like it'd be easier for kids to know who you are so they can see themselves in you and things like that. I think representation is important. (Interview, 4/29/19)

To ensure that all of her students identify with some part of their classroom experience, Alex stated that she initiates conversations about queer composers and musicians and musicians of color. The levels of representation that she works to give her students also include fostering a respectful environment that embraces dissent so that students can develop their voices and critical thinking skills. She declared:

I do the things like promote diversity of people and ideas in my classroom; students have the right to question me and why we're doing certain things. I try to incorporate the why into everything we do because I believe they have a right to know and understand that side of things. (Interview, 4/29/19)

Alex wanted to afford students the opportunity to visualize themselves functioning in society, so she established and maintained the safe space of her classroom where students could disagree, object, and ask questions.

Though they view representation in different ways, participants regard representation with great importance and demonstrate its value by their commitment to serving as confident role models and supportive teachers. They believe that students' sense of belonging develops in part from how students relate to school structures (Eccles & Midgely, 1989; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Because these teachers understand that their young students often develop a sense of belonging in society by how relate to school, the participants teach with a philosophy that embraces students' desires to see themselves and find their voices in the classroom. When students develop that sense of belonging in the world, they can then represent themselves and their interests and become strong representation for the next generation.

Music Education Summary

All participants dealt with negotiating how to be of “two minds”—one concerned about their own well-being, and one interested in their students' welfare. At several times, the two sets of interests seemed at odds with each other. When presented with an opportunity to advocate for students' authority to live their truths, participants simultaneously contemplated how much they could stand up for students and conceal their own non-normative sexualities. Because supervisors and parents voiced sometimes unsupportive and homophobic comments, participants felt monitored. As such, the teachers internalized that they needed to protect themselves from revealing their sexual identities. This internal conflict of having to privilege their safety over representation for their students occurred daily, and often many times daily. This fact affirms my claim that being out, not just coming out, is a reiterative and taxing process (Ward & Winstanley,

2005). Not only did participants negotiate the panopticons of the Bible Belt, but they also navigated the surveillance of the music education community and certain stereotypes associated with being involved in music (see Chapter 1).

Resilience

Each participant exhibited high levels of resilience over the course of their lives. Debate abounds on what resilience means. Some researchers highlight the interaction between adverse personal factors and ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) or environmental factors (Frost & Meyer, 2009; Garmezy, 1991; Meyer, 2015; O'Connor, 2002; Rigsby, 1994; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Other researchers focus on adaptation to environmental issues, especially those experiences of marginalization, oppression, and abuse (Newman, 2005; Northway, 2017). Each definition includes an attention to the consideration of risk (discrimination or oppression), adaptations (working to develop a non-deficit model self-view or distancing oneself from toxic circumstances), and protective measures (finding and creating support for oneself).

To not only survive several traumatic experiences, such as sexual abuse and people's racist and homophobic actions toward them, but to thrive in spite of those experiences, required of a great deal of strength from Alex, Zion, and Andrew. While many of Alex's traumas center around navigating sexual identity and religion, she dealt with other adverse circumstances that influenced her life decisions. At a time when many people who go on to lead musical careers began taking private lessons at an early age, Alex started taking private lessons in upper secondary school in order to prepare for college auditions. She remarked, "By the time I got to high school, my classmates were already playing three instruments or more! They started when they were three and took lessons from their dad or something. I didn't have that. I was way behind" (Interview, 5/10/19). Alex also experienced many microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007)

from faculty members and students alike while attending a predominately White institution. Her stories corroborated Johnson-Ahorlu's (2012) findings that claim that racial microaggressions negatively impact students' desire to seek help or to contribute to class discussions. Alex chronicled several instances where she considered leaving her degree program altogether because of racial slights and the lack of understanding she felt from faculty and students. Additionally, she advocated for herself by seeking out advice and care from therapists in order to make peace with all parts of her identity.

For Andrew, in addition to taking on parental responsibilities at a young age and navigating family secrets that directly impacted his life, he has worked diligently at maintaining a low viral load, which consists of regular exercise to reduce stress and strengthen the immune system, and regularly taking medications. Each participant demonstrated the ability to mitigate stress and overcome adverse life circumstances in different ways from childhood development into adulthood.

An ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) can help to demonstrate each participants' resilience through developmental life periods. A person demonstrates resilience when they interact with and refuse to yield to issues in their immediate social environment (*microsystem*), interconnections of the microsystem (*mesosystem*), connections between a social setting acting upon them and their immediate context (*exosystem*), cultural context (*macrosystem*), and patterns of environmental events over the course of their life (*chronosystem*). Participants' microsystems included their family, church, and school environments, and the connections between these three structures formed their mesosystems.

The accusatory and incriminating beliefs and behaviors of family members, church members, and colleagues necessitated resilience in the form of the development of self-survival

techniques and coping skills. In Andrew's narrative, he recalled how he spent a great deal of time at home, caring for his younger siblings due to his mother's work schedule. The ways in which his mother's work schedule influenced his development made up his exosystem. Because he was required to attend to his siblings' needs, he had to learn how to learn how to shoulder that burden without giving much time or space to his own developmental needs. Zion's and Alex's exosystems were constructed by the impact their regular church attendance had on their development. Fundamentalist preachers and ministers introduced and reiterated the notion that homosexual thoughts and behaviors were sinful and would disqualify them from entering heaven. Because they heard this message often, they regarded themselves negatively. Participants' macrosystems included the customs of keeping family secrets, not questioning parental and adult authority, and going to church on Sundays and Wednesdays. The timing of when to disclose their sexual identities to their families, friends, and people in their school communities made up their chronosystem. Zion, Alex, and Andrew perceived that they needed to wait to disclose their sexual identities because they feared rejection. In other words, they felt forced to mask parts of their identities in order to receive love and support. For each ecological level, participants had to become flexible in their presentations of self so as not to reveal their truths. For the participants' personal growth and survival, they had to develop and practice daily coping mechanisms.

While participants' strategies of resilience may be positive and inspiring, a focus on resilience can lead to an expectation that minoritized people and groups *should* be resilient and casts resilience as ordinary or commonplace, not something extraordinary and superhuman (Masten, 2001). Though common in queer discourse, one should not take high levels of resilience for granted when taking into account queer narratives. Resilience is not a given for

anyone. The fact that all participants exhibited such high levels of resilience demonstrates just how truly extraordinary they are.

