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This dissertation, "KNOWING THAT MY VOICE BELONGED THERE": AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN COMPOSERS, by BRITTNEY ELIZABETH BOYKIN, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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“KNOWING THAT MY VOICE BELONGED THERE”: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN COMPOSERS

by

BRITTNEY ELIZABETH BOYKIN

Under the direction of Dr. Natalie S. King and Dr. Jennifer Esposito

ABSTRACT

This exploratory case study examined the lived experiences of Black women composers. The main research question undergirding this research sought to understand how Black women composers describe their identities of race and gender within their careers. It also aimed to understand how Black women composers navigate elements of knowledge, opportunity, and visibility in a profession where they have been traditionally marginalized. Purposive sampling was used to invite ten Black women composers who are active in their careers and have catalogued works that are published and performed. Utilizing a conceptual framework that encompasses Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009) and Counterspaces (Case & Hunter, 2012), the case study centered the experiences of Black women composers in a way that will contribute to music and music education. Three themes surfaced in the findings from this research: 1) adversity played a major role in building Black women composer’s resilience 2) they identified music as being a vessel for their opportunity and visibility in the field, and 3) self-awareness was essential to realizing their identities as Black women composers.

INDEX WORDS: Black, women, composers, music, counterspaces

"KNOWING THAT MY VOICE BELONGED THERE": AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN COMPOSERS

by

Brittney Elizabeth Boykin

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in

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in

the College of Education & Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2021

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all Black women composers – past, present, and future. Your lives and music mean more than you will ever know.

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I would like to sincerely thank my co-chairs, Dr. Natalie S. King and Dr. Jennifer Esposito, for your guidance and support during this process. This would not have been possible without you. To my committee members, Dr. Susan Ogletree and Dr. Martin Norgaard, thank you both for your phenomenal ideas and encouragement. I'm so blessed to have had co-chairs and committee members that believed in me.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes and gender biases that women face are unfortunately more common than people realize. However, those barriers created by biases are sometimes even more prevalent in creative spaces such as the performing arts – specifically, composition. Male composers have long dominated Western European music and, as a result, women composers have received little attention in the area of composition (Colley et al., 2003). It is the perpetuation of this climate that continues to be a concern amongst creatives. Although institutions are making strides to challenge the disparity, Hannah Schiller (2019) notes this cycle continues to impact women composers in other opportunities, including the film industry.

A recent article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* notes that both the Chicago and the Philadelphia Orchestras' 2018-2019 performance seasons did not program any women composers. Peter Dobrin (2018) shares a sarcastic tweet from an unidentified person who said, in response to the lack of women being programmed, "I'm sure they've committed to doubling that number by the 2023-2024 season, though." The comment suggests that the seriousness of major organizations not having a diverse program that features Black and/or women composers may not be considered an earnest concern. Eleanor Alberga, a Black composer who has written for the Royal Philharmonic, said the following at a BBC 3 radio conference:

> The classical music world is not very inclusive and I suspect there are wider issues here, like unconscious racism and class. The perception of black music as jazz or reggae or coming from a roots background is still with us and probably leads to a hesitancy or even condescension in welcoming black people as part of the classical music family. (Young, 2016, p. 2)

Hesitancy fuels inequity, which impacts the visibility of Black women composers within the field of composition, while inequity seemingly fuels the hesitancy of hiring Black women composers. According to Tom Huizenga (2017), even though "more women have been winning Pulitzer Prizes for music lately, it's still next to impossible to hear works by female composers performed by America's symphony orchestras."

Hidden systems are contributing factors to the sustained oppression of Black women composers and their music. Additional research supports that the current systems for new compositional works may also be a factor in perpetuating the continued bias against women composers as a whole (Young, 2016). Young indicates that during the year 2013, a majority of the composers were directly commissioned by artistic directors or other personal networking. Unfortunately, this approach results in closed subjectivity for music selections and opportunities for collaboration. Even Vick Bain, chief executive of the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, says, "We know from research that the reliance on such networks disadvantages women as well as working class and black and minority ethnic workers" (Young, 2016, p. 4).

There are three leading issues that worked in tandem as the basis for this study: knowledge, opportunity, and visibility. Knowledge, for the purpose of this study, focused on the information and experiences shared by the Black women composers and how they understand themselves within the world of composition. Opportunity in this context centered on programming, publishing, and recording music. Visibility focused on the composers' perception of themselves and their place within the field. When knowledge about a marginalized group is absent, this can result in a lack of opportunity and visibility for the members of that group. Collins (2009) expresses the following concerning knowledge suppression:

> Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization (Scott, 1985 as cited in Collins, 2009, p. 5)

This chapter offered the significance of this study, along with the research questions that have guided it. It also introduces Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009) and Counterspaces (Case & Hunter, 2012) in order to offer a conceptual framework that better guided the understanding of the experiences of Black women composers. Collins asserts that "silence is not to be interpreted as submission in this collective, self-defined Black women's consciousness" (p. 108). This study aimed to break that silence and give voice to the collective consciousness of Black women composers.

Research Questions

1) How do Black women composers describe their understandings of the identities of race and gender on their careers?
2) How do Black women composers navigate knowledge, and opportunity, and visibility in a field where they have been traditionally marginalized?

Purpose

The terminology, Black women composers, is an integral part of the following study. For purposes of this research, Black women composers are defined as people who have ancestral origins to the African diaspora and who identify, socially, as a "woman" and write music for one or more mediums. The experiences conveyed highlighted a plethora of challenges experienced as a result of race and gender. Payne et al. (2017) suggests that bias occurs when people conceal

assumptions and beliefs based on a person's race, gender and other classifications. These associations tend to be stereotypical and are fueled by the ignorance of the particular subject (Reed, 2009). Reed further asserts that "the first step toward resolution regarding these issues is awareness" (p.72), and this informs the necessity for this study.

Pertaining to the invisibility of Black composers, Bill Banfield (2004) shares the following:

> If we examine the state of scholarship about African American culture in traditional music disciplines, we find that too often the academy consistently obscures the beauty, complexity, and variety of Black life and artistic expression. By doing this, the academy misses an opportunity to have an encompassing and relevant discourse related to the study of Black music, folk, and life, in total. Basically, there is sumptin' going on that allows us to ignore and thus dismiss the variety and diversity heard and taught within the whole of Black artistry. (p.196)

In order to further illuminate and provide additional context behind the musical contributions of Black women of in composition (Capizzi, 2020; Martin, 2019; Hsieh, 2019; Jobson, 2019; Black, 1986; Pool, 2002; Holzer, 1995; Clay, 2006; Harris, 2018), this study explored the experiences of living, Black women composers. Each composer's ability to share her experiences in her upbringing, education, and professional career provided insight into what the experience is like for Black women composers in a majority white and male-dominated field.

As an initial investigation, I conducted a pilot study in 2018 to explore the experiences of women composers. Yin (2018) asserts the importance of a pilot study and its grounding for creating a foundation for a proposed study. Malmqvist et el. (2019) also asserts that a pilot study

can greatly influence the design of a research study if it is thoughtfully adjusted before the main study.

The purpose of the pilot study was to better understand the lived experiences of women composers and their challenges with race and gender within the scope of their professional careers. Two participants identified as Black women and one identified as a White woman. Each participant completed a one, one-hour in-depth interview. The following three emerged from their interviews as having an impact on who they were as woman composers: 1) early childhood experiences with music, 2) bias, and 3) words of wisdom. All three composers revealed that they experienced a challenge with sexism at some point during their careers, which included their experience higher education. However, only the two Black women composers recounted instances of racial discrimination that was either experienced or observed by peers. In fact, the White woman composer felt that racial discrimination was not something she was able to experience due to being a White woman in society.

The findings from the pilot study inspired this larger study to further inquire into the experiences of Black women composers and the roles of race and gender in their careers. Moreover, these findings, in addition to the observation that the experiences of Black women composers have rarely been studied directly, seemed to call for moral agency. According to Code (1991), a moral agent posits herself in the pursuit of understanding an issue and establishes a plan to do so. The creative output of Black women intellectuals is quelled from the systems of oppression in order to protect the interests of elite White males (Collins, 2009). Black women composers and their music have been hidden, suppressed, ignored, and silenced in order to protect the elitism of the standardized canon, which is mostly comprised of White men. While the pilot study presented other directions for further research among women composers as a

collective, it was evident that experiences of the Black women composers varied greatly from their White counterparts due to the combined identities of race and gender. Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to specifically explore the experiences of Black women composers within the field. Their resilience and commitment to the craft of composition in the midst of challenges with race and gender throughout their experiences was centered within this exploratory study and analyzed through a combined conceptual framework that utilized Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009) and Counterspaces (Case & Hunter, 2012).

Significance of the Study

While the physical presence of Black women composers has been documented by scholars such as Helen Walker-Hill (2007) and William Banfield (2003), the presence of their musical voices has been minimal in the standardized music history and musical canon. Opportunities for their works to be published and made accessible were also few during their lifetime. Research has shown that the first generation of Black women composers persevered through racial and gender discrimination in all levels of their careers (Walker-Hill, 2007; Banfield, 2003; Brown, 2020). However, the impact of racial and gender discrimination on their careers has rarely been addressed in the scholarly literature, making this study an essential contribution to the conversation.

Research reveals that Julia Perry, a Black woman composer from this first generation, pleaded with publishing houses in the months leading up to her death to publish her music and asked for monetary assistance to help cover medical expenses (Walker-Hill, 2007). The company had published some of her pieces early on, but they respectfully denied her requests, asking her to be patient and to try later. They wished her well and she passed soon after. While some of the works of Julia Perry, Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, and so many others have made it to the

special collections of libraries around the country, there are a number of pieces that are unaccounted for because they have not been found or have been lost indefinitely. Other studies have shown that composers did everything they could to have their music published and/or performed, and that history has displayed an overwhelming insensitivity to the preservation of Black women composers and their art (Walker-Hill, 2007). This lack of preservation has crippled their ability to have their music performed on a macro level, even posthumously. With this lack of knowledge and opportunity, Black women composers, past and present, are not granted the same visibility as others.

Assumptions and Limitations

The first assumption in this study was that the Black women composers (participants) would feel comfortable in sharing information based on the researcher's positionality as a Black woman composer. In reference to research involving topics around race, class, and gender, Johnson-Bailey (1999) asserts that "class concerns can cut through gender and racial solidarity" (p.659). Being Black, a woman, and a composer, would not prevent issues of colorism or classism that may surface during data collection. These issues had the potential to make the interview process feel awkward (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). Another assumption included the actual experiences, based on the interpretations and meanings of the responses given by the Black women composers. It was believed that those who were willing to participate, would offer information unapologetically and honestly (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2005). For example, it was assumed that the participants identify themselves as a "Black woman composer." While some participants embraced the labeling, others preferred solely "composer," acknowledging that "Black woman" before "composer" was an attempt to minimize, other-ize and pigeon-hole their ability.

While this study aimed to acknowledge and provide insight on the experiences of Black women composers, it does not represent all Black women composers. The experiences conveyed by the participants are theirs and theirs alone. Similarities surfaced but the position of this study was not to assert that their experiences speak for all Black women composers. An additional limitation was the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to focus more in depth on the case being examined by deliberately selecting participants that will contribute to exploration of that case (Schoch, 2020). While the criteria for the sampling had been set, the scope of the participant search was limited due to the invisibility of Black women composers, e.g., a lack of visibility through databases and/or not having their own websites. However, the response from the database that was utilized was high and resulted in the participation of ten Black women composers. The themes presented by their experiences will hopefully encourage further research that will combat the marginalization of Black women composers.

Overview of the Study

This study explored the lived experiences of Black women composers. Johnson-Bailey (1999) posits that the roles of race and gender may be a result of the parameters influenced and determined by society. These parameters have the capacity to impact the trajectories of Black women composers' careers. For this study, a case study methodology (Yin, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) was used in order to further analyze their experiences with identifying as a Black woman composer in their education and career, and in instances of racial and gender discrimination, and to validate those experiences as knowledge. This study thus highlights the lives of ten Black women composers to create awareness and incite additional research to bring this marginalized community into the foreground.

Definitions

A few key terms require definition as they pertain to the purpose this study. When describing Black women composers, the term **Black** encompasses the terminology "of African descent" and "African American." As Dexter Gordon explains, the social construct of race employs the "inaccurate color descriptors" of "Black" and "White" (Gordon, 2003, p. 2). He also asserts that the categorization and functionality of race contributes to the "continuation of racism, with its systematic advantage to one group over the other" (p. 2). However, it is acknowledged that "Black does not adequately describe" the race represented in this study "that bears so many hues, features and diverse characteristics" (Duncan, 1972, p. 195)

Gender refers to how one identifies oneself socially. In this study, the singular term **woman** and collective term **women** will also be used. According to Robert Stoller (1968), who first coined the gender identity terminology, there are three components that contribute to the formation of someone's gender identity:

1) Biological and hormonal influences
2) Sex assignment at birth
3) Environmental and psychological influences with effects similar to imprinting

In this study, the concept of gender was utilized to examine societal and cultural barriers. The term "female" was not used at any point due to its restrictive nature to anatomy, though it does appear in quotations from other sources. Only "woman" or "women" were used in order to be more inclusive of those who identify in this group. Payne et al. (2017) defines implicit bias as "the idea is that people harbor mental associations based on race, gender, and other social categories that may lead to discrimination without intent, or possibly even awareness" (p. 233).

A **composer** is a person who creates and writes music. This person normally maintains a musical profession but is not limited to only composing music. The field of music composition is diverse. The Black women composers selected for this study possesses a broad compositional palette that includes writing for solo voice, choir, orchestra, band, film and electronic mediums.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Black women composers are a marginalized group within the musical canon for reasons outside of their control. The dominant culture's consistent inability to acknowledge their voices in the musical realm gives opportunity for their musicianship and even their existence to be questioned. The following review of literature displays the vastness of the impact that race and gender can have within music education and composition. I collected general literature on these topics before narrowing my focus to race or gender (for example, Black AND Music Education) and then focusing on both race and gender (Black AND Woman AND Music Education). The terms "bias" and "discrimination" were also used in the searches. Databases searched included JSTOR, RILM, Black Thought and Culture, and ProQuest. Other research guides that were searched included Music and African American Studies. The literature was analyzed using the Grounded Theory Approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) with NVivo and Mendeley to assist in drawing connections and comparisons. Compiling literature in this way allowed me to assess the widespread impact of barriers experienced by Black women composers in music education and the professional world of composition. Therefore, I have structured the literature review in the following order.

I have structured the literature review in the following order. First, I will expound on the conceptual framework that encompasses Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Counterspaces: this framework will guide the interpretation and analyses of the lived experiences of Black women composers. Second, I will provide a brief overview of music education and some of the anticipated benefits of studying music. In order to gain as much insight as possible, it was necessary to review literature at the intersection of music education and composition. This will then lead into a narrowed focus on perceived challenges pertaining to race and gender within

music education. After that, the focus will shift to the profession of composition and literature specifically surrounding Black women composers. In order to gain a holistic perspective, it was important to consider literature focused on “Black composers” and “women composers” as two separate categories. Finally, the literature review will conclude with a variety of qualitative inquiry in music education that will set the foundation for the need of this study.

Conceptual Framework

Origins of Black feminism have roots in the United States abolitionist movement (Johnson, 2015; Freedman, 2003). The abolitionist movement resulted in “a race barrier within the female anti-slavery movement” (Johnson, 2015, p. 2) that greatly hindered the participation of Black women during that time. The themes and experiences that resulted from the inequality provided the foundation for conversations guided by race and Black womanhood that ultimately influenced the framing of Black feminism (Johnson, 2015).

Another similar framework is Critical Race Theory. Delgado (1995) asserts that CRT is rooted in the “notion that racism is normal” (p. xiv). CRT also posits that racism is embedded so deeply within the country that it infiltrates societal functions through perpetuated and invisible systems of oppression (Bradley, 2006). It has been argued that “Black race activists are always portrayed as male” (Johnson, 2015, p. 3; Collins, 2009). Nevertheless, CRT allowed space for the emergence of Counterspaces.