In their adult lives, participants have gone on to develop community resilience (Meyer, 2015) by providing inclusive and affirming classrooms. Simply stated, participants have paid forward positive and encouragement they have received. In his classroom of mostly minoritized students, Andrew's community resilience takes the form of creating space for student input and feedback as well as providing varied meaningful opportunities for his choir students. For example:

[Students] got to sing backup for CeCe Winans, met Kiera KiKi Sheard, met Jesse Jackson, met the founder of AutoZone. We almost met Barack Obama and Bill Clinton when they came here last year. We were gonna sing for them. (Interview, 2/9/19)

Andrew mentioned providing out-of-state opportunities for his choir students: "I'm taking them on a trip to Florida in April. They're going to get to hang out there are perform at a few places" (Participant journal, 3/6/19).

Alex's community resilience practices involve a focus on representation. In addition to bringing in musicians of color to work with her students, she said, "I have discussed with my students composers that are in the LGBTQ community...I try to show different races and ethnicities" (Interview, 5/1/19). As a queer Black woman, she also gives particular focus to presenting herself to students as "a real person" by discussing her interests alongside students' interests and preferences. Most of Alex's representation, however, is non-verbal in that she decorates her teaching spaces with encouraging and inspiring quotes and posters that show people of varied identities (ethnicities, genders, abilities, ages, and body types) performing music.

Resilience Summary

Bronfenbrenner (1979) maintained that resilience was when a person survived and eventually thrived when faced with adverse conditions between their ecological systems and their own personal factors. By this definition, participants have exhibited a significant level of resilience by serving as a role model and caretaker at an early age, without the luxury of time to consider their own thoughts and feelings as well as fighting through demeaning beliefs and actions against them. Additionally, by providing inclusive and affirming classrooms, different musical opportunities for students, and providing representation for students, participants have paid forward positive deeds where they experienced hurtful actions based on their layers of identity, which points to their work fostering community resilience (Meyer, 2015) as well.

Cross-Case Themes Summary

Participants of this study have navigated several difficult situations over the course of their lives. They interpreted those difficulties as life ultimatums, in which they each had to decide for themselves whether to fight through the pain and traumas to develop a strong sense of self-worth or to allow people and circumstances to make them feel weak and unimportant. Zion, Alex, and Andrew exhibited resilience when they determined that they would fight for themselves through over-protective parenting methods that sometimes invaded their privacy. They wrestled with conservative religious beliefs and resulting actions from family members that disdained their sexual identity and battled through the highs and lows of acceptance and rejection and the internalized thoughts and feelings that stemmed from those familial interactions. Participants fought through oversight and insults based on race. These microaggressions helped them to further internalize negative concepts of self-worth. Racial stereotypes added an extra

layer of consideration for how participants navigated their lives. All of these layers intersected with music education decisions and influenced how participants would provide mentorship and advocacy as well as representation in the classroom.

To survive and thrive when faced with intersecting and accumulating oppressions, Zion, Andrew, and Alex practiced a profound level of resilience. They worked against several opposing environmental factors that could have stunted their personal growth and their influence as music teachers. Becoming the radically honest (DeJean, 2007) teachers that they are today required them to exhibit personal and community resilience (Meyer, 2015). Participants funneled their resilient actions through their music classrooms by providing safe and inclusive spaces that embrace diverse identities, providing students with many musical performance opportunities, and giving them the chance to see what influence they can have on their own communities. Participants navigated several interlocking layers of identity and their resulting oppressions as African American LGBTQ K-12 music teachers in the Bible Belt.

CHAPTER 8—REFLECTIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Include and project the voices of underrepresented people in the spaces where their access is limited. Go love, and build, and restore, and speak, and engage, and create. Go be better and do better. (Patterson, 2018²⁰)

I don't want to be included. Instead, I want to question who created the standard in the first place. After a lifetime of embodying difference, I have no desire to be equal. I want to deconstruct the structural power of a system that marked me as different. I don't wish to be assimilated into the status quo. I want to be liberated from all the negative assumptions that my characteristics bring. The same onus is not on me to change. Instead it's the world around me. (Eddo-Lodge, 2017²¹)

In this concluding chapter, I provide a summary of this project and present reflections on the research process, which includes thoughts about my assumptions at the start of this project and how I negotiated self in the work itself. I share implications for how family members and school faculty and staff might provide support and mentorship for minoritized populations, paying special attention to music teachers. In the implications section, I point to some negative consequences of not supporting minoritized populations and suggest specific strategies for family members and education professionals to avoid these negative possibilities. The combined discussion of teacher and student implications in this section allows for the visualization of the

²⁰ It has been difficult to attribute this quote to a specific page number within a source. A website that contains quotes from the author locates the quote in *Love's Not Color Blind: Race and Representation in Polyamorous and Other Alternative*.

²¹ A website that contains quotes from the author locates the quote in *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race Communities* (see <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/54425062-why-i-m-no-longer-talking-to-white-people-about-race>).

interconnectedness of educational roles. I propose changes for music education based on how participants related to their respective music education programs and based on what they said they could have used help with in their first years of teaching. I also issue a mandate for music teacher educators concerning the ways they prepare preservice music teachers for the field. To finish the chapter, I offer recommendations based on participants' experiences, suggestions for future research, and conclusions.

Reflections and Conclusions

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand how three African American LGBTQ K-12 music educators who teach in the Bible Belt navigate their lives in relation to axes of power and domination, as related to their layers of identity. In this study, I focused on religion (of the individual and of the Bible Belt), race, sexual identity (and its association with gender), and music education as a career choice. Additionally, I attended to how participants perceived their places in the world based on the intersections of their layers of identity. In other words, what did participants feel was the impact of their sexuality, race, music education career, and their own spirituality, plus the religious beliefs and practices of an area characterized by a significant percentage of the population who identify as evangelical Christians (Balmer, 2016; Barton, 2012).