Counterspaces is a term that qualifies a physical or conceptual setting as a “safe space.” For Black women composers, this idea can be applied to an array of areas and can also mean creating their own “spaces” in order to thrive musically. These safe spaces include, for instance, publishing their own music, creating and performing with their own ensembles, and programming works by other marginalized composers and much more. According to Shirazi

(2019), “counterspaces emerges from critical race theory (CRT), wherein the notion of race is understood to be an organizing hierarchical concept in social life” (p. 481). West (2017) defines professional counterspaces as an “opportunity intentionally designed by and for similarly situated, underrepresented individuals to convene with one another in a culturally affirming environment” (p. 285). Shirazi also found that counterspaces in educational settings “work to facilitate collective processing of experiences that are related through shared elements of identity” (p. 481). They also provide the space to where “white normativity can be interrogated” (p. 481). Even coming from a professional and educational background, West (2017) further asserts that the concept of counterspaces “has been cited as a powerful strategy” that is “rooted in BFT” (p. 285).

The overlapping barriers of race and gender may effect the composer musically, as well as individually. According to Sharon Curtis (2017), who examined the intersectional complexities of the Black woman’s experience in positions of leadership, the social ramifications of gender can “can separate and divide a woman’s consciousness” (p. 100). Curtis further asserts:

> Women are separated through their experiences of privileges within society and their relationships with power and how power is distributed between women within the various spaces. They occupy various spaces on their journeys – educationally, personally, socially…(p. 100)

It is the varying of these spaces that makes the experiences of individual Black women composers unique. Privilege within their individual journeys may vary in terms of access to music in schools and/or private lessons, or exposure to different types of music in their homes and/or churches.

Black Feminist Thought will provide the support needed to analyze the impact of shifting and its effect on the composer's self-esteem. According to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), the impact of shifting is "often internal and invisible" and can chip "away at black women's sense of self, at her feelings of wholeness and centeredness" (p. 7). The elements of shifting may surface as a result of the long-term effects and history of Black women composers dealing with racial and gender discrimination (Curtis, 2017: Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Prior research of Black women in leadership suggests that Black women become self-reliant in their perseverance through the effects brought on by shifting (Curtis, S., 2017). Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017) asserts that, in graduate education contexts, "Black women often have to employ a variety of coping mechanisms and strategies to overcome racial and gendered oppression" (p. 157). However, prior studies have failed to evaluate similar possibilities within the field of composition in particular. The key to the career-related survival of Black women is the wisdom gained from the intersections of their experiences and knowledge (Kernodle, 2014). Understanding the key to the survival of Black women composers in the profession is essential to comprehending the mosaicism that characterizes their lives and their music.

Collins (2009) uses the following dimensions of Black feminist epistemology to inform Black Feminist Thought: "lived experiences as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue, the ethic of personal accountability, and the ethic of caring" (p. 286). The centering of these experiences through the lens of Black Feminist Thought will provide unique and personal perspectives that is critical to the survival of Black women composers and their music.

Black Feminist Thought also incorporates a unique perspective pertaining to activism. As Nayak explains, this can result in "tangible outputs" that "produce outcomes" which can "make a measurable difference to Black women's lives" (Nayak, 2014, pp. 1-2). She further suggests that

the activism is "articulated as the thinking upon which the action is contingent" (p. 2). The activism of Black feminism centers the need for understanding Black women's lives within a dominant, white and patriarchal society(Nayak, 2014). King and Pringle (2019) suggest that Black girls in STEM benefit when they have "support systems" which "help them cope and persist" (p. 544) through the challenges of adversity in science education. It is also a hope that, by the participants sharing their experiences, younger Black women composers will feel inspired and encouraged to navigate the world of music composition without having reservations.

Employing Black Feminist Thought and Counterspaces together strengthens the ability to closely examine the intersectionality of race and gender within the context of Black womanhood in the world of composition. This combined framework reinforces the idea that Black women composers use their presence, as well as their music, as tools to challenge oppression.

This exploratory case study positions the experiences of Black women composers at its center. While BFT is essential to understanding their experiences as Black women within composition, counterspaces provides a unique perspective on how the composers maneuver their marginalization within the field. Within counterspaces, adaptive responding is a critical element in understanding how a person is able to maintain a sense of self under oppressive circumstances (Case & Hunter, 2012). Further, adaptive responding is a process that is often defined "as coping, resilience and resistance" (p. 259). This combination assisted in the exploration of how Black women composers identify within the social constructs of race and gender. It also informed how Black women composers have created their own spaces of knowledge, opportunity, and visibility to challenge their marginalization within the field of composition.

Upsides to Music Education

The history of American music education is rooted in Western European practice, which has been the foundation for music educators for over almost 200 years. The Eurocentric structure of music education has become increasingly challenged over the years as the American population has diversified (Shaw, 2015). With the evolution of the student demographic, teachers have to be more aware of the cultural concerns when instructing students from a different demographic that is not their own (Shaw, 2015).

Marie McCarthy examined the evolution of music education in a 2014 article in the *Music Educators Journal*. She discovered that the narrative of American music education was one that only represented the "dominant professional group" (p. 29). While the issue of multiculturalism in music continues to be researched, McCarthy's work presented a number of articles that supported the changes in American music, and she labeled the fusion that it represents a "cultural mosaic." She asserted that American music is a result of the cultural combination of people immigrating over generations. According to Dura and Volk (2006), multiculturalism in American music education really started to surface during the twentieth century as a result of the changing cultural and political climate of American society during that time. Prior to their work, Volk published an article in 1997, expressing that music education in America began to break away from the Western European tradition between the years of 1930 and 1954 with the movement toward internationalism. A new multicultural perspective has been afforded to the current music education field with the assistance of focused choices in repertoire, teacher training and publications (Volk, 1997).

As a result, research shows that music education can have positive and long-lasting effects on a person's development (Silverstone, 2018). These effects include fostering a larger

vocabulary, enhancing reading comprehension, and increasing memory capacity, as well as developing social skills that encourage teamwork (Silverstone, 2018). The Harmony Project, a study that took place in Los Angeles, saw significant evidence of increased neural processing from students who studied music for two years or more (Kraus & White-Schwoch, 2020). In addition, music can also provide students an opportunity to possibly activate themselves as political agents (Hess, 2019).

Race and Gender in the Music Education Climate

The U.S. educational system has a history of internal challenges with race and gender. Moreover, it is the perpetual nature of racism, bias, and other discriminatory practices that have detrimentally impacted the way children function in school and in the larger society (Reed, 2009). This remains a problem within education as a result of school systems camouflaging standardized curriculum that promote the upholding of dominant culture and systems of oppressions (Apple, 1990; Akom, 2009). The effects of these pedagogical underpinnings contribute to the lingering infringement upon the voices of Black and Brown students in the classroom (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2002; Akom, 2009). Hegemony of the dominant class is Eurocentric in practice and stifles the diversity and opportunity of Black and Brown students in educational environments. This leads to a myriad of problems in pedagogical practices, including those within music education.

Current hegemonic practices in music education lead students to believe that women composers do not exist. Laura Curtis (2017) explains that gendering in music has had an "influential role in musical performance and education for more than two hundred years" (p. 5). In the twentieth century, works by male composers predominated music history books and music repertoire and curriculum (Atterbury, 1992). Years upon years of perpetuating the images and

work of only male composers in the classroom sends the message that "women have not written and do not write music!" (p. 25). The purpose of Atterbury's article was to call attention to the widespread issue of gendering in music when it came to the perceptions of women as composers, band directors, conductors, and other leading professionals. Boeckman (2019) reports that in the year of 2016, women accounted for only 16 percent of the full-time, tenure-track composition faculty at forty conservatories, colleges, and schools of music in the U.S. As Boeckman explains, this largely male-dominated field, which spans composition faculty as well as other performance faculty, perpetuates unconscious gendering in music (Boeckman, 2019). One problem that results from gendering in music within the field of composition is the upholding of misogynistic attitudes and unreasonable expectations, which can negatively impact a woman's choice to pursue a career in composition.

The gendering of music can be occur in a wide range of facets within the field. These can include how the music is prepared, produced, performed, and received (Lamb, 1994). Gendering elicits stereotyping within the field, which limits women's visibility in some artistic spaces. In this limiting, their presence may be omitted altogether. According to Atterbury, "Omission is a powerful teacher" (p. 25), and when anyone is omitted within aspects of music education based on race or gender, it sends a powerful message. One approach to address this problem, as Laura Curtis (2017) suggests, is for music educators to use reflection and to "deconstruct their own and their students' gendered musical perceptions" in order to "break the current gender cycle in music" (p. 5). The wide range of the problems and influence associated with gendering makes it a socially constructed phenomenon (Curtis, 2017; Lamb, 1994; Green, 1997). Understanding the gendering of music as a social construct allows for the opportunity to examine and deconstruct the discriminatory systems in place (Curtis, L., 2017). It also allows for the challenging of the

"musical patriarchy," an idea coined by Lucy Green (1997) to describe the power dynamic of men over women in music through systems of "tolerance and repression, collusion and resistance" (p. 15).

The message of omission can also influence how students in primary education perceive their own musical ambitions. Black composer Patrice Rushen, for example, was unsure about pursuing her aspirations of being a classical pianist when she was younger because she "didn't see a lot of Black people doing that" (Banfield, 2003, p. 251). Black composers remain in a marginalized group at the collegiate level as well. As related in Banfield's 2003 book, Black composer Dorothy Rudd Moore expressed the following about Black composers being absent at the collegiate level:

> One thing I have not been happy with is that well-respected universities have very little information about black composers. If a black person is on a faculty of music at a university and that music department has no information on other black musicians, something is wrong…There is just no excuse for this omission. (p. 120)

The omission of Black composers and Black music can impact the pedagogical practices of music professors at the collegiate level as well. Regina Harris Baiocchi shared about some of the adversity she experienced being the only Black student and only female in the composition and theory department during her time:

> I was always being rudely reminded of the fact that they were teaching me how to write classical music. I tried to present the music I was hearing, and a lot of times it was rejected as "pop shit." (p. 304)

While the sentiments expressed by Dorothy Rudd Moore and Regina Harris Baiocchi are deeply personal, they speak to the realities of Black music and Black composers at the collegiate level,

and the broader implications are concerning. The complexities and distinctiveness of their individual situations indicates that there may be other problems that are experienced by Black women composers at the collegiate level.

In music education, creativity is commonly associated with a specialized focus such as composition (Langley, 2018; Kennedy, 2000; NafME, 2012). One's creative expression can be either encouraged or stifled by social environment (Langley, 2018; Amabile et al., 1996). While the culture of music education culture is changing, the predominant hegemonic practice today is that which enables the perpetuation of a social environment with historical narratives and ideals that prohibit student inclusion and creativity. This hegemonic practice is in part a byproduct of the reluctance of veteran teachers to introduce new ways of teaching (Langley, 2018).

Evolution occurs when that hegemonic practice is consistently challenged. The myth about one of classical music's most famous composers Ludwig Beethoven being Black, for instance, spread widely and quickly with the influx of social media. The overwhelming amount of sharing, rewriting, and reposting about Beethoven being Black convinced many people that the idea is true (Rinehart, 2013). According to Rinehart, even though the "issue has been sufficiently settled by intellectuals like Darryl Pinckney and academics like de Lerma" (p. 125), it still surfaces from time to time. While the issue of determining its accuracy or inaccuracy has been addressed by academics, there remains the broader question of why the debate keeps resurfacing. The curiosity and excitement of people wanting to identify Beethoven as Black is likely another result of the covert omission of Black composers from the classical canon. When the "greats" of classical music are all white and men, what does that imply? As Rinehart argues, it is clearly a sign that the classical canon needs to be reimagined.

> (O)ur constitution is colorblind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved. (Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 559, 1896, Harlan, J., dissenting))

While most of Justice Harlan's comments from this famous case "have been cited when arguing for a color-blind racial ideology" (Annamma et al., 2017, p. 147), they are commonly associated with not "seeing" race and, as such, have been discouraged by scholars (Annamma et al. 2017; Gotanda, 1991). Color-blind ideology has been embraced in some studies, policies, and other facets of the U.S. education system (Annamma et al., 2017; Milner, 2007). Yet additional research shows that color blindness can negatively impact a student's level of achievement and discipline (Annamma et al., 2017). CRT scholar Neil Gotanda challenges and critiques the color-blind ideology, dubbing it "a tool to maintain white supremacy" (Annamma et al., 2017, p. 148). In education, research has shown that teachers who adopt the color-blind ideology have challenges when it comes to reflecting on the racism that occurs within their classrooms (Annamma, 2017; Dixson & Roussea, 2005).

The idea of color blindness in music education further perpetuates racial and gender inequality in the classroom. Deborah Bradley (2015) believes that color blindness may impact the ways in which music educators teach choral music, for example. Within the choral repertoire, multicultural music is a category used to expand diversity and tout inclusivity. However, Bradley uses her inquiries to challenge the "othering" of marginalized groups by the dominant culture of Whiteness. She challenges the systems of music publishing, in particular:

> The system of music publishing, while bringing product to market to help us "celebrate diversity," is also part of a well-established system of Whiteness in North America, a system that renders issues of racism and social inequity invisible. (pp. 4-5)

While the system of music publishing may "celebrate diversity," Black women composers appear to be adversely affected when it comes to the visibility and accessibility of their music. The perpetuation of this particular system of oppression within the music field renders the presence and music of Black women composers invisible.

Strategies for Moving Forward

Bradley asserts that in order for critical multiculturalism to occur, educators need to move away from the " polite and vague discussions" of color blindness and instead turn their attention to the "more uncomfortable discourse of race and racism in North America" (p. 5). In teaching non-European music, educators will then have the opportunity to challenge the systemic racism in our society, starting in the classroom (Bradley, 2014). By avoiding these vital conversations and not addressing the contexts behind certain multicultural musics, the unfortunate irony of color blindness is maintained and the systems of "othering" upheld (Bradley, 2003). Bradley offers the example of the exclusion of context for South African apartheid songs, like "Siyahamba" and how that exclusion furthers the social reluctance to acknowledge "ongoing aboriginal apartheid issues in North America" (p. 13). When context is absent from musical instruction, we reduce the ability to fully experience music (Bradley, 2003).

Problems such as racism, sexism, exoticism are rarely examined in the field of music education (Bradley, 2003). As a result, educators' thinking often remains stagnant on these issues and stereotypes are often preserved (Bradley, 2003). It also results in the continued appropriation of folk music and "multicultural" music in which they are widely exploited and sold for profit by

major publishers (Bradley, 2003). According to Hess (2014), "Western classical music dominates while musics appropriated for use in school are arranged peripherally" (p. 236). As the dominant culture controls the cycle that perpetuates the Western European canon and appropriates folk music in music education, it maintains the ability to exclude marginalized groups without remorse or reprieve.

One way to overcome this problem is to move beyond the notes when teaching music and to teach context in order to incite social change (Hess, 2014). Music education needs a radical contextualization in order for teachers and students to understand the deeper, more meaningful issue that we are all connected (Hess, 2014). Broadly speaking, radical music education is a solution for destabilizing the Western classical canon and dismantling the systems of oppression in music. Music is a valuable tool for students and teachers to explore anti-racism work if there are opportunities for conversations about context and meaning in regard to the music and its origins (Tran-Adams, 2007).

The many barriers of inequality within music education must be deconstructed in order for music education to be reconstructed in equality. Juliet Hess (2014) suggests a tri-faceted lens that allows for an anti-oppressive perspective for reconstructing music education. It "encompasses three theoretical lenses – anti-colonialism, anti-racism and anti-racist feminism" (p.231). The resulting anti-oppressive perspective combats the hegemony and privilege of the dominant culture and supports connection, inclusivity, and equality (Hess, 2014).