Evangelical Christians often espouse fundamentalist beliefs that declare that (1) the Bible is fact, to be read literally as the supreme authority on all things moral and good, (2) Jesus atoned for the sins of humanity in order to create a path to heaven, (3) spreading the gospel of Christ is important and mandated in the Bible, and (4) followers of Christ must be “born again” (Marsden, 1991; Soper, 1994). To be born again means that one rejects their old sinful ways of living and

instead embraces a more biblically-sanctioned lifestyle. These types of beliefs permeated society, especially that of the southeastern and south-central U.S. states—the Bible Belt—and influenced laws, education, and social norms. Eventually, people began to monitor and manage other people’s behaviors in comparison to the newly established laws and social norms, creating a panopticon (Bentham, 1791).

Participants of the current study live and teach in this panopticon, where some evangelical fundamentalists police participants’ layers of identity because they do not reflect a White, heterosexual, evangelical society. As participants feel watched by people in dominant groups and powerful entities of society, they practice self-surveillance, negotiating the parts of their identities from which they could garner scrutiny. Therein lies the focus of this work—to answer the following questions: What factors do participants feel influence how they work to construct their public image? Because oppressions accumulate, how do those different factors intersect to form a larger web of marginalization?

Through conversations and observations, participants shared intimate details of their lives that pertained to sexual identity, race, religion, and music education and the intersections therein. They shared stories about strained family relationships, their struggles with faith, and how societal expectations play into all the layers of their identity. Each participant’s overall narrative, though different from that of the other participants, corroborated the accounts of the other participants. In fact, participants mostly shared experiences of similar themes though each one’s context was slightly different. For example, all participants lamented about over-protective parenting methods. The ways their parents went about parenting differed, but the theme of overparenting emerged in each account. Each participant shared about the same topics as the next person.

Reflections on the Research Process

Assumptions. I began this research project with a few assumptions: (1) The study would not garner many participants, which would allow me the space and flexibility to get to know would-be participants more than a large-scale study could allow, and (2) Black men experienced more societal pressure to present as heterosexual than Black women.

Issues associated with gathering data (stories, knowledge, insight) from sexual minorities are well documented (Abrams, 2006; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997; Goodman, 2011; Hulko & Hovanes, 2018). As such, I felt that I would not be able to recruit many people due to the intersectional focus of the study. For participation in this study, interested persons needed to identify as African American or Black and identify with a non-normative sexuality (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer). Additionally, would-be participants needed to teach K-12 music in the Bible Belt so that they could be able to speak to both the expectations of the music teaching field and the religious atmosphere of the Bible Belt. I also focused the study on people who affiliated with a religion at some point in their lives. I was correct in my assumption that despite exhaustive recruitment methods, the study would only amass a few interested persons, but I understood the need for this population to remain hidden. I imagined that fears surrounding being outed by associating with my study kept some interested people from contacting me to express interest in participating.

Based on the breadth of literature I read while constructing the research project, I assumed that Black men suffered more under the weight of societal expectations related to race and sexuality than Black women. Several writers centered the experiences of Black men (Balaji et al., 2012; Ernst et al., 1991; Fields et al., 2015; Hunter, 2010; Jeffries, Dodge, & Sandfort, 2008; LaSala & Frierson, 2012; Quinn & Dickson-Gomez, 2001; Quinn, Dickson-Gomez, &

Kelly, 2016; Smallwood et al., 2017; Snorton, 2017; Ward, 2005) so that I assumed the Black woman experience paled in comparison to the Black man experience. Through the lenses of Andrew and Zion, I saw that Black men absolutely bear a great burden of meeting expectations that dictate how Black men should behave. I, likewise, learned through Alex's experiences that the same remains true for Black women. Society holds African American women and men to different standards, but both groups experience hardships based on how they measure up to assumed racial and sexual identity norms.

Negotiating self. Because the origins of this work developed from personal experience, I continually considered how much I should reflect upon my experiences within the document. While I found it important to explain the context of how I came to do this work, I realized that I wanted to highlight participants' experiences instead of mine. This decision proved especially difficult once I completed interviews with participants and some of their experiences were nearly identical to mine (understanding that no two experiences can ever be the exact same because of differing contexts). Though I decided to decenter my own experiences outside of Chapters 1 and 8, I used my similar experiences to connect with participants. I shared about my life to elicit additional information. In this way, interviews were conversational in nature, like two people getting to know each other. One example of this, happened near the beginning of the first interview with Andrew when he discussed his family's secrets.

Andrew: I found out when I was 22 that my mom, who she had been telling me was my dad, may not be my dad....My mom told me I could never say anything because of what it would do....It is tough because I really wanna know but because of the shame and out of respect for my mom, I just left it.

Latasha: Let's go back cause—I love talkin' to Black folks 'cause we find that we have so much in common, for better or for worse. You talk about some secrets kept in the family—[audible sigh]. Where do I even wanna begin cause my family has lots of the same types of, just like all kinds of sexual abuse in the family from generation to generation....Is there some unwritten code or someone that actually says, 'These are things we don't talk about,' or do we just grow up knowing these are things we don't talk about?

Andrew: Right. I don't know. I think it's just out of what may come with people knowing the reality or the truth. Like I found out a few years back how my grandfather passed away...(Interview, 2/2/19)

In this example, after I commiserated and shared a similar experience, Andrew shared other family secrets. For each participant, when I found an alignment in our stories, I used that similarity to spur conversation. In the moments when I did not have related stories, I simply asked clarifying questions, again, conversational in nature. Surprisingly, the participants and I shared several similar experiences, particularly related to church and family, which substantiates the claims that African American churchgoers use the church as a center of information and may often share similar family and community values (Fountain, 2010; Greene, 2000; Ledet, 2017).

Implications

As stated earlier, the topics of each participant's conversations all centered around similar themes—the importance of faith in their lives or at least in their childhoods, battling with their families' conservative religious beliefs in general and in relation to sexual identity, the (assumed) closeness of family, racial microaggressions and stereotypes, music education advocacy and representation, and resilience through every tough experience. Queer theory aided in examining

participants' experiences and choices in how they deconstruct labels attached to their interlocking identities and greatly influenced implications. Though LGBQ experiences are not monolithic, the fact that no significant outlier data emerged, suggests religious African American families might share similar life experiences.²² If this statement is true, then these families could possibly build connections across differing layers of identity, using their similarities as a foundation of understanding and thereby establish an extensive web of support.

Support and Mentorship for Minoritized Populations

Family. For LGBQ people, family can and often does play a major role in how they see themselves and how they relate to society. In participants' stories, this fact was evident in the ways that they internalized the need to monitor their thoughts and actions. Not only was this negotiation part of their youth but also part of their adulthood, showing, once again, that coming out and being out is a reiterative process. That arduous and never-ending process can be made simpler by support of family. Unconditional affirmative support helps LGBQ youth and adults alike to find their place in the world. People often establish reference groups that consist of family members, especially youth (Durkheim, 1973; Matsueda, 1992). If comprised of people who hold back support, the queer person may internalize the unsupportive family member's judgment and begin to see themselves as bad. This function of reference groups, how a person relates to society based on how their reference group characterizes them, lies at the heart of labeling theory.

For participants, some of their family's lukewarm acceptance functioned as rejection. This finding of the study provides much information for families of LGBQ people to consider.

²² I raise this point as a theory only, as I cannot make this claim due to the small sample size from which it derives. Researchers could examine this theory further with a larger sample.

Family members should understand that their actions (or lack thereof) can play a significant role in the character development of a queer person. While some might believe that showing neither overt acceptance or rejection means that they are withholding judgment, passivity can prove just as detrimental as oppression. As Tutu famously proclaimed, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor” (as cited in Brown, 1984, p. 19). In matters that involve one going against social norms, families have an opportunity to demonstrate how to show love and support. The lack of support may be felt as rejection.

It is imperative that families seek to understand the queer person’s perspective, which can begin by listening to them. In each participant’s experience, no family member asked participants what struggles they were experiencing or what they might have endured to reach a point in which they were ready to profess their sexual identities. Initially, it seemed that no one cared for participants’ emotional well-being. Upon further thought, however, support presents as a more complex process than the specifics of what actions participants’ families took. The context of each situation always matters. Each participant internalized their family members’ lack of enthusiastic support as rejection, but this discussion does not take into account the possibility that some family members behaved the way they did because they thought that they were providing acceptance. Family members might have perceived that they were offering acceptance to participants, but Andrew, Zion, and Alex each interpreted some family members’ actions as rejection.

The tenuous relationship between intention versus function is significant in terms of participants’ perceptions of support. Family might have believed that by not saying or doing anything overtly negative, they were providing a semblance of support, but participants, the ones with less power in the situation, desired a gesture of support. People in dominant positions must

align their intentions of support with actions that function as support for minoritized people on their terms. In this instance, family members occupied the more dominant positions because participants sought assurance from them, their reference groups. If the participants' families desired to show support, they could have had conversations with participants to discuss what they themselves perceived as support. While this type of interaction might have been difficult for family members at the beginning of conceptualizing support, especially without having any resource upon which to rely to think of different ways they could support the participants, it might have been a positive way to establish and build upon support after the fact.

In schools. People who work in the education field should learn more about intersectionality (Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989) in order to better understand how layers of identities compound to impact one's life experiences. Through intersectionality, education professionals could possibly develop deeper connections with students and other faculty who identify with multiply marginalized identities. For example, a principal who leads and establishes rules through an intersectional lens might grasp the concept of sexuality as fluid both within an individual and across all people, and therefore, might not use heterosexual examples exclusively during an explanation of acceptable public displays of affection amongst students. By reading about and doing trainings that focus on intersectionality, school leaders might be able to sympathize with the experiences and considerations of people like this study's participants, who live at the intersections of multiply marginalized identities, e.g. sexual and racial minorities.

Along with increased involvement in intersectional education, all education professionals, especially principals, teachers, and school counselors should be required to participate in extensive professional development that teaches them about different sexualities and how to support the people who identify with them, including how to foster and maintain

environments that do not allow for the mistreatment of LGBTQ individuals. As recommended by Hu (2011) and Shelton (2015), schools need to acquire legal protection for LGBTQ individuals who encounter and report hate crimes based on their sexual identity. According to Miller (2013), several states have enacted laws that protect LGBTQ students, including New Jersey, Massachusetts, New York, and California. However, these laws do not include protection for teachers. In some places, teachers lose their jobs for identifying as sexually queer or advocating for queer rights by teaching about LGBTQ-related topics (Shelton, 2015). The results of these “no pro homo” laws, as Shelton (2015) calls them, are hostile teaching environments for LGBTQ some students and teachers. Nieto (2010) wrote that learning is directly linked with “the social, cultural, and political spaces in which it takes place” (p. 4). This statement means that the context of a classroom directly affects what teachers can achieve in said classroom. For instance, if a teacher fears negative ramifications of displaying a picture of their spouse on their desk or openly talking about their spouse, that teacher is less likely to engage in classroom discussions about queer-related material. According to Cavicchia (2011), “Educators systematically eliminate details of the personal trials and tribulations of prominent gay composers from what students learn about them and the circumstances surrounding specific works” (p. 13). Alex expressed that she feared the consequences of being out at school, but she continued to provide queer representation in her classroom. The trepidation involved in navigating what to teach for fear of outing themselves, might give some teachers pause about advocating for LGBTQ rights at school.

Though some school districts and individual schools that want to promote ethnic diversity require school personnel to take sensitivity trainings, those who work in schools must also work to develop practices that support ethnic minorities—both students and teachers. Some school

leaders either lack an awareness of how some Black and Brown bodies navigate the education system and life in general, or they choose to ignore the well-documented harsh realities of the system (Gregory, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lynn, 2006; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Raffael Mendez, & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2011). In either case, ethnic minorities do not receive the same amount of support in schools, and if these students' academic performance suffers, then school officials label them as "trouble" or "a problem", and sometimes remove sources of help they might use as motivation to fight through difficult times. Once students acquire a negative label, the process of disassociating from that label with them becomes a more arduous task than acquiring that negative label in the first place. Instead of strategizing ways to help, encourage, and motivate underperforming students, in discussions about student achievement and progress, school faculty sometimes talk about so-called problem students in damning ways so that more teachers, administrators, and counselors associate the negative label with that particular student. With a bad reputation looming over their heads, these students sometimes perceive that people regard them as "trouble." Before long, because of a withdrawal of resources in the form of mentorship, those students start to internalize the negative labels and view themselves as bad students and sometimes bad people. Education professionals need to examine their biases daily and do the necessary work to provide support and mentorship for those ethnic minorities who might struggle to see their places in the classroom.