Overview of Music Composition in America

The determining factors surrounding a musical composition and its impact on the composer are the musical composition itself and the public's reaction to the musical composition (Boeckman, 2019). Recent scholarship has "called into question how composers and their works

get performed, accrue value, become culturally important, and achieve canonical status" (p. 48). Marcia Citron (1993) suggests that a composer's success is greatly influenced by political and societal norms. If a composer acknowledges these norms within their musical writing, it may prohibit or diminish certain opportunities for that composer. For major publishers, music is easier to market when "there is no political message or uncomfortable social context" (Bradley, 2003, p. 14). For example, there are many children's arrangements of "Siyahamba," but this South African folk tune is still tied to the country's apartheid era. While some major publishers, following the lead of one publisher, have started to offer more information about the origins of songs in the cover notes, the endeavors of just one or a few alone cannot produce the widespread change needed by the masses (Bradley, 2003). The commodification of multicultural music continues to demonstrate that publishing companies are driven by the financial gain of appropriated music and not the messages or learning opportunities related to social justice.

The tradition of music education and performance in America overall continues to acknowledges the "greats" and "firsts" of the past (Hess, 2014). Within that tradition, children are taught (or conditioned), that "great music is past music" (p. 232). According to Helen Walker-Hill (1992), "the serious pursuit of composition has traditionally been a male prerogative" (p. 2). In addition to that, as it is taught has been predominantly white.

Literature Surrounding the Black Composer

In 1955, James Baldwin began his essay "Many Thousands Gone" with these words:

> It is only in his music, which Americans are able to admire because a protective sentimentality limits their understanding of it, that the Negro in America has been able to tell his story. It is a story which otherwise has yet to be told and which no American is prepared to hear.

Baldwin's sentiments ring true as Black composers remain a marginalized group within the world of composition to date. The first generation of Black composers in America to be formally documented remained steadfast and composed during some of the country's most racially charged moments in history. A review of *Black Women Composers* by Mildred Denby Green and *In One Lifetime* by Verna Arvey was published in *The Black Perspective in Music* in 1985 and suggested the following about Black women composers during this particular historical moment:

> They practiced their art during a time when financial hardship and discrimination were facts of everyday existence, and nevertheless persevered, becoming role models for later generations. (p. 122)

Helen Walker-Hill (2002) notes that even though the desegregation of America occurred in the 1960s, "the black community is still the primary environment for the majority of African Americans" (p. xiv) in music. It is here that Black composers are afforded the encouragement, as well as performance opportunities, for the music that they created (Walker-Hill, 2002). Dorothy Rudd Moore shared that the Society of Black Composers, an organization that existed between 1968 and 1978, was formed in order to give Black composers a community where they could be recognized (Banfield, 2003). It created the foundation for the formation of other organizations that focused on Black composers, such as the Center for Black Music (Banfield, 2003). Some of these organizations were founded and based in Chicago and offered a number of different performance opportunities to promote the work and music of Black composers (Walker-Hill, 1992). In addition, there were churches in the Black community all over the country that also provided a safe-haven for aspiring artists. Razzante and Hanna (2019) assert that churches in Black communities "served as a means through which music and faith emerged as the fuel of perseverance" (p. 61).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) can be qualified as another form of Black community. However, a common complex problem within academia typically arises for music students transitioning from an HBCU to a predominately white institution (PWI). A study by Jordan McCall (2015) investigated this phenomenon, reporting that the devaluation of the identities and knowledge of the participants were stoked by issues of racism. McCall reported that as a result of being Black and transitioning from an HBCU, "some White students or professors assumed that" the participants were "incompetent, unintelligent and inadequate" (p. 268).

This problem has attracted more attention in the field of music education. Bradley's (2007) article "The Sounds of Silence: Talking Race in Music Education" highlights a number of obstacles that seem to prohibit conversations about race within music education. With further analysis of Bradley (2007), Joyce McCall (2017) provides more insight:

> These obstacles include our struggle to confront colonialism, institutionalized Whiteness, and the profession's tendency to further sideline issues of race and racism within pluralistic platforms such as multiculturalism and social justice… Acknowledging and confronting their Whiteness will not only allow Whites to acknowledge the presence of other and their social realities, but it will afford them a better understanding of how racial minorities are forced to see themselves through what Du Bois refers to as "double consciousness." (McCall, 2017, p. 15)

Robinson and Hendricks (2018) assert that the "root of double-consciousness is an internal struggle." And according to Reed (1997), the inner turmoil results in the conflict between self-realization and awareness and how they are viewed in society.

> Double-consciousness is theorized as the psychological feeling that African Americans experience in viewing oneself as both African American (Black) and European American (White). (Robinson and Hendricks, 2018, p. 34)

It was W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) that first qualified this theory and likened African Americans to being a "problem." He furthered this idea, saying,

> The Negro is sort of a seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (p.9)

The other side of the double-consciousness coin is the realization that Black equates to inferiority (Robinson & Hendricks, 2018). Nigrescence is defined by Cross (1994) as "the processes by which Black children develop an awareness of their racial identity." The first two stages that appear in Cross' theory are pre-encounter and encounter. During the pre-encounter stage, the personal and social significance of one's racial group membership has not yet been realized and racial identity is not yet under examination (Cross, 1994, p. 22). "When the environmental cues change and the world begins to reflect his blackness back to him more clearly, [the adolescent] will probably enter the encounter stage" (Cross, 1994, p. 55).

The programming of Black composers during Black History Month or when there is a need for diversifying a performance is one of the leading oppressive factors experienced by Black composers. Dorothy Rudd Moore continued to share that when people need Black music,

they choose to program featured Black performers, such as the Boys Choir of Harlem, instead of Black classical composers. (Banfield, 2003). She went further, saying,

> It is almost as though black people are ghettoized in the general culture to do only certain kinds of music. It is almost as if the black classical composer doesn't exist. In February during Black History month, organizations think about us. It is almost as though black people are ghettoized in the general culture to do only certain kinds of music. It is almost as if the black classical composer doesn't exist. (pp. 117-118)

While Black composers are not completely absent from the programming for main performance stages, their presence is still minimal enough to allude to the non-existence of Black composers. A reason for this, is shared by Regina Harris Baiocchi:

> So, a lot of the major orchestras and a lot of the major opera houses are widening the circle, to hang onto the money they are getting… For example, sometimes you hear people singing Abraham Lincoln's praises for freeing the slaves, and that is not what he did at all. What Lincoln said was if freeing the slaves was going to save the Union, then slaves should be freed. Lincoln was not necessarily antislavery, he was pro-Union. I think the same thing happens to musical organizations. They are doing this for self-preservation, yet nothing but good can come from it. (p. 307)

Even though they are normally featured annually during the Martin Luther King, Jr. holidays and Black History Month performances, "for the remainder of the year, African-American composers are rarely heard on the concert stage" (Walker-Hill, 2002, p. 353).

Research has shown that prejudicial thinking begins between the ages of 3 and 6 years old (Aboud et. al 2012). Raabe and Beelmann (2011) further suggest that critical thinking with regards to race at such an early age can be further influenced by notions of self-identity and

relativity to other ethnicities. Other researchers have indicated that color blindness has inadvertently created two additional problems: racelessness (Kempf, 2013) and colormute (Polluck, 2004). Racelessness refers to the idea that everyone has equality and that race/racism is an element of the past (Kempf, 2013); the colormute idea refers to the process of actively silencing or removing situations that would encourage discourse about race (Pollock, 2004).

Color blindness is also connected to the “blinding” of people to the continued effects and histories of racial oppression and the current realities of racial discrimination (Teeger, 2015). It has also been called “laissez faire racism” due to the racial inequality maintained through the race-neutral dynamics that are encouraged (Bobo, 1997).

One particular study on race in a college setting spoke to the level of discomfort about and resistance to critiquing “whiteness” (Tatum, 1992, 1994). Tatum observed three fundamental ways students thought about the topic of race and racial groups. The first was race as a taboo topic; even though students were interested in studying race, they were reluctant to discuss it. Second, students believed the United States was a country of equity and freedom and that anyone could succeed regardless of race. Third, students denied any notion of perpetuating racism and resisted any forms of self-analysis or awareness.

American psychologist Gordon Allport was an important figure in social psychology and the analysis of attitudes. According to Allport (1935), a person’s attitude is a result of their mental and neural responses from the sequences of their life (Allport, 1935). With this notion, it is clearly evident that attitude influences behavior (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

A 2013 study on attitude change suggested that there are three factors involved in conversations or confrontations about racial bias: the communicator, the message, and the audience (Schultz & Maddox, 2013). In addition, there are a number of emotions that can be felt

in a suspected situation of racial bias from the person who is being confronted: guilt, self-criticism, and dissatisfaction (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rokeach & Cochrane, 1972; Rokeach & McLellan, 1972).

The racial discomfort of non-Black artists around the authentic performance of Negro spirituals and art songs by Black composers is a highly discussed issue (Helton & Stephens, 2007). The Helton and Stephens study further suggests that the non-Black performers experience emotions like discomfort or fear in relation to performing music by African Americans. The participants (roughly 25% Black and 75% White) shared the following challenges:

1. fear of authenticity/needing permission,
2. lack of availability or knowledge where to find the music,
3. lack of sufficient stylistic knowledge, and
4. ignorance.

Literature Surrounding the Woman Composer

Male composers have long dominated in Western European art music, as well as contemporary pop music (Colley et al., 2003). As a result, women composers have received limited opportunities in comparison to their counterparts (Colley et al., 2003). For centuries, unconscious and conscious bias has negatively impacted the capacity for women composers to be heard. As Bowers and Tick (1986) explain,

> The absence of women in the standard music histories is not due to their absence in the musical past. Rather, the questions so far asked by historians have tended to exclude them. (p. 3)

Unconscious bias, implicit bias, and gender schemas are just a few of the terms that are used when discussing discrimination (Easterly & Ricard, 2011). And while gender schemas tend to provide an idea for what is expected, when "schemas turn into prescriptive roles, sexism and discrimination occur" (Easterly & Ricard, 2011, p. 64). These schemas also tend to limit women and minorities (Easterly & Ricard, 2011). According to Easterly and Ricard (2011), "Many everyday practices in society create situations that are biased," but "…no one questions their inherent injustice" (p. 65). In some disciplines there is a perception that "males are positioned as more 'expert' users than females and have greater influence in shaping the culture" (Armstrong, 2008). Literature has shown that even the slightest amount of bias can have a substantial impact upon an outcome, especially when there are already few opportunities for advancement (Archer, 1992).

Gender equality aims to level the differences in opportunities between men and women so that gender is not a determining factor (Koskoff & Cusick, 2014). According to Boise (2017, p. 34), "there is evidence that class and ethnicity, particularly, impact heavily on gendered application, discrimination and selection." The imbalance of opportunities for living composers, men and women, remains a concern in the 21st century (Strempel, 2008). As a result of this, some female composers "conceal and fabricate their gender to avoid male-bias, negative stereotypes and discrimination" (Bennett, Hennekam, Macarthur, Hope, & Goh, 2018, p. 3). Furthermore, it's debated that even though this strategy may be utilized by some female composers in hopes of combating discrimination, "it may not be feasible in the longer term" and may result in the composers developing "feelings of inauthenticity" (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 3). According to Eagly and Carli (2007), recent studies show the influence of gender bias and traditional thinking about gender roles on hiring, promotion, and career opportunities in the

modern workplace. The underrepresentation of women violates human rights and stunts diversity within the discipline (Sipe et al., 2016). Scholars argue that the skewed representation of women in certain areas stems from the "glass ceiling," which insinuates seen opportunities that are blocked from reach (Besen & Kimmel, 2006). Findings from this study suggest that the same glass ceiling may exist within the world of composition.

Until recently, historians in Europe had the belief that women composers did not exhibit the creativity or talent needed for composing substantial musical works unlike their male counterparts (Walker-Hill, 2002). Regina Harris Baocchi spoke briefly about her thoughts on the bias experienced by women composers:

> People are socialized to think that men are stronger and better when it comes to certain things, and that writing music is one of them. Because we are socialized to think more of men and their accomplishments, sometimes women composers are not looked upon with the same seriousness as their male counterparts. (p.301)

Take Nadia Boulanger, for example. According to Rinehart (2013), Boulanger is considered to be the "greatest composition instructor of the twentieth century," but even with that notoriety, "her own works are inexplicably neglected outright" (p. 127). Another example is Fanny Mendelssohn, who was the beloved sister of the famous composer Felix Mendelssohn. Fanny was equally as talented as her brother but "was forbidden from pursuing a career as a composer because she was a woman" (p. 127). Rinehart also asserts that Felix even published some of Fanny's works under his name. These are just a few examples of some of the injustices women have faced in music. Rinehart further asserts that women composers tend to be "overlooked and

neglected"; to be "forgotten completely"; to become "esoteric in the extreme"; or to become "overwritten by a man" (p. 128).

Gendered norms stem from heterosexual conventions across cultures and societies (Butler, 1990). The stereotypes and gender biases that women face as a result from these gendered norms, unfortunately, are more common than people realize. According to Brannon (2010), gender stereotypes are used to represent attitudes, attributes, interests, and beliefs about masculinity and femininity. This stereotyping includes the assignment of certain psychological traits, physical qualities, personality characteristics, and types of activities as "appropriate" for one or the other sex (Brannon, 2010). Gregori-Signes (2017) asserts that the "current gender stereotypes in Anglo-Saxon society go back to the Victorian era when the attributes of True Womanhood (1820–1860) (i.e., piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity) were thought to bring happiness to women" (p. 24). In history, we have seen women march and demonstrate on important issues such as voting rights, equal-pay, and sexual harassment in the workplace. However, women continue to face a number of barriers from stereotypes and biases in their respective environments daily. Those barriers are sometimes present in creative spaces, including the performing arts. Women composers are among the demographic of women who deal with discrimination related to their work being programmed and/or published.

This leads into the highly debated issue of the label "woman composer" and its potential to deter women from pursuing careers in composition. Boeckman (2019) argues that composers want "to be judged on [their work's] merit and to be treated equally and without discrimination (positive or negative)" (p. 46). The concern is that the word "female" or "woman" before "composer" becomes an automatic qualifier for "othering" women composers and diminishing them relative to their male counterparts (Citron, 1993, p. 87). Marcia Citron (1993)

acknowledges the impact of recent research on women composers but asserts that "women's compositions still occupy a marginal position in relation to the canon" (p. 4).

Dichotomies present a number of problems due to their exclusionary nature and the polarizing ideas that they elicit, both subconsciously and consciously (Code, 1991). The label of composer vs. woman composer is an example of such a dichotomy. This divisional way of thinking follows the Aristotelian idea of the opposition of terms, in which "everything has to be either A or Not-A" (Code, 1991, p. 29). Code argues that, ultimately, this renders the connection between the labels logically impossible (Code, 1991); therefore, any label in front of composer, such as Black composer or woman composer, can add an unintentional distinction. The concern comes when these distinctions are used as "instruments of oppression and social control" (Code, 1991, p. 29).

Women composers and their music battle stereotyping, which is filled with vocabulary associated with femininity and tied to gendering in music that is not experienced by male composers (Legg, 2010). This "linguistic gendering" (p. 142) is evident in the frequent use of words like "pretty" or "delicate" in the descriptions of music composed by women. According to Lucy Green (1997), conditioned, societal views on masculinity and femininity emerge when analyzing works by women. In music education settings, the bias against women composers is perpetuated if women composers are not introduced into the classroom. Beethoven, Mozart, Bach are normally included in the curriculum and repertoire as the standards, but, by focusing only on male composers, "music education risks indirectly discriminating against girls by denying them role models" (Legg, 2010, p. 144). Aside from music historians tackling the issue of introducing more women composers into the canon in university and concert hall settings, the problem still remains in secondary education where children are the most impressionable (Legg,

2010). While learning the names of women composers and their works are important, it is equally important to understand how societal barriers and influences have impacted women's careers as composers (Scott & Harrassowitz, 2004).

Music has been described as a "dynamic mode of gender" (Taylor, 2012) that can be further contextualized with "gender, race and ethnicity" (Treitler, 2011). According to Green (1997), there's a direct association between the gendered and inherent meaning of a piece and the gender of the composer – "music can delineate a notion of femininity or masculinity owing to the gender of the composer" (p. 131). Sergeant and Himonides (2016) interpret Green's statement by acknowledging that the "narratives of compositions by women composers impart information that is qualitatively different from those that characterize the narratives of male composers" (p. 3).

Citron (1993) questions whether there is a female style in music that is associated with being a woman composer and, if so, how it is different from the voice of a male composer. As Sergeant & Himonides (2016) express,

> If the information conveyed by musical compositions can be considered to be gendered, this indicates a belief that gestures and structures employed within a composition possess to be characteristic of either the masculine or feminine directions of gender. (p. 4)

Literature Surrounding the Black Woman Composer

The experience of the Black woman composer poses a complex problem for researchers, the general public, and Black women composers at large. Lettie Beckon Alston, a Black woman composer, reflected on being in a male-dominated field, saying, "I can't relate to a black woman's experience because I don't know what that would be in music," (Banfield, 2003, p. 283). Black women composers are a marginalized part of the already widened marginalization

between Black composers, women composers, and non-Black composers. The overlap of race and gender in their situations disadvantages them more within an already challenging and majority-dominated field. Williams, Williams, Wilson and Matthewson (1977), however, believe that Black women's studies programs have created an awareness of Black women, which includes Black women composers, whose contributions to history have been forgotten or ignored. Helen Walker-Hill (2002) expressed the following:

> As females who are African Americans, these composers have been overlooked as a category because women composers are presumed to be white and African Americans are thought of as male. They are members of not one but two groups whose ability to write serious music was long denied by the dominant culture. (p. xiv)

Just as Black people are not monolithic, neither are Black women composers. There is a wealth of diversity among Black women composers, who write in all genres, in an array of styles, and for all instruments and areas of music performance. According to Walker-Hill (2002), "in the music of black women composers it is not uncommon to hear European classical or even sixteenth-century techniques combined with serialism, atonality, Asian or Afro-American idioms" and many other mediums (p. 39).

The Black church, a staple and symbol within the Black community, has played an important role in nurturing Black women composers (Walker-Hill, 1992). They have utilized and grown from the opportunity of being connected to what Kernodle (2014) has dubbed "the trinity of church, home and community" (p. 33). According to Walker-Hill (1992), musical associations and public schools have also played roles in the development of some Black women composers based in Chicago. Black women composers leaning into the support of their communities exhibit the seeking for a place to be supported, especially in their compositional pursuits. Research

suggests that there is more documented publishing of vocal and choral music than there is instrumental music by Black women composers (Williams et al., 1977). More than likely, this is a result of Black women composers finding more opportunities to have their music performed in vocal/choral settings than in orchestra or chamber ensemble settings (Williams et al., 1977). While there is documented effort, the cataloguing and preservation of works by Black women composers is relatively minimal. Williams et al. (1977) argues that some compositions are not easily accessible due to the fact that "music publishers have discontinued printing many of the works, and some of the music companies have merged, folded, or moved" (p. 162). Walker-Hill (2002) found, for example, that while Undine Smith Moore has over 100 compositions in her catalog representing a variety in instrumentation and voices, only about 26 of those works have been published and printed. In addition, "since her death eight works have been either reprinted or published for the first time…" (p. 65).

An additional publishing issue is demonstrated by the situation of Julia Perry, another Black woman composer. Perry preferred publication over archiving and attempted to publish several pieces prior to her death (Walker-Hill, 2002). However, the publishing house "replied that they were too busy doing inventory and thanked her for her patience" (p. 106). Perry passed away about a month after this correspondence and no measures were implemented to save her music. Walker-Hill notes that, as a result of this, "by the 1990s many [of her] works were gone" (p. 106).

The literature presented here provides relative and intersecting insight into gender and racial discrimination against Black women composers. These conscious and unconscious systems contribute to the patterns of suppression, which result in omission (Collins, 2009).

Eileen Strempel (2008) had the following to say about the disproportionate programming of compositions by women of color:

> Shockingly, only one percent of the works played by symphony orchestras were by women, and this appalling statistic further shrinks with the addition of the modifier "living" and moves to statistically insignificant if one is looking to find compositions of women of color. (p. 169)

Compositional methods and historical data remain of interest to researchers. Beasley (2021) focused on analyzing the "musical multiplicities," or intersections, that women composers face within their careers and highlighted the lives of four women composers, one of them being Florence Price. Disparities within the field of composition in terms of race and gender, and the impact they have on compositional output and programming has also been explored (Bowman, 2020; Joyner, 2020; Callam, 2020; Lynch, 2020; Robbins, 2019). In addition, there has been an array of studies that focus specifically on Black women composers: Mary Lou Williams (Capizzi, 2020; Hsieh, 2019), Margaret Bonds (Martin, 2019; Hsieh, 2019; Jobson, 2019), Eva Jessye (Black, 1986), Zenobia Powell Perry (Pool, 2002), Eurydice Osterman (Clay, 2006), Jacqueline Hairston (Harris, 2018) Florence Price (Holzer, 1995; Miller-Williams, 1998), and many others. While these studies are valuable contributions to historical methods and compositional analyses, which are critical to challenging systems that maintain the standardized canon, there still remains minimal research that focuses on the lived experiences of Black women composers and examines the impact of race and gender on their careers.

Advocacy for BWC and other marginalized composers will only be strengthened with contextual analysis. This study aims to help fill to that knowledge gap and highlight those factors

that contribute to their marginalization. This knowledge is critical to understanding the plight of Black women composers. Their experiences with and thoughts about these barriers are at the center of the study, encouraging further inquiry about bias in other musical mediums. Continued investigation can provide additional insight as well as and influence music histories, repertoire selections, curriculum, publishing contracts, concert hall programs, and so many other areas of musical life to be more inclusive of Black women composers.

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the lived experiences of Black women composers. The mission is tied to the following, expressed by Botstein (2016):

> It is an example of complacency and of the failure to be the self-critical scholars, teachers, and performers we claim to be. Simply to express outrage as fellow human beings and citizens, without any attempt to link what we do with the advancement of some construct of social justice, would have been not only enough but far more honest and defensible. If we really believe that there is a link, then let's take on the task of forging it, with urgency and seriousness, with our hearts and minds fully cognizant of the failures of the past. (pp. 284-285)

This chapter provided a survey of existing literature and highlighted the gap in scholarship that supported the need for this dissertation, whose approach and purpose was different than those that focused on historical and musical analyses of works of Black women composers. By considering the marginalization of Black women composers in the field of music and examining the context behind that marginalization, this study aimed to understand and reveal the oppressive systems that seem to threaten their existence as composers.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses my research questions, methodology, and conceptual framework. It addresses the study's design, participant sampling rationale, and data collection methods, and concludes with a statement on the researcher's role. The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of Black women composers in order to better understand the roles of race and gender on their careers. Additionally, it aimed to investigate how Black women composers with those experiences navigate knowledge, opportunity and visibility to challenge their marginalization in composition. There is minimal, empirical research on Black women composers, so this study aimed to contribute knowledge and critical interpretation to the gap in contextual information so that music educators and conductors can utilize it in their pedagogy and performance practices.

The following chapter includes the research questions, a discussion of the conceptual framework, participants, and concludes with a statement on the researcher's role.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do Black women composers describe their understandings of the identities of race and gender on their careers?
2. How do Black women composers navigate knowledge, opportunity, and visibility in a field where they have been traditionally marginalized?

Qualitative research was selected in order to further investigate these experiences. According to Pacho (2015), qualitative research seeks "a better understanding of complex situations," and is "often exploratory in nature" (p. 44). Qualitative research also relies on the specialized analysis of the "social experience that reflects everyday experience" (p. 44). In qualitative inquiry, the

researcher can utilize sensitivity where they will be able to deduce deeper meaning and interpretations resulting from the participants actions and dialogue (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

The case study approach was used in order to explore the "how" and "why" of the impact of race and gender on the lived experiences of Black women composers. While the topic may seem broad, case study was appropriate due to the level of inquiry and the fact that it encompasses a relatively small group (Yin, 2018). Two research questions were articulated in order to accurately identify helpful information that applied specifically to the case (Yin, 2018). The research questions and conceptual framework allowed the study to be bound and remain within reasonable limits (Yin, 2018).

Research Design and Rationale

Examining the lived experiences of Black women composers provides insight into whether standardized music performance and pedagogical practices that are dominated by longstanding traditions, conditioning, and norms in Western culture need to be changed. The literature indicates a wide range of qualitative inquiry within music education exploring an array of topics, including issues of diversity, gendering, identity, etc.: autoethnography (Shevock, 2016; Manovski, 2014), narratology (Stauffer & Barrett, 2009; McCarthy, 2007; Palkki, 2020; Allsup, 2003; Haywood, 2006; Westerlund, 2020; Madsen, 2019), phenomenology (Joubert & Van der Merwe, 2019; Crawford, 2019; Burland & Davidson, 2002; Oakland et al., 2014; Sweet & Parker, 2018), and ethnography (Sutela et al., 2017; Palkki, 2020).

Shevock (2016) utilized autoethnography to critique music education as a social institution and was guided by the intersections of rurality, Whiteness, and poverty and their impact on a career in music education. McCarthy (2007) selected narratology to highlight the unique lived experiences of students and teachers with music in a classroom setting. Crawford

(2019) used phenomenology to examine past and present experiences of students and teachers combining music and digital technology. Within ethnography, Palkki's 2019 study also used narrative techniques to highlight the journeys of three LGBTQA students in highs chool choral programs. These are only a few examples that demonstrate the importance of qualitative inquiry into these topics in music education. Research conducted on the lived experiences of Black women composers, however, is minimal, and what does exist fails to address the impact of race and gender on the careers of these individuals. Case study is crucial to understanding this particular phenomenon, as it retains a "holistic and real-world perspective" (p. 43). Case study research is suggested over others when:

1. your main research questions are "how" or "why" questions,
2. you have little or no control over behavioral events, and
3. your focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon—a "case." (Yin, 2018, pp. 39-40)

This particular approach afforded a two-fold opportunity for investigating the specified case and exploring the outcome of that investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The bounded case for this intended study was the lived experience of Black women composers. As stated in chapter 1, the case was bounded by the qualifications (Yin, 2018) of the participants identifying as "Black," "woman" and "composer," as well as their direct contribution to the exploration of the case.

Furthermore, this study addressed the initial inquiry into the "how" and "why" race and gender impact their experiences as composers. As such, an exploratory case study design was chosen because of the minimal amount of current literature on the specific subject matter and the desire to explore the experiences of Black women composers within the field of music composition specifically. Yin (2002) posits that the case study is directed and influenced by

previously developed theories. Therefore, this study was guided by the combined framework of Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Counterspaces in order to fully address and expose the "how" and "why" of the lived experiences of Black women composers.

Women's voices and the validation of women's experiences are central to the feminist qualitative research enterprise (Kitzinger, 2004). Feminist social scientists have argued that "men define reality on their own terms to legitimate their experience, their own particular version of events, while women's experience, not fitting the male model, is trivialized, denied or distorted" (p.113). There is value in analyzing data from living, Black women composers and letting these women speak about their own experiences. There is value in listening to a person narrate their life experience (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2011). The woman's experience, as told by her, is the way that she knows life and her place in it. As Johnson-Bailey (2004) explains, the personal and private storytelling of women's histories has typically been discounted due to Western society upholding and prioritizing the validity of findings from scientific and systematic procedures (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). This sort of bias suggests that any data that is "collected using a different lens and presented in a different voice claiming multiple realities, is suspect" (p. 125). Therefore, it is important that each story, collection of data, and analytical process must be equally balanced (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Women are the keepers of knowledge within their cultures and are able to express that knowledge to advance collective efforts due to their acute awareness within their communities and societies (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Women are equipped with the intuition that allows them to draw connections between elements in life (Fuller, 2013). It is this same intuition that allows Black women composers to draw the necessary connections from their lived experiences to maneuver through the field of composition.

The use of BFT in this proposed study was critical to the centering of "Black women's lived experiences" and aiming "to better those experiences in some fashion" (Collins, 2009, p.35). While utilizing specific knowledge that explores certain themes of a particular space, enclosed within BFT is also a broadened knowledge that assists Black women to "survive in, cope with, and resist our differential treatment" (p. 35). This social theory is critical to understanding and helping in the battle Black women face with the intersecting oppressions of race and gender (Collins, 2009). This study aimed to address the "different institutional location" referred to by Collins in the following statement:

> It remains to be seen whether the specialized thought generated by contemporary Black feminist thinkers in very different institutional locations is capable of creating safe spaces that will carry African-American women even further (p. 122)

Employing Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009) as part of the conceptual framework afforded the opportunity to closely examine the lived experiences of Black women composers. According to Johnson (2015), there has been minimal "examination of the damage [race and gender discrimination] has caused on the lives and on the minds of black women" (p. 4). Johnson asserts that Black Feminist knowledge is greatly needed in order to fill the spaces outside of academia. The contribution of this study is situated in the gap that encompasses the academic fields of music and music education.

The Bennett et al. (2019) qualitative study examines the intersectionality of gender and age among women composers around the world, focusing on nationality and not race. Their findings "highlight the persistent marginalization of female composers, as a result of which the female gender is viewed as a career disadvantage" (Bennett et al., 2019, p. 20). While the information is valuable, the study does not create room for the marginalized voices to be heard.

Centering the Black woman's experience within composition provided an opportunity to analyze how "Black women's life experiences are different from those of black men and white women…" (Curtis, 2017, p.94), in this particular discipline.

Crystallization was the selected methodological framework for this study. Crystallization offered flexibility, as it is open to multiple forms of analysis and data representation (Ellingson, 2009). Moreover, in my desire to avoid being boxed in when describing the data, this adaptive perspective allowed me to use Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009) and Counterspaces (Case & Hunter, 2012) as the conceptual framework. The experiences of Black women are unique (Collins, 2009), and this framework affirms the experiences of Black women composers as equally unique through a lens that is social and musical. Crystallization embraces diverse and distinctive expressions in data and thus promotes social justice (Ellingson, 2009), and this was deemed essential for this exploratory inquiry into the lived experiences of Black women composers. Instead of aiming to find a definitive truth that is associated with triangulation (Ellingson, 2009), crystallization embraces the mosaic, the multiple truths, of the lived experience of Black women composers. This process is discussed further in the Analysis portion of this chapter.

Conceptual Framework

The grounding of the study within Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Counterspaces as a conceptual framework assisted in better understanding these individuals' experiences. Intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2016) would have been an appropriate tool for understanding and gaining "access to the complexity of the world and themselves" (p. 2) within composition. However, it is important to note that certain frameworks were created for Black women in order to specifically analyze the discriminations they face and continue to face. While the main tenets

of intersectionality focus on social inequality, power relations, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice (Collins & Bilge, 2016), BFT and Counterspaces were combined as a conceptual framework in order to more appropriately, focus and analyze the experiences of Black women composers within a marginalized field.

Famed author and activist Audre Lorde insisted that those who have intersecting qualifiers of race, gender, class, etc., recognize that “survival is not an academic skill” (Lorde, 1979, p. 112). In this study, BFT was used to highlight the marginalization experienced by Black women composers. The following distinguishing features of BFT were critical to the foundation of the study (Collins, 2009):

1. Black women encompass an oppressed group within the U.S.
2. While some experiences are common, Black women’s individual experiences are unique and vary.
3. Individual positions can contribute to a collective experience and foster activism.
4. There are essential contributions from BFT intellectuals from varying disciplines.
5. Importance of change.
6. Advocates for social justice.