Several writers have documented myriad reasons why sexual and ethnic minorities may not be able to see themselves in the school context. For Howard (1999) noted significantly if teachers knew little about the realities of ethnic minorities because they had not been adequately prepared, they could not teach in a way that centered their experiences and backgrounds. Gay (2002) placed part of the onus of responsibility on teachers, writing that teachers needed to see

themselves in a partnership with minoritized students and enhance a different level of caring for their growth and success.

Teachers have to care so much about [them] and their achievement that they accept nothing less than high-level success from them and work diligently to accomplish it. This is a very different conception of caring than the often-cited notion of ‘gentle nurturing and altruistic concern,’ which can lead to benign neglect under the guise of letting [them] make their own way and move at their own pace. (p. 109)

Without this level of caring, teachers will not extend their teaching practices to account for the need for ethnic and sexual minorities to see themselves and achieve success in school settings.

Both of the above reasons relate to privileging Eurocentric learning techniques. While some teachers embrace teaching about the contributions of people of color, other teachers construct curricula around White-based subject matter, teaching about the cultures and histories (and herstories²³) of Black and Brown people to pass as multicultural or “woke.”²⁴ Banks (2013) contends that multicultural education extends beyond simple content integration, in which “teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline” (p. 20). Banks continues by stating that this weaving of material should proceed in genuine and compelling ways instead of being implemented by phony and forced methods. In other words, the teaching of ethnic and cultural content should flow from the pace and direction of class material, and not simply to be able to say, “I taught a multicultural lesson this school period.” In

²³ The use of *herstory* (her story) draws attention to the fact history (his story) often omits the accomplishments of women. Where herstory celebrates women, history narrates events from a man’s perspective.

²⁴ A *woke* person is one who is conscious about social injustices.

fact, a genuine concern for multicultural education will include not only content integration but will focus on the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture (Banks, 2013).

Another way in which school policies reflect Eurocentric standards in schools is by sometimes creating rules that restrict African Americans from wearing hairstyles that reflect their culture, as was the case for Andrew Johnson of the Buena Regional High wrestling team (Bogage, Rosenberg, & Horton, 2018). All of the aforementioned actions function as microaggressions (Sue, 2007) that send minoritized people negative messages about themselves and keep racial minorities from seeing themselves, their cultures, and their backgrounds celebrated in an educational setting.

Some minoritized teachers develop cultural- or geographical-based fear because of the ways in which people monitor and manage other people's behaviors. In the Bible Belt society, where some school education professionals espouse militant evangelical and fundamentalist beliefs that filter into school legislation and rules, some minoritized teachers feel watched. Because of this perceived surveillance, these teachers resist any actions that might out them to their school community or suggest that they want to cause trouble. For queer teachers, sometimes speaking up for queer students and other queer teachers presents difficulty in hiding their own non-normative sexual identity, so they are forced to choose their safety over LGBTQ mentorship and support. The same remains true of racial minorities. For fear of acquiring a negative label, some racially minoritized teachers disassociate with students whom other teachers deemed trouble.

Racially and sexually minoritized teachers and students alike suffer from lack of representation and support in similar ways. Both groups must navigate an interconnected

education system; what one feels in terms of identity support (or the lack thereof), the other will likely feel as well. If the teacher feels unsupported because of identity, then that feeling can trickle down to the student. In that case, the student might see school officials as a reference group and internalize their disdain for teacher queerness, thinking that the school officials might feel the same about the student. If school officials provide no support for these disparaged teachers, then some of those teachers will not feel safe at school and will protect their identities in any way possible in order to escape an association with negative stereotypes, which might mean that similarly-identified students will lack critical mentorship. Perhaps by education professionals resisting compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) and embracing non-normative sexual identities, the stigma surrounding LGBTQ people will abate into nothingness and more people will feel safe at schools—safe enough to live in radical honesty (DeJean, 2007). Likewise, if those associated with schools question their biases against Black and Brown bodies, then maybe everyone—student or otherwise—can simply focus on living their truths.

Music teachers. Each participant of this study developed connections with their music teachers. Though Andrew was the only person who expressed the profound difference his high school choir director made in his life (not sexual identity-focused), all participants spoke warmly about several of their music mentors, especially their high school music teachers. Positive adult mentors can serve as role models for queer students, especially positive music mentors. Palkki and Caldwell (2018) assert that music teachers sometimes provide sanctuary for students who identify within the queer community. If it is true that music teachers can provide a haven for LGBTQ youth, then all music teachers should be prepared to interact with and support LGBTQ students, and it follows that LGBTQ music teachers could provide even more protection and support for queer students. Taylor (2018) found this to be true of the music student teachers he

paired with mentors who shared students' identity status. In his study, queer preservice teachers paired with an external teacher (not their cooperating teacher) and had opportunities to receive support from LGBTQ teachers who had years of experience with negotiating sexual identity and teaching music. The students contacted these external teachers both when they had specific questions and when they needed someone to listen to what they were experiencing. Connecting queer students with an older mentor uncovered some differing generational philosophical beliefs, but these connections yielded preservice teachers who felt supported even when they disagreed with the advice the external teachers shared.

This study demonstrates the type of mentorship LGBTQ students need. When students have questions and concerns, they need safe spaces in which to ask their questions. While it is not LGBTQ teachers' contractual responsibility to provide support outside of their subject area, students often confide in people with whom they interact regularly. As stated in Chapter 1, music teachers often spend more time with their students than teachers of other subjects. This extended time usually yields deeper connections between students and the music teacher than between students and teachers in other subject areas. Therefore, the relationship between music teacher and student lends itself to more opportunity for music teachers to provide students' mentorship and support. Stronger mentorship becomes a possibility when students can confide in (to a degree) teachers who also identify within the LGBTQ community. However, this level of mentorship is not always available for many reasons, which increases the need for all teachers and school personnel to receive professional development on LGBTQ topics and issues.