For this study, I applied the features of BFT tenets 2, 4, and 5. The development of BFT encourages the need for exploring its expression in other areas where Black women may not be recognized as intellectuals (Collins, 2009). Musicians and other artists fit the description emerging Black women intellectuals (Collins, 2009). Angela Davis (1989) asserts that “art is special because of its ability to influence feelings as well as knowledge” (p. 200). The music of Black women composers is an essential contribution to Davis’s idea of art. The following

reasons support that idea that Black women intellectuals as musicians are central to the fourth tenet of BFT:

1. Our experiences as African-American women provide us with a unique angle of vision.
2. Black women intellectuals both inside and outside the academy are less likely to walk away from Black women's struggles when the obstacles seem overwhelming or when the rewards for staying diminish.
3. Black women intellectuals from all walks of life must aggressively push the theme of self-definition because speaking for oneself and crafting one's own agenda is essential to empowerment.
4. Black women intellectuals are central in the production of Black feminist thought because we alone can foster the group autonomy that fosters effective coalitions with other groups. (Collins, 2009, p. 39)

Black women are more likely to have insight into the oppression within a structure than those on the outside (Collins, 2009). Black women's insight into oppression is analogous to the insight Black women composers would have within the world of composition.

Solorzano et al. (2000) used Counterspaces to explore Black women's experiences at the collegiate level, acknowledging a need for a space where "deficit notions of people of color can be challenged" (p. 70). Collins (2009) also asserts that if a Black woman is "lucky enough to meet others who are undergoing similar journeys, she and they can change the world around them" (p. xi). This was exhibited in the focus group portion of the study and will be shared in chapters 4 and 5.

Understanding the journey of Black women composers is critical to fully understanding how the intersecting oppressions related to race and gender impacts their careers as composers. As Collins (2009) explains,

> Identity is not the goal but rather the point of departure in the process of self-definition. In this process Black women journey toward an understanding of how our personal lives have been fundamentally shaped by intersecting oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, and class. (p. 125)

Participants

This study's target sample was comprised of participants who identified as "Black," "woman," and "composer." An application was submitted for the study and approved by the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Purposive sampling was used to select ten Black women composers who would "yield the most relevant and plentiful data" (Yin, 2015, p. 93). Thirty-three composers were contacted with a recruitment email. An initial sample of eight participants was proposed. Twelve participants responded to the email invitation to participate in the study and ten ultimately proceeded with the study. Nine of the ten participated in the focus group portion in addition to the individual interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary that the participants have internet access in order to participate in the study. This is supported with Patton's criterion sampling (Patton, 1990).

Purposive sampling has been utilized in other studies in music and music education (Pelayo et al., 2015; Girdzijauskiene, 2015; Stafford-Davis, 2011; Rimkute-Jankuviene, 2013; Rachel & Dobreski, 2019), which suggests that it is an effective tool for examining an ideal population. According to Patton (1990), "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (p. 169). Having ten participants for the

study aligned with the common sample size for qualitative research (Schoch, 2020), as well as the “information-rich” cases described by Patton (1990).

The Collection is an educational resource that features an online directory of living Black composers. It was from this database that the initial contact list for this study was generated. Composers were selected who are in the United States, identify as a woman and had an active website. An IRB approved recruitment email was sent, inviting the composers to participate in the study based on the length of their professional careers, as well as having music published and performed. Having their music published means that their music is available in print and/or electronically, whether self-published or by a major publishing house. Having their music performed means that there is audio and/or visual documentation of their music available. Thirty-three composers were emailed. The initial sample goal for the study was six participants. However, twelve composers responded to the invitation and ten ultimately opted to participate in the study. The composers’ professional careers span a variety of mediums, including and not limited to the following: film scores, vocal and choral works, symphonic writing, electronic music, band, and percussion, etc. Their creative output also covers a wide array of genres that include and are not limited to classical, jazz, gospel and many more. The age distribution of the composers-participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Age Ranges

Age Range	# of Participants
20 – 30	3
31 – 40	1
41 – 50	2
51 – 60	2
61+	2

My Role as the Researcher

I am a Black woman scholar within music education; I am also an emerging, Black woman composer. I believed that I would recognize similar experiences from my participants with my own educational and professional background. Collins (2009) asserts that our experiences as Black women "provide us with a unique angle of vision concerning Black womanhood… should we choose to embrace it" (p. 39). In alignment with the activism expressed in BFT, this study afforded an opportunity to hear directly from a group whose voices have been marginalized. Systemic barriers that create advantages for the dominant culture are not always visible (Bradley, 2007). Similar invisible systems exist within composition, making it difficult for Black women composers to be known, to be visible, and to have opportunities. My own experience as a Black woman composer assisted in my reflection on these intricate details and fueled the desire to pursue this unique study. The participants' definitions of themselves, as well as their own perceptions of their success, were important considerations in this study's

framework, because “Black feminist thought cannot challenge intersecting oppressions without empowering African-American women” (Collins, 2009, p. 40).

Data Collection and Procedures

Yazan (2015) suggests a Merriam assumption for qualitative research, saying that the “primary interest of qualitative researchers is to understand the meaning or knowledge constructed by people” (p. 137). Data collection included in-depth interviews, as well as virtual focus group dialogues. These data collection techniques afforded the opportunity to focus on the individual experiences of the participants and how they view themselves in the world as Black women composers. According to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), “Many Black women rely on each other – sister circles made up of friends, mothers, siblings, cousins – as a way of staying connected with and affirming themselves” (p. 82).

Johnson-Bailey (1999) describes qualitative research interviewing as “dynamic and ever changing” (p. 668) due to each situation being different. Yin (2018) suggests for multiple sources of evidence for case study. Therefore, each of the ten composers participated in a semi-structured, individual interview and nine participated in the focus group portion. Each focus group had 3 participants. Bearman (2019) suggests that “the open-ended questions from a semi-structured interview can be “effective” and “generate rich, thick description” (p. 4). This allowed the researcher flexibility to decide on what areas to focus on while the interview was in progress (Bearman, 2019). All interviews and focus group meetings took place via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to protect confidentiality in the focus group, the names of the participants were changed to their first initial upon entering the Zoom call by the researcher. Cameras were turned on during the interviews to allow for more connectivity amongst the participants. It is interesting to note that only one of the participants from one of the focus groups

recognized her other group members and participants. Those other participants, as well as other participants from other groups did not recognize anyone. Each group was gently reminded to protect the confidence of the other participants by not sharing any of the discussions outside of the group (see Table 2). All interviews and focus group data were recorded (video and audio) and stored on a password-protected computer. At the conclusion of the data collection period, all of the text from the interviews and focus group conversations was transcribed by the researcher. An opportunity to check and approve the interview transcripts was offered to the participants so they could clarify anything they shared before analysis commenced. Two participants responded with edits: one requested the censorship of her religion and the other provided edits for accurate representation.

Table 2

Interview and Focus Group Information

Participant	Data Type	Date	Time
Olivia	Individual Interview	March 22, 2021	42 minutes
	Focus Group B	April 2, 2021	30 minutes
Sunny	Individual Interview	March 23, 2021	31 minutes
	Focus Group A	March 31, 2021	49 minutes
Trisha	Individual Interview	March 24, 2021	55 minutes
	Focus Group A	March 31, 2021	49 minutes
Fiona	Individual Interview	March 24, 2021	27 minutes
	Focus Group B	April 2, 2021	30 minutes
Felicity	Individual Interview	March 24, 2021	35 minutes
Skylar	Individual Interview	March 26, 2021	26 minutes

	Focus Group B	April 2, 2021	30 minutes
Savannah	Individual Interview	March 26, 2021	47 minutes
	Focus Group C	April 2, 2021	1 hr. 6 min
Eve	Individual Interview	March 26, 2021	26 minutes
	Focus Group A	March 31, 2021	49 minutes
Nina	Individual Interview	March 29, 2021	47 minutes
	Focus Group C	April 2, 2021	1 hr. 6 min
Tara	Individual Interview	March 29, 2021	33 minutes
	Focus Group C	April 2, 2021	1 hr. 6 min

The focus group interview presented an opportunity for participants to have a wide range of discussions about experiences, issues, and ideas that may not have surfaced in their individual interviews (Hennink, 2014). Collins asserts that "self-definition is key to individual and group empowerment" (p. 40). There was value and power in bringing these women together (Collins, 2009). Having fewer than six participants in the study would not present sufficient diversity in the data (Hennink, 2014); however, having ten participate in the individual interviews and nine participate in the focus group portion presented data in a wealth of content in a very diverse way. Group homogeneity was achieved due to the women's shared experience of being Black women composers. There were three focus groups, labeled A, B and C with three participants in each group. Only the first initial of the participants' names were displayed in order to protect their identities. According to Hennink, having a shared experience "often creates a strong shared

identity among the participants" (p. 39). As Evans-Winters (2019) explains, the importance of creating a "safe space" within the study is critical to the fostering of memory work within oral and written spaces. The idea of Counterspaces added an additional layer of support for the creation of a safe space. Case and Hunter (2012) express the following:

> We argue that counterspaces can be thought of as settings, which promote positive self-concepts among marginalized individuals (e.g., racial and sexual minority individuals, persons with disabilities, etc.) through the challenging of deficit-oriented dominant cultural narratives and representations concerning these individuals. (p. 261)

Furthermore, there are three main challenging processes that occur within counterspaces regarding marginalized groups and systems of oppression, as expressed by Case & Hunter (2012), that were likely to be present: "narrative identity work, acts of resistance and direct relational transactions" (p. 262).

For the written analysis presented later in chapter 4, pseudonyms have been assigned to the women in order to protect their identities and maintain the personal feel of the data being analyzed (see Table 1). Due to the minimal information that is available on living Black women composers and to further protect their identities, their locations, ages and compositional focuses will also not be shared.

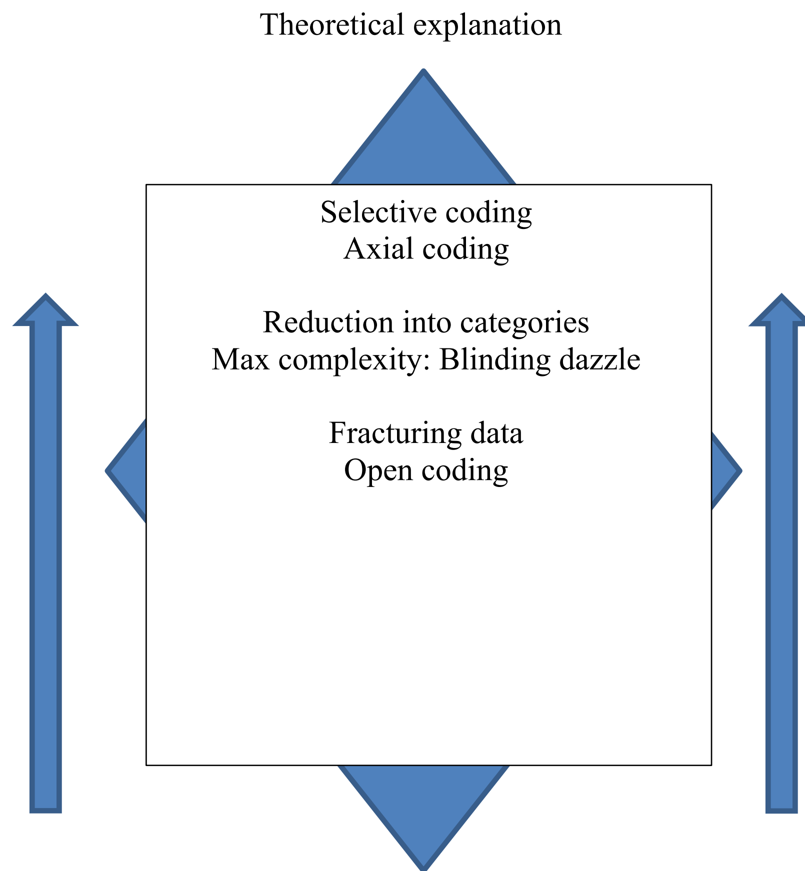
Data Analysis

Grounded theory is a common way to analyze qualitative data so that themes, patterns, and/or categories can be deduced (Ellingson, 2009). Yin (2018) recommends the strategy of working with. the data from the "ground up" when analyzing a case study. The application of grounded theory in this study allowed me to contextualize the participants' experiences (Ellingson, 2009)

while engaging the combined conceptual framework of BFT and counterspaces. To accomplish this, I used the Diamond Model process to code the data (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Diamond Model



Data collection involved gathering information from individual interviews and focus groups. After the transcribed data was approved by the participants, it was imported to Atlas.ti for further analysis. Open coding was the first initial pass through the data that allowed me to break up or "fracture" the data into "codes." I accomplished this by highlighting broad concepts that were embedded in the participant's responses to interview questions. For example, take the following

quote from Trisha as she described in her individual interview what her experience was like as a composition student:

> Oh, it initiated with faculty because the faculty in general was so racist. And it was a small student body, so believe it or not the other students…okay, well you take on the mores of your parents. You take on the mores of your role model or those people that you think are most valuable to your development. So, it got a few of the students. I actually heard people say words like "what she doing here" / "how is she going to the…?" But they're not used to just learning for the sake of learning. Then the other thing is "oh wow, how is she paying for this?

I highlighted this experience within the "Issues with Racism/Sexism" code because Trisha explaied that the racism was first experienced from faculty before she experienced it from her peers. According to Trisha, it was the faculty that set the tone for how to treat her and how to interact with her. The sub-code for this was "Problems in Academia - Student" due to the fact that she experienced this during her tenure as a composition student.

Then I began to group the codes into categories through axial coding. This required me to read the data extensively in order to organize it. This allowed me to find connections among the codes that were created and to reconfigure and consolidate. As a result, codes that were similar in meaning or objective were merged together. The following is a comprehensive list of the final codes and their frequency: combating ageism (2), realizing the importance of online databases (6), the importance of advocacy (8), having allyship from "outsiders" (10), the power of "we" for Black women composers (11), having creative freedom (11), combating publishing problems (12), dealing with society's racial opportunism (12), self-doubt (16), having concerns of tokenism (17), being a music major (20), having a musical family (24), possessing the grit to

“do-it-yourself” (26), having mentorship and being encouraged (31), networking (37), being drawn to your destiny (38), having minimal exposure to other Black women composers (49), having historical awareness (50), journeying through self-discovery (53), defining a Black woman composer (58), self-empowerment (65) and issues with racism and sexism (77). These issues are all part of the lived experiences of Black women composers.

Selective coding was the final step in organizing and presenting the data to address the study’s research questions. The codes previously presented were then grouped into categories which ultimately led to themes being derived through the relation of the conceptual framework (Table 3).

Crystallization is geared towardspushing the limits on traditional methods and analysis of data in order to embrace creativity (Ellingson, 2009). This allows the researcher to combine methods and tools as necessary in a way that best represents their work (Ellingson, 2009). Therefore, “daughtering rituals” (Evans-Winters, 2019) were also used as a guide in order to let the analysis process breathe, while still maintaining connection to the Black woman experience. Daughtering is a methodology that affords space within academia for the understanding of informing of worldviews based on Black womanhood (Evans-Winters, 2019). This unique methodology affirms the Black woman/daughter as knowledgeable and spiritually connected, and it challenges her to be responsible for other Black women/daughters (Evans-Winters, 2019). Daughtering also reminds the researcher to acknowledge the vulnerability of Black women/daughters and to center their resilience in the analysis process (Evans-Winters, 2019). The rituals afforded me an opportunity to delve deeper into the data. The following is a journal entry from after a sunset walk, which was part of the ritual processing:

Saturday, May 8, 2021

I can't help but to feel overwhelmed by the amount of adversity experienced by these composers and how that outweighs the talent, the degrees and so much more. Shouldn't that be enough to validate their position in academia…in composition…in life? Black women composers constantly deal with outside struggles which in turn, jeopardize their self-esteem. They're fighting unseen battles. They're fighting their own doubts and questioning their sense of self in addition to questioning their musical gifts. Now some may say, "We all fight unseen battles." But do we? Does everyone constantly deal with disrespect from colleagues or classmates as a result of their race and/or gender? Do people question your talent because it doesn't make sense how the talent could be coming from ***you****? While that's happening, are you constantly realizing and evaluating the adversity from a historical lens? You justify and accept* **why** *things are happening to you the way they are because your ancestors' lineage paints the gruesome picture of what has been endured for centuries and so…that's just how it is.*

The line in the sand has been drawn. If anything, Black women composers found strength in their shared stories of hurt, thwarted accomplishments and blatant racism and sexism. While they were briefly unified by the wounds and bruises of some of their experiences, they saw each other beyond their pain. The focus groups breathed affirmation and power into the space through sistering. While tears flowed easily, they were wiped away with murmurings of love and empowerment. Their vulnerability allowed them to see each other. And they re-affirmed each other's gift as musicians. In fact, it was

Savannah who was adamant about this gift, this purpose in this life as composer. I remember her voice vividly, saying, "They will never take it from us. No one can. We rise in spite of."

Affirmations. The power of words. The power of spoken energy from someone you barely know who has an immense love for you because they see themselves in you. This realized strength among these women/daughters cultivated more conversations for coalitions, community and more safe spaces like the focus groups. They realized they were not alone. Who knew that there could be so much comfort…assurance…healing…empowerment….in knowing that they weren't "the only one."

The rituals guided the analysis process through a structured daily schedule from sunrise to sunset that combined journaling, walking outside, as well as a spiritual aspect in regard to connecting to the data. This highlighted the necessary components from the data that could be assessed for thematic material and assisted in the exploration of meaning around the investigated case (Saldaña, 2016). From coding to categories, the data was then interpreted through the conceptual framework where three themes emerged. (see Table 3).

Table 3

Associated Data Groups and Codes

Code	Sub-Code	Category	Relation to Conceptual Framework	Theme
Issues with Racism/ Sexism	- Academia as a student and/or faculty - Invalidation of work - Closed networks resulting in lack of	Adversity	The second tenet of BFT says that while some experiences are common, Black women's individual experiences are unique and vary. This would apply to the unique and varying experiences with racism and sexism. The second point for	Theme 1: Adversity played a major role in building BWC's resilience

	financial support - Minimal exposure		describing BFT Intellectuals also says that inside and outside of academy, Black women are less likely to walk away from struggles. This was demonstrated by most of the composers remaining in their programs or faculty positions in the midst of their experiences with racism and sexism.	
Historical Awareness	- Historical patterns - “Black on Black” - Me vs. historical and societal norms	Adversity	BFT shares that knowledge is also figuring out strategies for dealing with dominant culture and/or “how to get over” (p.38); Historical awareness is an integral part of BFT (Sojourner, Maya Angelou, Angela Davis, etc.)	
Music Performed/ Hired		Opportunity	BFT’s 4th tenet says that there are essential contributions from BFT Intellectuals (in this case, Black women composers); this affirms previous, present and future works and work to challenge oppressive systems (closed networks, blocked funding, etc.). Some composers challenged these systems by creating their own opportunities and included other marginalized composers in the process (Counterspaces) and fostering group autonomy (BFT)	Theme 2: BWC’s music has been a vessel for their opportunity and visibility within the field
Music Performed/ Hired		Visibility	BFT’s 4th tenet says that there are essential contributions from BFT	

			Intellectuals (in this case, Black women composers); this affirms previous, present and future works and work to challenge oppressive systems (music curriculums, publishing, etc.). Some composers would challenge these systems by "fostering effective coalitions" (through performances, suggesting others for publishing and programming, etc.) which is part of BFT	
Empowerment	- Having a voice (Music and the Person) - Power of "We" (Sistering)	Reclaiming Power	BFT Intellectuals from all walks of life, must aggressively push the theme of self-definition which is essential to empowerment. This category combined with the knowledge categories resulted in Theme 3.	Theme 3: Self-awareness was essential to knowing what it means to be a BWC
BWC Definition		Knowledge	Applies to BFT's strategy for dealing with the dominant culture by "knowing" and defining how they are Black women composers	
Self-Discovery/ Awareness		Knowledge	BFT's 5th tenet applies to the importance of change; in knowing themselves and being aware, they are equally aware of how the field needs to change	

Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) assert that in order to "empirically understand the dynamics" that could impact the experiences of Black women in education, researchers have to "embrace alternative methodologies beyond traditional positivist paradigms" (p.14). In hopes to better understand these experiences within the context of music composition, the resistance

narrative that stems from the utilization of counterspaces (Case & Hunter, 2012) centers the experiences of Black women composers in navigating marginalization within the field.

For case study research that involves data collection from multiple sources, Yin describes an ongoing process where the researcher interacts with the data. While most case study researchers utilize triangulation, it was determined that triangulation was not the appropriate methodological framework for this exploratory case study. Crystallization moves away from the rigid and conventional practices of data analysis and interpretation in order to embrace practices that can be considered artistic (Ellingson, 2009). Laurel Richardson (2000) had the following to say in regard to selecting crystallization over triangulation:

> I propose that the central image for "validity" for postmodern texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. s(Richardson, 2000, p. 934)

Several guidelines were used in order to effectively summarize and interpret the data (Yin, 2018) that aligned with the daughtering rituals. These interpretive methods focus on the written methods described by Berg (2004, 2008) through words, themes, and/or paragraphs from journaling (Yin, 2018). Atlas.ti software was used for further analysis in order to keep the code groupings organized. Reflections and journaling were also used for deeper analysis as advised and guided by daughtering rituals (see Table 4). As expected, some composers experienced difficulty when discussing some experiences. Most of these instances centered around the category of adversity, melding historical passages of their ancestors with their current lives.

As Winkle-Wagner (2009) observed in her study, some of the women saw "themselves as the same or changing through time – the past, present and future" (p. 190). She explained the usage of the technique in the following statement:

> If the women switched from first person to second or third person when talking about an emotional difficult issue such as racist experiences, this could indicate that they were trying to detach themselves from the issue at hand (shifting from a personal explanation to a more generalizable explanation). (p. 191)

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

The findings in this study illuminate lived experiences shared directly from the participants that hegemonize the collective experience of Black women composers within the marginalized field of composition. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black women composers describe their understanding of the identities of race and gender on their careers?
2. How do Black women composers navigate knowledge, opportunity and visibility in a field where they have been traditionally marginalized?

The following three themes emerged from the data:

1. Adversity played a major role in building Black women composers' resilience,
2. They identified music as being a vessel for their opportunity and visibility in the field,
3. Self-awareness was essential to realizing their identities as Black women composers.

These three themes emerged from five larger categories: Adversity, Knowledge, Visibility, Opportunity, and Reclaiming Power. The first theme emerged from experiences that correlated with their understanding of the roles of race and gender during specific moments in their lives. The second and third themes explored the navigation of knowledge, visibility, and opportunity by highlighting the necessity of programming/performance, as well as the power of self-definition within a marginalized field. Interview data has been used throughout in order to support the themes that emerged.

Theme 1: Adversity and Resilience

Adversity played a major role in building Black women composers's resilience. There's levels to this. That is the result of the roles of race and gender on the experience of Black women composers. While some societal expectations about what it means to be a composer have been

quiet or hidden as a result of racism and/or sexism, other expectations presented themselves through heinous and intentional treatment. Most of the adverse encounters the participants experienced were concentrated within academia, as a student and/or as a faculty member. These experiences included interactions with other students or faculty members. Ultimately, answering RQ1, the participants understood the identities of race and gender within academia as a reality check for what it means to be Black and to be a woman within composition. In order to grasp the fullness of their understanding of the roles of race and gender as related to their careers, I have identified a number of different adversities within academia, which I will explain using examples from the interview data. This will be followed by an explanation of three categories of "multifaceted understandings" of the race and gender identities.

Adversity within Academia in the 21st Century

Entering into a doctoral program, Trisha knew what to expect in terms of academic rigor, as well as what goal was to be accomplished. For her, it was about completing the degree and getting "the paper." However, she not expecting the added toll of combating racism and sexism.

> It took a lot of prayer. Not to do the work, but to get past the overt racism. It was stunning…Someone like me coming into the program and the first words I heard were "what is she doing here?" and "she's already got a career" – Oh yes, and they weren't quiet about it either. (Individual interview)

Trisha further explained how the impact of the faculty being racist inadvertently affected some of the students' interactions towards her.

> I actually heard people say things like "What she doing here?" and "How is she going to the…?" and "Oh wow, how is she paying for this?" (Individual interview)

She reasoned that the students were following the example set by the faculty and likened it to observing your parents or role models. She believed that the students were emulating the moirés exhibited in order to gain approval from the "people that you think are most valuable to your development."

In a different example, Sunny shared about her undergraduate experience with music composition juries and how challenging it was to decipher the faculty's feedback.

> They may have given constructive feedback, maybe two out of the six juries that I had with them. And I was like, I don't understand. I've been putting in all this work over this period of time and it felt like they were afraid to tell me what they actually thought of my work. (Individual interview)

After Sunny expressed her concern to one of her white male classmates, his response was that the faculty were not going to tell her what they really thought because she was a girl and that she had it easy. Although he did not mention anything about her race, Sunny still found the comment strange. It would continue to perplex her throughout the rest of her undergraduate experience:

> It was something to think about because they never got really real. And I wonder if it was because they were afraid that they would say something wrong, that I would use my blackness to get them in trouble, which I think is something that people fear. Like, they fear the consequences of being corrected especially when that correction is necessary. (Individual interview)

Challenging or correcting faculty when you are an undergraduate student is not an easy or comfortable thing to do. Fiona shared that she was one of two black women in her composition program. However, it was a challenge for the faculty members to acknowledge them by the correct name; they could not tell the girls apart. When asked if they looked alike, Fiona

responded, “No, not at all. She was shorter than me and had red hair. I didn’t wear glasses at the time and she wore glasses. So, completely different.”

In contrast to the lack of faculty input in Sunny’s case, Fiona relayed her classroom experience. “I felt like my presence wasn't wanted there,” she said. “When we would showcase our work, it would be more harshly critiqued than others.” She also said that she noticed similar treatment given to the other Black girl in the class. Fiona expounded that the critiques lacked a musical foundation and, rather, were focused, personal attacks.

> There was one student who would just say rap lyrics to me in my responses. Or there was another student who said I should gear my work more towards R&B and Hip-Hop and not explore the classical world. So, things like that that really stood out to me. Like oh, this is race-based. (Individual interview)

An additional race-based encounter occured in Fiona’s master’s degree program. In one of her performance juries, there was a professor present who was not her primary teacher, but who was assisting in the adjudication. She remembered walking into the room and hearing, “You look like Oprah! You look like a young Oprah!” Fiona is light-skinned and Oprah is brown-skinned. She remembers seeing beads of sweat on her primary teacher’s forehead in nervousness. Fiona could not believe that the other professor had made a comment like that right before she was about to perform. To quell the awkwardness of the moment, Fiona said, “Thank you… I guess I look like a legend.”

A different set of challenges was presented by the participants who were teaching at the collegiate level. Nina described in her individual interview how professional ventures and opportunities for performances of her compositions were thwarted by her superior. The statement that brought tears to her eyes happened during a meeting with other faculty members; her

superior said, “I know you've been trying to work on this piece… and have it performed at the last two years. And it's not going to happen on my watch unless God says it’s going to happen.” This was extremely hard for Nina to hear, especially because she was working at an HBCU (Historically Black College or University). Nina expressed that she also tried to be innovative in her work as a faculty member in the department and suggested an idea for a new ensemble. The department was in a transition phase in hiring another ensemble director and she thought it would be a good idea to have a new ensemble that would focus on premiering works by living composers. Nina even offered to serve as the conductor so that the feet of her other colleagues “wouldn’t get stepped on.” But the chair immediately denied her request and said, “You’re just trying to find a way to get your work performed.” The chair’s “no” was also accompanied by the inaccurate reasoning that Nina did not have any ensemble conducting experience, even though she used to conduct choir at the high school level. But that experience was not official enough for the department chair. This further confused Nina as she considered her colleagues in the department, who were, in fact, able to conduct ensembles within the department without having degrees in conducting. It was clear to Nina that the chair felt threatened by her being a composer because he was also a composer.

> I heard through various students, the things that he said about me – “She’s not a real composer. She doesn’t have her doctorate in composition.” (Individual interview)

Tara wanted to pursue composition and chose to apply for a master’s degree. She had won a composition competition and had received her first commission during her time as an undergraduate and thought the master’s degree would be a great opportunity to learn more and develop her skills. She was unfortunately rejected from the master’s composition program at one institution. Another institution also declined her acceptance into its composition program but

invited her to audition for the vocal performance program. She reluctantly accepted and greatly expressed that she greatly desired to study composition. They agreed that she could be admitted to the composition program on a probationary status, as an addition to her vocal major. Their justification for the probationary status was that she did not already have a degree in composition. Tara had a number of Negro spiritual arrangements, the inspiration for which she attributed to the musical exposure she had growing up and to attending an HBCU, and she showed them to her professor.

> I remember my composition teacher saying, "I saw your compositions…" And he either said they're 'cute' or 'sweet'…he definitely didn't take it seriously. And I felt that. (individual interview)

Understanding #1 – Historical Identity

Black women composers have leaned into history in order to understand their experience of being marginalized in a field and to maneuver the controlling influence of the dominant culture. For Trisha, the understanding of being Black and a woman has meant that there will always be obstacles. She recounted a number of different, racially-charged killings that have occurred between the year 2000 and the present day, lamenting that she could not believe we were still dealing with "this craziness." Tara then attached that perspective to her tumultuous trek through higher education.

> When I look at history like that, we haven't changed one bit. But I was not going to let their bigotry and their racism determine what I would or wouldn't achieve. If didn't do it, it's because I didn't want to do it…but if I want to do it, you're not gonna get in the way. (Individual interview)

Questions about the history and present state of racial issues, the potential progress and its impact on their identities surfaced among the participants in a focus group discussion. The following is an excerpt:

> Eve: Well, I think it hasn't gone anywhere. I feel like things kind of picked up, this is awful, but I think things kind picked up after George Floyd…
>
> Trisha: Of course!
>
> Eve: That's where I kind of, woke up.
>
> Trisha: I was waiting for somebody else other than me to say it!
>
> (Focus Group A)

Sistering moments like this occurred throughout the focus group discussions as the composers seemed extremely comfortable in affirming each other's thoughts and opinions. Trisha also expressed her opinion about recent events and the ties to other historical, Black women composers. She mentioned Florence Price, who is recognized as the first Black woman composer to have a work performed by an orchestra in the United States.

> There has been no change! If you look at every orchestra, every small ensemble in the world is doing Florence Price. Every white person trying to do a degree in Ethnomusicology is doing a book on Florence Price. Florence Price has been around. She's ***been*** around. But it's an opportunity now to build your career. It's an opportunity to take everything that's about "Black" right now. It'll be that for two or three more years and then we'll go back to total obscurity if we don't make ourselves visible. (Focus group interview)

Nina likened her experience with Black colleagues to that of an earlier Black woman composer.

> Well, that's no different from what Florence Price experienced back in the thirties from many black colleagues because of so many layers of racism against our own for so many,

> various reasons. And subconsciously, things are said and maybe they don't even realize it. Maybe they've never taken a step back to say, "Well, why am I doing this to her?" (individual interview)

Understanding #2 – Black on Black Community Identity

Resistance and rejection of Black women composers from men within the Black music community is attributed to a "gatekeeper" mentality and practice. According to Felicity, within the Black music community, that's how people identify it. This results in the perception of there not being enough space.