Changes for Music Education

Though some music teacher preparation classes have begun to include discussions about queer topics along with other necessary teaching information, such as possible techniques to

increase student engagement, participants of the current study expressed that they received no education related to matters of identity. In their preparation for becoming a teacher, no one discussed sexual identity, race, or religious mores of different areas in relation to music education, meaning that participants embarked on their first full-time teaching positions unprepared to navigate both their own identities and that of their students. Preservice music teachers desperately need better preparation to enter a diverse and ever-changing profession. The amount of influence that music teachers have on youth mandates that they receive professional development on how to relate to and support a diverse population of students, including students who are LGBTQ and students from racially diverse backgrounds. As I stated earlier, some music teachers see a significant percentage of the student population over the course of an academic year. Often, elementary music teachers provide music lessons to the entire student body on some sort of rotational basis, be it weekly, every four days, every three weeks, or something else. Music teachers typically interact with more students than some teachers and across more years than most teachers. For these reasons, preservice music teachers need more education on how to relate to a diverse student population.

Specific types of professional development may help better prepare music teachers to teach such a significant percentage of the student population. Here, professional development means any time of preparation that encourages preservice music educators to respond to and/or interact with hypothetical teaching situations, planned or extemporaneous. For instance, an open discussion with a group of student teachers about things that students are concerned about handling in the classroom is just as valuable and necessary as students undertaking the practice of writing lesson plans. One could plan for either topic, but discussions could go in any direction. Sometimes if music teacher educators provide preservice teachers the space to voice opinions,

discussions may reach topics that music teacher educators might not think to raise. Other times, teachers of the preparation classes can try to anticipate topics about which preservice teachers need to form a philosophy about *before* going out into the field with the responsibility of leading a class on their own. Other types of education might include participating in and listening to workshops and presentations about identity. Those developmental trainings could discuss ways to center student identity across race, gender, religion, class, ability, and sexuality among other topics. Those types of professional developments could never prepare preservice teachers for each layer of identity that they might encounter, but the trainings will help preservice teachers better prepare for how to construct their teaching in ways with which students can possibly connect. At the very least, student teachers can learn how to locate helpful resources for themselves and for students. Better music teacher preparation can help preservice teachers provide better instruction and mentorship in their careers and especially at the beginning of their first positions.

In Participants' Own Words

Zion. In student teaching, there was talk about professionalism as far as dress and punctuality and not showing up high or drunk, but never anything dealing with sexuality or race. We talked about, in seminar, the types of relationships you should have with your cooperating teacher, the other teachers in the school, the students and parents. I imagine now that those conversations have maybe evolved or changed because social justice is such a big deal in music education now. I think it's absolutely necessary to talk about the types of identities that will be in the classroom. Finding ways to relate to those identities goes miles and miles. It makes a huge difference if they can see that you relate to them in some way. I think making our spaces

accepting, saying things like ‘everyone is welcome here. We’re not downing people because their difference of religion or sexuality or race.’ I think that’s the first big step.

Alex. *I think we should have more preparation in student teaching where we talk about different gender things, different sexuality things, and different race things, just like we do different learning styles. We could just talk about different parts of identity in an effort to prepare future teachers for what they’re gonna see in music education, but we tend to shy away from these tough conversations. I don’t see what’s so hard about them. Student teaching is essentially the last chance to impart some wisdom about teaching respect for all. Hopefully, those lessons start at the very beginning of a program but if not, definitely in student teaching. When teachers have experience teaching across diverse identities, kids win, teachers win, everyone involved wins. And I think that as we mainstream more that more teachers who identify as queer, they will come out and they will be a model for students who identify that way.*

Andrew. *It would be nice for future teachers to take a sexuality course that goes into depth that sexuality/gender is a social construct. If a student is born a male and decides to transition to female, she should be called by female pronouns, but I work with teachers who refuse to honor a student’s personal gender identity. If future teachers were required to take a course that explains being a queer in today’s music education scene, it is somewhat common that music educators are queer as far as how to navigate being queer in the classroom. There are so many different types and levels to being queer that I ultimately feel that best approach is to get in the classroom and find what works for you. The more the queer teacher is comfortable with themselves, the more students will respect you. Students know when teachers are ‘faking being tough’ so owning who you are and demanding respect is important. We have to help preservice teachers understand how to do this.*

Having gone through the requirements for becoming a licensed music teacher in their respective states, participants speak in direct and matter-of-fact ways about where music education preparation has been and the level to which they believe it can grow. Their experiences demonstrate that music education, at least during their time as undergraduate students, has failed to embrace and address identity considerations, but they see various paths to a more inclusive future and watch increasingly more music educators take steps to achieving said future. After navigating their own teacher preparation courses and comparing those experiences to those of students today, they confirm the growth in music education practices toward social justice issues. Participants represent the hope and dedication it takes to create and maintain music education practices that support *all* identities. They further demonstrate their insistence for focusing on and practicing resilience in the ways that they continue to create better experiences for future students by providing safe spaces in which they can be themselves.

Suggestions for Future Research

Researchers have done much work to better understand the impact of individual identity levels on people in general and on teachers. In the last ten years, more music education researchers have included sexual identity in the discussion. As intersectionality (Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989) has gained permanent footing in research that centers identity, growing numbers of social scientists examine how two or more layers of identity influence a person's life experiences. Still, more research can be done to complement and extend these early efforts toward a deeper intersectional understanding of how identity impacts and influences life considerations. Wilchins (2002) implored, "The time for changing the mainstream is now" (p. 17). With these words as motivation, more studies should investigate and analyze the topics that music teacher educators plan for and the ones that emerge from classroom discussions. The

knowledge gained from that type of study could inspire dialogue on the changing music education landscape and how to prepare preservice teachers to handle those changes. With research questions like the following, a study focused on the specifics of music teacher preparation might illuminate pathways for growth: Do music teacher preparation courses include discussions about identity (gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, musical, socioeconomic, etc.)? What are some benefits of facilitating more conversations about identity? This kind of study could have immediate implications for the future of music education.

With Wilchins' call to action in mind, music education research could benefit from more studies like the current one. Qualitative investigations that compare and contrast the experiences of African American LGBTQ music teachers in urban and rural places could uncover other place-based phenomena, as might examining other informal regions like the Bible Belt. A qualitative study exploring the differences and similarities between people with no religious connection and people who subscribe to certain religious beliefs. Does the lack of religious-specific conviction change the internal struggle that some describe when dealing with race and/or sexuality? Additionally, the current study only dealt with the perceptions of K-12 music educators, but a study that focuses on collegiate teachers might illuminate differences or similarities within teaching levels.