> It should be a free, open space. The mentality of it not being enough space, it's for all of us…acknowledging those around you that are doing the same thing as you or something like you and not feeling intimidated in any way. And not feeling like, that person is in my spot – there are so many spots. I think we're just so used to always seeing one or two, that people feel like there is a gate to be kept. There is no gate to be kept. (Individual interview)

Savannah understood the dynamic between Black men and Black women in the music community as one that is deeply rooted with historical ties:

> I think when it comes to the African-American male, they have made it further than we have in classical music. But to me, it still goes back to slavery and even the Civil Rights Movement. (Focus group interview)

She reiterated how the "Black man got the right to vote before the Black woman the same way the white man did before the white woman." She continued, asserting that these deep-rooted issues ultimately foster the sense of invisibility.

> We are not thought of. And when people don't think of you, it's not that they're trying to do something to you. You're not a thought. I don't think people get it. They're not trying to hurt me. They don't think of me. The visibility is not there because just as on the slave plantation, they're blind to us. And that includes our own brothers.

Savannah continued to share that "the tree is going to be as the root." She asserted that she is not referring to all Black men, but believed that "the root of our men, for the most part, was never taught to nurture the black woman" because "we've never belonged to our men." According to her, the psychological generational impact of the Black woman identity is part of the present-day treatment within the Black music community. Savannah further expressed that "we don't know why we do what we do, because we don't know our heritage. That too was stolen from us. It was stolen and so because of that, we became ashamed of it." Savannah applied this way of processing to Nina's plight among Black colleagues that was shared within the focus group. "They don't even know that they should be lifting her up," said Savannah in reference to Nina. "The black woman was always supposed to be beneath the Black man. So, when she comes in and she's doing what she's doing, they don't know why they can't say, 'Oh, sister, come on!' " Savannah turned to Nina, saying, "They're intimidated by you" because to them, 'you're supposed to be beneath me'… and all we do is keep getting wounded."

Understanding #3 – Internal Identity

Being a composer has always been a desire for Skylar. "I just happened to be, female," she said. "So, I know there are certain stereotypes that I have to overcome in order to be successful." Skylar shared that for most of her life, her identity was tied to being heavily religious and involved in her faith. However, she came to realize that someone would not be able to identify her that way in the public eye. "They don't see what your religion is. They just see

you as a Black woman. And unfortunately, they're going to project the stereotypes and limitations on to me that they see in the media." Fiona also agreed with the internal understanding of experiences. "I think it's part of being a black woman in the industry," she said. "That's something you're going to experience, unfortunately." A similar understanding was also acknowledged by Skylar, who said, "it is just a reality that I just kind of came to accept. I don't want to live in a world like that but I've become quite nihilistic. Like, this is as good as it's going to get… at least for me."

For Nina, some of those historical moments have turned musical. Her goal in composing works was to capture the essence of a particular moment in history or time with the hopes that audiences would focus more on the music and not on her being Black and a woman. According to Olivia, that's the challenge of understanding the combining the intersections of gender and race with being a composer. "What I do does not compute in the minds of a lot of people," she said, "because when they think of composers, they don't necessarily think of a woman and they don't necessarily think of a Black woman or African Americans."

Theme 2: Opportunity and Visibility

Black women's music was identified as a vessel for their opportunity and visibility within the field. The complication and complexity of having music performed surfaced in a variety of ways throughout the study. According to the participants, there are factors of invisibility and in-opportunity when it comes to the Black women composer due to social constructs. "I understand that when you think of composer, you generally think of a white male," said Eve. "When you're in school, those are the composers that you study and those are the composers that are taken seriously. Unfortunately, everybody else is kind of "other-ized." It's the danger of the "othering" of Black women composers that bothered Trisha:

> I have a bit of a problem with segregating and pulling black women composers out as a separate entity mostly because the composers that I know, including myself, who are composers of color, what we're looking for primarily is inclusion in the overall canon of whatever genre of music we tend to write.

Eve attributed the invisibility of Black women composers to the lack of visibility within the canon and the music education curriculum. She and Sunny had an exchange during their focus group:

> Eve: When you think of music education in general and building a curriculum, the fact that black composers are invisible, they're not a part of the curriculum. Growing up, I really did not see it. I did not see it at all. Just the fact that we're invisible is a problem. It needs to be like a regular part of the curriculum so that people…People should be used to seeing black composers, black female composers. It shouldn't be something special. It should just be a part of the repertoire. I don't know if I'm directly answering the question, but when I think of curriculum, that's a big problem. The fact that we're invisible and they only kind of pull us out in February. Growing up, I heard… like I was telling you the other day, I heard Scott Joplin and that was it. Just the fact that we're not visible is a problem.
>
> Sunny: Yeah, I wholeheartedly agree. I didn't have much awareness, if any, of black composers until I got to college. I think of the ones that I had learned about, maybe two or three of them were women like __________ and ____________. All of the information that I learned about these composers were either in like, a very, very specific section of music history. So, like the last one, like early 20th century on and it was also in a supplemental class that wasn't required at specifically about black perspectives in

classical music and jazz. Both of the classes were taught by a Black professor. But I mean, going to a music school within a large university, hardly anybody was black and of course, hardly any of the faculty were black. So of course they wouldn't have our best interests but also like our representation at the forefront of their mind. I still see black people being compartmentalized to Jazz. They are not given the full due, the respect they deserve as classical composers, as you know, media composers, all of the things. We're still seen only as essentially the creators of popular music and not a fully deserving all-encompassing part of the western classical tradition and it's trash to be frank. (Focus group interview)

Sunny shared that she did have some introduction to Black women composers in college, however, the range of the material was very minimal. The information was part of a supplemental course that was not required and was relegated to a specific portion of music history that covered Black perspectives on classical music and jazz. Even though the course was taught by a Black professor, Sunny was not impressed due to the university lacking diversity in both student and faculty metrics. Eve chimed back in with another realization.

> Growing up, and I thought about this last week…the fact that it shows how deeply white supremacy is ingrained in education… because I didn't notice that I didn't see any Black composers. I feel like I should have noticed that, looking back. The fact that I didn't, you know, as you're learning about different periods of music…the fact I don't see somebody reflected and that doesn't raise an alarm. I think it shows how ingrained white supremacy is in just overall education in general and who gets the spotlight. (Focus group interview)

That spotlight also came with being able to have music performed and programmed. But that involved having some semblance of consistency. "It would be nice if pieces that I've written live

beyond the premier," says Eve. "Because I notice a lot of the time, and this is just in general…they'll say the 'world premiere' and then it doesn't have a life after that. It just kind of disappears." Sunny agreed that it takes more to be inclusive.

> You have to continue building your roster and your rotation of composers so that we have an art that continues to live, to literally outlast us… so adding Black women intentionally and continually to that roster is imperative. We don't just have white people who exist in this world. There are so many different people of all genders, all nationalities, all races and ethnicities and in order to reflect the actual diversity that you see when you walk outside, you have to hire Black women. (Individual interview)

Creating Their Own Space

The fact that Black women composers have had minimal exposure in the mainstream and music education curriculum left some of the participants at certain memorable points in their lives, desiring for more information about Black women composers and their music. The composers shared how they pursued research on their own as a result of limited access to resources in education. Fiona found herself confused as she compared scores of Black women composers to that of earlier composers. She was perplexed because she often found them "equally as good" and was amazed that they were not included in the standard curriculum.

Felicity had the opportunity to perform some works by Black women composers, due to being at an HBCU. But even in doing so, little background information was shared. As she expressed, "I do wish there was more time to educate us on what we're singing and who's work this is… what her life was like, what her career was like." Instead, in Felicity's words, "It took me going and finding out on my own."

Felicity also shared that the first time she heard a program with music composed by a Black woman was at another student's recital. This performance sent her searching for more, and resulted in her finding other Black woman composers to study. But she was also confused about having not been exposed to them earlier.

> Why haven't I heard these names?! I'm just like, I have to study this music! All of my studies with them were on my own. (Individual interview)

The lack of performances of the music of these Black women composers fueled some participants to make themselves and their own music visible. Trisha found her opportunity after someone heard some of her music at an event and asked if she would be interested in a commission. After that, she was composing for weddings and other events. "I composed books of my music for the players to play instead of sending them with Pachelbel's Canon and all that usual wedding nonsense," Trisha said.

Olivia also saw the importance of having her music performed while she was in college and took the initiative to plan a concert.

> I got a group of people together who liked to compose. They were not Black; I was the only Black music major at the time. But we had an interest! And we were going to have a concert of women composers. So, we got together and found the music majors who were the top musicians at the school. We organized a concert of women composers. We had a flyer and that was my brainchild. (Individual interview)

Sunny also remembered taking the initiative when she was 13 years old and studying composition. Her mother found a composition competition where the winner would have a piece performed by the city's orchestra. Sunny had just started composition lessons with her teacher,

who suggested that she wait, since everything was still relatively new. But Sunny was not easily deterred.

> And so, with the help of my teacher and also the help of the internet, I learned how to write for all of these instruments, some of which I had never written for before, some of which I had never even heard of before…and I ended up winning the competition with like nine other people. I was the first woman, the first black woman…to win this award. I mean it wasn't shocking to me because I wasn't aware of how significant that was. I was just like, I'm doing what I enjoy and I'm getting recognized for that and that's really wonderful. (Individual interview)

Sunny went on to win the same composition a second time which she believes, allowed her to be on the radar for possible study in composition programs at neighboring institutions.

Trisha took the initiative to produce her own opera as her final project for the completion of her terminal degree. A major museum collaborated with her in the production of the sold-out performance. However, at least half of the committee was unwilling to accept the submission. "Well, the camera's on the opera," Trisha recalled one of the committee members saying; "We don't want to see the opera, we want the camera on her and her hands so we can see what she's doing." For Trisha, it was just another reminder for her that any work within academia can only be verified or validated if white people say it should be.

> What they said to me, was that my presence changed the architecture of their conversation. I said, "So you didn't plan on helping me get through this program, did you?" I said, "I understand that loud and clear"… And that was me not trying to be a Black composer. I'm just trying to work on these theories and present more. You know, I

didn't produce that thing in somebody's basement. A major, major, *major* museum produced it! Again, I think it was just a little too much for them to process, so here we go.

Trisha carried this same grit with her into her career, challenging the lack of visibility and opportunity head on by taking the onus of her visibility as a composer into her own hands. The number of her catalogued works is so high that she expressed the following.

I stopped count because I know at this point, I have at least two thousand pieces minimum and I'm sending them all over the place. I do my own publishing. I have my own engraver… So, I'm not going to have you tell me that my stuff is not good enough when people already are playing it. (Individual interview)

Trisha was set on doing things herself. "I just wasn't going to have anybody tell me that I wasn't good enough," she said. She also thinks that visibility and opportunity can happen if people work together. She creates those spaces through commissions.

I have commissioned all kinds of composers to create pieces for my group and it's not about money. It's about, I have an orchestra. Let's create pockets of visibility for people. I've done it for men, women, White, Latino, Black, whatever. We have to change our mindset in that we *know* we're being discriminated against. So, let''s not do it to each other. (Individual interview)

Trisha also understands that in order for people to have the desired outcome that comes with visibility and opportunity, some of us have to "build our own table."

I understand that white supremacy is always going to be. But if I want to do this music and I want to do what I want to do, then I had to make my own entree and I had to make them believe that if I can do it, others can do it. It's a never-ending conundrum of getting

> them to let you in but then maintaining your spot once you get in and opening that door for others. (Individual interview)

Theme 3: Self-Awareness and Knowing

Self-awareness was essential to realizing their identities as Black women composers. Knowing of who they are and how their gifts contribute to the world was a reoccurring theme among all participants. Although their lived experiences were all different, this particular theme was unifying in powerful way. Olivia realized and settled into her confidence shortly after college. “I realized that nobody has my voice. Nobody can say what I need to say better than I can myself,” she said. Olivia acknowledged that people have their own gifts and talents, depending on their field.

> But they don’t have my journey. They don’t have my soul and they can’t play the notes the way I can or sing the notes the way I can or write music in the way that I can. So, the more I refine my uniqueness, the better the art will be. (Individual interview)

That uniqueness was part of Sunny’s encouragement to Black women composers to not feel “bound by the classical music that everyone else thinks you should write.” Sunny’s confidence shines through, saying, “I am confident that we will produce music unlike anything that they have heard before and because systemically the world has been drastically underestimating what black women can do.” Trisha also advocated for Black women composers committing to themselves and their craft. “Do your work authentically. Find your voice,” she said. “Determine what it is that you do, that’s good, develop that. Don't be afraid to access change and additional genres. You have to be limitless. You have to not buy into the narrative that black people only do certain things.” She then made a historical connection with the sense of grit of Black people.

> Your potential, not just your potential…but if you go back in history, you know that almost everything that we do in this country in some way was enabled by Black presence. We have a White House because Blacks built it. You have toilet paper, you have light bulbs, you have 3D movies…all of these are things that Black people invented…You have to be able to go beyond what even you can imagine. You have to. (Individual interview)

Trisha did not see herself *not* succeeding in her career, even with the adversities she experienced early on.

> So much of their energy is put toward thwarting us… Nobody was going to tell me "What are you going to do with that viola? You're not going to get a job." That stuff goes in one ear and out the other. I didn't look at it as a Black person… I loved music, so of course I'm going to succeed. (Individual interview)

Fiona had similar feelings about what kept her going. It was a knowing that she also had something to offer the world of composition:

> Knowing that my voice belonged there, and knowing that I knew I had the talent, I knew I had the skill and no matter what they said to me, it couldn't deviate from what I wanted to do and the dreams I wanted to accomplish. (Individual interview)

Felicity also recognized this sense of knowing as important. "Don't wait for someone else to validate you," she said. "Just do it yourself. From there, people will recognize your greatness and people will recognize what you can offer. But you have to recognize it before they do."

Trisha chose not to wait for anyone to validate her or her music, and she started her own orchestra.

> I knew as a composer that if I waited, I'd be hearing my music from the other side of the grass. So I funded the start of this orchestra and we do not only my music but other composers. I just knew that I didn't want to live in frustration. And I didn't want bitterness to fester. So, I did it. It wasn't the smartest thing, in terms of my retirement, but it was very, very, *very* fulfilling."

For Savannah, it was seeing the exhibition of everyone's strength within the focus groups and knowing that Black women possess inner qualities that equip them to withstand adversity. Her words of encouragement touched everyone within her group, as the "you" applied to everyone and their shared struggles.

> And you've been put in places of leadership and everybody wants to bring you down. They can't. And they know what you have in you. That's why they want to bring you down… They not only knew you were a wonderful composer and it bothers them that you can do this and you didn't study composition. (Focus group interview)

Trisha's understanding of being a BWC was coupled with knowing that it comes with the territory in being a Black woman within a predominantly white, male dominated field like composition.

> And that's why when people ask me, "Oh, as a black woman, what obstacles have you…?" Ain't nothing but obstacles! I can spend time on that or I can go ahead and do my work and be ready for when I either the opportunity from the outside comes to me or I create my own. (Individual interview)

Savannah knew that her strength comes from ancestral women from the past. She used this to re-mind the other members of her focus group.

> It’s at all these different levels. You fight and you fight… but I’m not going to stop fighting. I’m not going to stop pressing through because, from Harriet Tubman to Sojourner, this is what Black women have been going through. And we’re where we are because of what they fought through. (Focus group interview)

Savannah could not overlook the stories and strength that had been shared by the others in the focus group, saying to all of them:

> Look what you’re doing. It’s despite. It’s in spite of. I love to tell some of the African American students, when you succeed in spite of, there’s a strength that goes back to Maya Angelou’s poem “Still I Rise.” That’s where that comes from, for me. You’ve done everything you can to me. I’m still here. If that’s not empowering?! (Focus group interview)

Savannah continued to affirm and praise the others in the group, acknowledging their hardships and how they were still standing.