Along the same lines of centering intersectionality, future research could substitute other religious backgrounds in the place of Bible Belt mentality or other racial or ethnic identities where the current study focused on African American experiences. Finally, to work to discontinue the conflation of issues related to sexuality and those that concern gender on its own terms and not as a by-product of sexuality, the current study did not include any transgender

topics. Trans²⁵ issues deserve their own attention and specificity. Because the scope of the current study centered sexuality in the African American LGBQ K-12 music educator in the Bible Belt population, one could do a new study that focuses on similar intersections but centers the trans population. Such a study could expand the scope of the current study to focus on the personal and professional experiences of African American transgender K-12 music educators. To gain perspective on the negotiations of people with those intersecting layers of identity, the project could be based in areas where people typically enact laws that restrict trans rights.

Conclusion

With the overall purpose of highlighting marginalized voices, I embarked upon this project desiring to uncover the experiences of a hidden music educator population. Palkki (2015) calls for more researchers to investigate geographical-based phenomena, and Minette (2018) recommends that researchers intentionally seek out missing voices, such as queer music educators of color. In this dissertation, I have combined each of these suggestions for future research into one study. Answering each call to action, I focused on significant gaps in queer literature that are both somewhat place-based²⁶ and center the experiences of a population of color. By highlighting these narratives, I worked to create a place for queer music educators of color that researchers of queer perspectives have largely left out of the discourse. While myriad reasons may explain the lack of inclusion of Black and Brown experiences in LGBQ music education research, the result of this dearth has possibly left some queer music educators feeling unsupported.

²⁵ Trans is short for transgender. Many people who identify as transgender use the abbreviated term trans.

²⁶ I say somewhat because the Bible Belt functions as both a place and structure of feeling (Williams, 1977).

This study has hopefully allowed the reader to contemplate, examine, and explore intersectional issues related to being an African American LGBTQ K-12 music educator in the Bible Belt, such as stigma, surveillance, acceptance and rejection, familial relationships, mentorship and representation in the classroom, racial stereotypes and microaggressions, religion, and resilience. It is my hope that the current study will serve as a catalyst for exploring more intersections of Black and Brown experiences. By exclusively seeking out Black LGBTQ voices for this study, I believe that increasing numbers of Black LGBTQ music educators will be able to see themselves in the present and future of music education. Additionally, I hope that with a growing number of studies like the current one, people in the profession will learn more about the considerations of multiply marginalized music educators and seek to better prepare all preservice music educators in terms of what to expect when entering the teaching profession. This more accurate depiction of what LGBTQ African American K-12 music educators navigate can also help lawmakers legislate more effectively for teachers in general.

I expect that studies like the current one will lead to better protections for all marginalized teachers, producing a wave of changes that will continue to bolster understanding and support for the profession. In pondering how to engender the necessary changes to provide supportive, inclusive, and diverse educational systems, we must remember the resilient actions of Alex, Zion, and Andrew and pursue small acts of subversion. Consistently taking these seemingly limited small-scale actions, such as practicing radical honesty (DeJean, 2007) by refusing to diminish one's layers of identity, finding ways to provide mentorship and representation for minoritized populations, and being resilient when faced with setbacks, can activate long-lasting macro changes. Extraordinary changes often begin as miniscule improvements.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Screening Informed Consent

“Like a double, triple hate”: Music education at the intersections of race, religion, and sexuality in the Bible Belt

Thank you for your interest regarding The Intersections of Race, Religion, and Sexuality: Identity’s Function in Music Education. I would like to ask you a few questions in order to determine whether you may be eligible for the research. Before I begin the screening, I would like to tell you a little bit about the research. The goal of the research is to make relevant transfers to the larger LGBTQ community, contributing knowledge to aid in the understanding of factors that impact and influence P-12 African American LGBTQ music educators who teach in the Bible Belt.

Would you like to continue with the screening? The screening will take about 2-5 minutes. I will ask you about name, race, age, geographical location, sexual self-identity, family status, teaching experience, length of teaching experience, and email address. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or are uncomfortable answering, and you may stop at any time. Your participation in the screening is voluntary.

Your answers will be confidential. No one will know your answers except for me. If you do not qualify for the study, all of your answers about personal information will be destroyed, and I will only note that a specific number of people expressed interest in the study but a specific number did not qualify for the study. If you do qualify for the study and decide to participate, I will contact you via the email address you provide with more specific information for the study. All of the information you provide will be encrypted and kept on a password-protected computer to which only I have access.

Would you like to continue with the screening? If no, thank you for your time and interest in this study.

If yes, continue with the screening. **NOTE: Completing the following questions and emailing your answers back is your voluntary consent to participate in the research study.**

1. How do you describe your race or ethnicity? _____
2. Focusing on sexual identity, do you identify as
 - a. Lesbian
 - b. Gay
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. Queer
 - e. None of the aboveExplanation _____
3. What **best** describes your level of disclosure or openness about your sexual identity?

- a. I am open with everyone, including students, colleagues, administration, parents as well as my friends and family.
 - b. I am open to my friends, family, and administration only. I am not open to colleagues and students.
 - c. I am open to my friends and family but not my school community (colleagues, administration, students, parents of students).
 - d. I am only open to my friends. I am not open to my family or my school community at all.
 - e. I have not disclosed my sexual identity at all.
4. What **best** describes your current family status?
- a. Partnered (not married) without children
 - b. Partnered (not married) with children
 - c. Married without children
 - d. Married with children
 - e. Single
5. What is your age? _____
6. What most closely aligns with your job description (check all that apply)?
- a. High school band director
 - b. High school choir director
 - c. High school orchestra director
 - d. High school general music teacher
 - e. Middle school band director
 - f. Middle school choir director
 - g. Middle school orchestra director
 - h. Middle school general music teacher
 - i. Elementary school band director
 - j. Elementary school choir director
 - k. Elementary school orchestra director
 - l. Elementary general music teacher
 - m. Something else _____
7. How would you describe the location of the school(s) in which you teach?
- a. Rural
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Metro
 - d. Inner-city
 - e. Something else _____
8. How many years have you been teaching? _____
- a. I am currently student teaching?
 - b. 1-5
 - c. 6-10
 - d. 11-20
 - e. 21-30
 - f. 31-40+
 - g. Retired
9. What state do you currently live in? _____

10. What is the name with which you would like to be addressed if contacted about the study? _____

Thank you for answering the screening questions.

Do you have any questions about the screening or the research? If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Latasha Thomas-Durrell, 1034 Runaway Bay Dr. Apt. 1A, Lansing, MI 48917, latashathomasdurrell@gmail.com, 731.358.7220.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

Thank you again for your willingness to answer these questions. **NOTE: Completing the following questions and emailing your answers back is your voluntary consent to participate in the research study.**

APPENDIX B

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

“Like a double, triple hate”: Music education at the intersections of race, religion, and sexuality in the Bible Belt

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research study is share stories of people who embody multiple non-dominant layers of identity to highlight a hidden but important perspective in music education—that of K-12 African American LGBTQ music educators teach in the Bible Belt—to be able to speak to mistreatment and confrontations of this population. The study is concerned with the following layers of identity: religion, race, sexual, identity, and music education as a career choice.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

After each classroom observation (minimum of two), you will participate in a semi-structured interview. For each interview, you will be invited to share your story with me, anything that you feel is pertinent to the study. While what you choose to share will ultimately guide the interviews, I will have a few prepared questions ready for prompts. At any point, you may skip questions that you prefer not to answer or stop the interview. The second (and additional) interviews will serve as a follow-up to the first, covering topics that require further clarification and/or to address new material that you would like to share in addition to addressing events or situations that occurred during classroom observations.

You will also be asked to keep a weekly electronic participant journal in order to record important details about life events in between observations and interviews. The content of the journal will be up to your discretion. You may wish to record your daily schedules, significant interactions, or specific thoughts or feelings. Your participant journal will add to the overall “picture” of your lived experience. Because teachers are busy, you may have little time (or desire) to type your thoughts in an electronic journal. For this reason, I will also accept video logs (VLOGs) with whatever content you would like to record. You can record yourself with a cell phone, webcam, or any other electronic method. You may choose to send the videos to me as you record them or wait until the end of the week and send them all at once.

In the event that recruitment yields multiple participants, you will be asked if you would like to participate in an electronic focus group via Skype, Zoom, or Facetime in which the participants of the study who consent to participate in the focus group discuss various topics: life events, classroom considerations, community, etc. (**NOTE:** The focus group in **NOT** a requirement of the study. It is completely voluntary. Participants can be involved in the study and decline the focus group.)

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You may or may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study as the information gathered and shared can give representation to an often-overlooked population of music educators.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort. In the event that any questions asked are disturbing, you may stop responding at any time. You may also choose to skip questions.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

While you will be asked to provide identifying information, information that you provide will remain confidential. All information gathered will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected computer to which only I will have access. All data and identifying information from the research will be kept for eight months. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. All interviews will be audiotaped. This is a requirement of the project. Audiotapes will also be encrypted and stored on a password-protected computer to which only I have access. Interviews will be kept for eight months.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

You have the right to say no to participating in the research. You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

There are no financial costs to participate in this study. As the study requires a considerable amount of time, you will be compensated with a \$30 gift card for participating in the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Latasha Thomas-Durrell: 1034 Runaway Bay Dr. Apt 1A, Lansing, MI 48917, latashathomasdurrell@gmail.com, 731.358.7220.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature _____ Date _____

I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of the interview.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Initials _____

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

General

- Where are you from?
- How did you come to be a music educator?
- As far as sexual identify, how do you identify?
- How did you come to be gay/lesbian?
- Please tell me about your experience coming out.

Race

- How does race impact your gender identity?
- How do you feel your race impacts the way you experience life as an LGBTQ person?
- How does race impact being a music educator?
 - How does race impact your ability to be out in his or her classroom? Do you feel you'd be treated differently if out and a person of color?
 - What factors support gay and lesbian educators of color to remain out within your school environment?
 - How does race influence your class decisions?
 - How do you feel the experiences of out LGBTQ music educators of color similar or different from those of White LGBTQ music educators?

Religion

- How do you feel religion impacts the way you experience life as an African American person?
- How does religion impact being LGBTQ?
 - How does religion influence your level of outness?
- How does religion impact being a music educator?
- How does religion impact being an African American LGBTQ music educator?
- Do you affiliate with any particular religion or subscribe to any particular religious beliefs?
- What do you know about the Bible Belt?
 - Thinking about the Bible Belt, how does the region and its fundamentalist beliefs affect your life?

Music Educator

- How do you feel being a music educator impacts the way you experience life as an African American person?
- How does being a music educator impact your gender identity?
- How does being a music educator impact being an African American LGBTQ music educator?
- How does being a music educator impact being LGBTQ?
 - How would you describe your life as a gay/lesbian educator?

- What makes you proud about being a gay/lesbian educator?
- What does it mean to you to be a gay/lesbian music educator?
- Are you out in your classroom? To your students and coworkers?
 - Would you say that you are totally closeted, passing, covering, implicitly out, explicitly out, publicly out, or other?
 - If other, please describe.
 - Passing –concealing info with purpose to lead others to believe you are heterosexual
 - Covering – not trying to be perceived as heterosexual but attempting to hide LGBT identity
 - Implicitly out – not directly disclosed sexual identity, but no passing or covering; no labels of lesbian or gay
 - Explicitly out – directly disclose sexual identity using words like lesbian or gay
- If not, why? Do you fear being discovered?
 - If you are not out, how do you think people see you?
- Do you feel being out will cost you your job?
- Do you believe it necessary to maintain a strict separation between your personal and professional life? Why or why not?
- Do you feel the need to isolate yourself from other teachers and students?
- How does your sexuality inform what you include or don't include as far as subject matter in your classroom (composers, musics, concepts)?
- How does your sexuality inform how you interact with students (hug/no hug, fist bump, affirmation)?
- Does your sexuality inform the language you use in class?
- Do you know or know of other K-12 music educators in your city/state who are out?
- Do you know of any issues surrounding being LGBT and being a K-12 music educator?
- Please tell me where you were in your career when you came out.
- Please tell me concerns you had about negative ramifications of your sexuality being public on your career.
- Please tell me about any benefits you considered or found in your career of your sexuality being public.
- Based on your experiences, what suggestions would you have for other LGBT persons seeking career tracks in music education?
- What else would you like to say about being a gay/lesbian music educator?

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