> It’s like we rise in spite of it… I have tears in my eyes because I grew up in a family where you didn’t cry. It was a sign of weaknesses. I learned to cry. And I won’t take it back because it tells you, I’ve got life and love inside of me. There’s power inside of me. I'm not going to shut it down and nobody's going to tell me I’m weak because these tears are here. I’m through with people telling me who I am. You’re here, you’re doing it. You’re there…you’re doing it. No matter what anybody tries to do to you or say about you, they can’t take your power away because regardless, you’re doing it. Isn’t that powerful?

The tears of the other composers flowed freely at that point. Like iron sharpening iron, the sharing of similar adversities within the focus group provided an opportunity for these composers to strengthen themselves, as well as each other.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented findings that emerged from the data analysis exploring the lived experiences of Black women composers. Three major themes emerged from the data:

1. Adversity played a major role in building BWC's resilience
2. BWC's music has been a vessel for their opportunity and visibility within the field; and
3. Self-awareness was essential to knowing what it means to be a BWC.

Utilizing a conceptual framework that encompassed Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2009) and Counterspaces (Case & Hunter, 2012), allowed for the centering lived experiences of Black women composers in a way that will contribute to music and music education. The findings from this research demonstrated the importance and necessity of doing so. This study served as an inquiry into how Black women composers have navigated knowledge, opportunity, and visibility within a field where they have traditionally been marginalized. The findings are critical in their contribution to the fields of music and music education, as they aim to combat and dismantle many dimensions of systemic oppression that impacts Black women composers and their careers. The next chapter will briefly discuss the themes in relation to previous literature, as well as their implications, in order to suggest and encourage future research.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the lived experiences of Black women composers guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black women composers describe their understanding of the identities of race and gender on their careers?
2. How do Black women composers navigate knowledge, opportunity and visibility in a field where they have been traditionally marginalized?

These research questions sought to understand how Black women composers have navigated in a profession where they have been traditionally marginalized. Ten Black women composers shared their experiences through in-depth interviews and nine of those ten participated in focus groups. The data collected from the interviews and focus groups was analyzed to gain further understanding of their lived experiences as composers. In examining these experiences, three major themes emerged:

1. Adversity played a major role in building BWC's resilience
2. BWC's music has been a vessel for their opportunity and visibility within the field; and
3. Self-awareness was essential to knowing what it means to be a BWC.

Black Women Composers and "Mus"ogyny

The first theme deals with adversity and resilience, and it speaks to the first research question, which considers the participants' understanding of the identities of race and gender in regards to their careers.

"Mus"ogyny is a contributing factor to the marginalization of Black women composers within the field of music and music education. The word misogyny constitutes deliberate actions

against women due to contempt or prejudice. Therefore, the data supports that "mus"ogyny is the appropriate terminology stemming from the participants being targeted as a result of being women and composers. It is further exacerbated because they are Black. As previously shared in chapter 4, the data suggests that the experience of being Black women composers, particularly in academia in the 21st century, is one that includes challenging "mus"ogyny. The experiences in academia shared by the participants suggest that "mus"ogyny encountered as either a student or a faculty member can be qualified as, yet not limited to, the following:

Student

- Snide comments from classmates about their music.

- Microaggressions from faculty during class, private lessons, juries, etc.

- Intentional acts by faculty to deter or destroy the will to pursue composition.

Faculty

- Thwarted opportunities for performance or professional development by colleagues.

- Lack of respect for doctoral title from students.

- Invalidation of ability if not possessing a terminal degree in composition.

The study also suggests that these and other acts of "mus"ogyny are experienced within the Black composer community as well. Research supports that the Black community has normally played a significant role in supporting Black artists, which include composers (Brown, 2020; Walker-Hill, 2002). However, it has sometimes been challenging for Black women composers to

thrive in the same academic and/or professional spaces as Black men composers. These men have activated their power and privilege while operating from a position of envy. The data in this study supports the idea that some of the lack of visibility and opportunities of Black women composers is also a result of the actions of their Black counterparts. These actions included blocking attempts for musical performances, discouraging faculty support from colleagues, and demonstrating a strong disdain for Black women composers who do not hold degrees in composition. These are also examples of "mus"ogyny due to their abrasive nature and psychological impact. They attempt to thwart the existence of Black women compsoers within the field of music and music education, and will continue to do so if not addressed.

Findings also revealed a variety of interpretations about how BWCs understand their identities. Some of the unifying elements. Some of unifying elements included the acknowledgement of being a Black woman in America and that there are certain expectations that come along with that. Other elements touched on historical facts and their residual impact on how Black women are treated by others, inside and outside of academia and music. Another element was the challenge of internally separating the identity of "composer" from "Black woman composer" as a result of external challenges.

The second and third themes focused on the second RQ in considering how Black women composers navigate knowledge, opportunity, and visibility in a field where they have traditionally been marginalized. Their lived experiences support that visibility and opportunity can be fostered with the support of the programming and performing of their musical compositions. The notion of creating their own spaces in order to execute those opportunities is also present. Knowledge is centered around knowing who they are and the qualities that

contribute to their identity as a Black woman composer. In the next section, I will discuss the study's findings and directly correlate them to elements of my conceptual framework.

Black Women Composers as BFT Intellectuals and Champions of Counterspaces

Collins's (2009) second tenet of BFT asserts that Black women's experiences are unique and varied while still exhibiting commonalities. The fourth tenet focuses on the essential contributions to BFT from intellectuals in varying disciplines (Collins, 2009). BFT centers the shared experiences of these Black women composers and validates them and their contributions to composition within the discipline of music.

Black women composers also fulfill the description for BFT intellectuals in providing "a unique angle of vision" (p. 39) to the lived experience of Black women composers. As presented in the data, Black women composers "inside and outside the academy are less likely to walk away from Black women's struggles when the obstacles seem overwhelming or when the rewards for staying diminish" (p. 39) as students and/or faculty within academia. Collins (2009) noted that one of the core themes of "recurring patterns of differential treatment" for Black women concerned "multifaceted legacies of struggle" (p. 29). This supports the first theme in that Black women composers have a multifaceted understanding when it comes to their careers, considering the wide range of adversities they have experienced.

Academia in the 21st century was the leading source of adversity experienced by the participants. Within the realms of being a student (in undergraduate, master's, or doctoral programs) or being a faculty member, it is evident that the identities of Black women composers have been and are being challenged in academia in the 21st century. Trisha was met with overt racism throughout her doctoral program, regardless of having entered the program with an already accomplished career. Sunny believed that the faculty were reluctant to give critical

feedback on her compositions during her undergraduate work out of fear that she would "weaponize" her Blackness. Savannah eventually received a promotion at her institution but only after challenging a committee who had originally voted her down because they thought "she needed to go through a couple of times before she got it" and that she wasn't supposed to get it on the first time.

Black women composers recognize the importance of fostering visibility and opportunity through the programming of their musical compositions. This often leads them to create their own spaces for that visibility and opportunity. They create their own ensembles, which results in the programming and commissioning of more Black women composers, as well as composers of other marginalized groups. They produce their own concerts. They speak the names of other Black women composers in spaces that lean towards tokenism. These acts encourage "group autonomy that fosters effective coalitions with other groups" (p. 40).

Within the knowledge scope of claiming and re-claiming their identities as Black, as women, and as composers, "from all walks of life," they "aggressively push the theme of self-definition because speaking for oneself and crafting one's own agenda is essential to empowerment"(p. 40). In addition, they understand the importance of change within music and music education overall for Black women composers, and this idea fulfills Collins's fifth tenet.

It was Angela Davis (1983) who said, "Race works in convoluted ways." The findings in this study are an exacerbation when it comes to understanding the experiences of Black women composers. Davis also asserts:

> Even in the 1940s, there were street-corner markets in New York and other large cities – modern versions of slavery's auction block – inviting white women to take their pick from the crowds of Black women seeking work.

This is important to note because Florence Price, who is hailed as the first Black woman composer to have a piece premiered by a major orchestra, had her Chicago debut in 1933. During her time, she was facing the adversity of being a Black woman in America, in addition to facing the adversity of being a composer in a white and male-dominated field.

The Internal Identity section highlighted the personal struggles experienced as a result of the external challenges. As discussed in chapter 2, Sharon Curtis (2017) examined how social ramifications can impact a Black woman's understanding of her own intersectional complexities in a leadership position. According to Curtis, those spaces can present themselves differently throughout a woman's life. The findings in this study support that idea within the realm of music and music education. Racist experiences like this were understood through an acknowledgement of the deep-rooted ramifications of how the Black woman was treated during slavery. The data from this study supports Angela Davis's (1983) stance that "lessons can be gleaned from the slave era which will shed light upon Black women's and all women's current battle from emancipation" (p. 4). Savannah got tearful during her focus group session as she made the connection between Black women in slavery and Black women now, painfully describing their brutal treatment while also praising their resilience. Davis comments on this as well:

> Black women were indeed women indeed, but their experiences during slavery – hard work with their men, equality within the family, resistance, floggings and rape – had encouraged them to develop certain personality traits. (p. 27)

Yet, while the experiences of identifying as a Black woman in America are painful, a Black woman's "identity as a person of African descent" simultaneously "empowers and ennobles her" (p. 82). The findings in this study show that it was the understanding of these traits, as well as the

awareness of their own intersecting identities, that ultimately assisted Black women composers in maneuvering the "non-sacred" and/or "unsafe" spaces (Evans-Winters, 2019).

The understanding and knowledge exhibited by Black women composers is in alignment with Collins's (2009) dialogical practice of BFT, in which she asserts that "Black feminist thought encompasses general knowledge that helps U.S. Black women survive in, cope with, and resist our differential treatment" (p. 35). The findings in this study allow Black women composers to utilize a voice that is uniquely *in* music, as well as impacted *by* music. According to Case and Hunter (2012), the oppression narrative is one way to challenge utilizing counterspaces as a tool that "makes the invisible visible" (p. 263). Their responses of surviving, coping, and resisting the multifaceted legacy of struggles are demonstrated in the completion of their degrees, the ignoring or stomaching of racist treatment from colleagues and peers, and the rejecting of narratives that are not in alignment with their own self-definitions. The sharing of their experiences through this study aids in the processes of renouncing invisibility and the making of Black women composers visible.

Letting the Music "Speak" – Navigating Opportunity and Visibility

The second theme focused on the musical compositions created by Black women composers and how recurring performances and programming fosters opportunity and visibility. The findings in the study suggest that the minimal exposure of Black women composers receive in music educations jeopardizes their existence and contributions to the field. While the Eurocentric structure of music education curriculum has been challenged over the years (Shaw, 2015) as mentioned in chapter 2, findings in this study show that the efforts are relatively slow or nonexistent. As a result, Black women composers take matters into their own hands as far as their own research, learning and creative output. For example, Sunny wanted to enter into a

young composer competition in her early years but had just started lessons with her composition teacher. She took it upon herself to expand her knowledge of instrumentation, convincing her teacher in the process, and ended up winning the competition.

The findings in this study also support the idea that Black women composers are extremely disadvantaged when it comes to the world of publishing. As a result, opportunity and visibility remain diminished within the field of music education. In chapter 2, Deborah Bradley (2003) is cited for her work on how the inequality of publishing inadvertently perpetuates the color blindness within music classrooms. She refers to it as “part of a well-established system of Whiteness in North America” that “renders issues of racism and social inequity invisible” (p. 4-5). As Eve expressed:

> Looking back, it would’ve helped if I saw Black women composers. Definitely. If I saw myself reflected, instead of just one person, Scott Joplin… if I saw black composers and not relegated to Black History Month, but just as a part of the normal repertoire, it probably would have felt… it has to be normalized. It can’t be pushed in a corner.

Trisha wanted to hear her symphonic works performed, but did not want to those performances to wait until she had passed on. So she created her own orchestra to perform them, in addition to commissioning works by other composers of color along the way. Trisha also knew that she had a choice when it came to how racism and sexism impacted her. She could either focus on that or focus on how to make her herself visible. She chose the latter. Other research supports that Black women do this type of “shifting,” which is essentially detaching or ignoring the discrimination or bias, as a coping strategy (Major & Schmader, 1998; Smyth & Yarandi, 1996; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997) to avoid the acknowledgement of racism and sexism.

This method of shifting for Black women composers poses a complex problem as Black women composers utilize it to challenge systems of oppression (problems in publishing, lack of programming, etc.) while simultaneously striving to affirm their presence as composers. As a result of that striving, the findings in the study demonstrate that Black women composers have a level of desire to position themselves in spaces of opportunity and visibility that showcase their talents and abilities and those of others. Even in the midst of challenges presented by the "musical patriarchy" (Green, 1997) and the system of oppression within publishing as "part of a well-established system of Whiteness" (Bradley, 2003, p. 4), Black women composers have been able to sustain themselves and their music for generations.

Reclaiming Power – Navigating Knowledge within Self-Definition

Self-definition is essential to the knowing and empowerment in being a Black woman composer. The findings support that self-definition has assisted in rejecting false narratives that have been imposed by society and/or the dominant culture. Those rejected narratives include "You're not a composer because…":

- you're a girl (Sexism)
- your music is "cute/sweet" (Patronization)
- you don't have a degree in composition (Elitism)
- you haven't had your music performed (Invisibility)
- you're only programmed in February/March/etc. (Racial Opportunism)
- you're too old (Ageism)

As reiterated from chapter 2, the key to survival of Black women is the wisdom gained from the intersections of their experiences and knowledge (Kernodle, 2014). The findings in this

study have significant benefits that support Kernodle's assertion about how Black women have survived, particularly within the field of composition. Through their lived experiences, it is evident that they know who they are, regardless of the adversities they have faced throughout their journeys. The data supports the notion that Black women rely on this self-definition through historical and social awareness, self-worth, and affirmation of their musical gifting.

Implications

The key takeaway from this study is that race and gender greatly impact the overlapping intersections of knowledge, opportunity, and visibility when it comes to being a Black woman composer. When people think of composers, they think of men. And if they think of women, they think of white women. Therefore, the voices of Black women composers through their lived experiences must be regarded as being as invaluable as their music.

The most important implication is that Black women composers have been able to maintain a commitment to their careers and to themselves, in spite of navigating elements of knowledge, opportunity, and visibility that were impacted by the intersecting identities of race and gender. Although the participants' lived experiences cannot be generalized, their experiences do provide insight into how Black women composers have been able to sustain their creative work in a field where they have been traditionally marginalized. In a desire to encourage change, I am reminded of a question that was posed by Angela Davis (1983):

> How could Susan B. Anthony claim to believe in human rights and political equality and at the same time counsel members of her organization to remain silent on the issue of racism? (p. 121)

A similar question remains for music educators. How can you continue to champion "diversity" and musical equality when Black women composers are not normalized in your

pedagogy and performance practice? I charge educators not only to explore this question, but to actually act on it. Collins (2009) asserts that "knowledge for knowledge's sake is not enough," and that "Black feminist thought must both be tied to Black women's experiences" (p. 35). This study has aimed to help fill the knowledge gap about the experiences of Black women composers in order to contribute to the betterment of "those experiences in some fashion" (p. 35). Knowing about the experiences of these Black women composers should encourage music educators to be more intentional in their pedagogical and performance practices.

Incorporating daughtering into the methodology centered the resilience within the lived experiences of Black women composers in the analysis process (Evans-Winters, 2019). The experiences that were shared support Obioma Nnaemeka's (1998) idea of the dialogical relationship of Black Feminist Thought and Black Feminist Practice; as she asserts, "It is *what* they do and *how* they do it that provide the 'framework'…" (p. 5). As a result, the following implications are presented within the posture of the dialogical relationship of Black women composers as BFT intellectuals and through their practice (lived experiences). Within daughtering, is the obligation to "think for yourself" and to "speak up for yourself and other people's daughters" (Evans-Winters, 2019, p. 279). The participants' lived experiences serve to remind other Black women composers that they are never alone in the world (Evans-Winters, 2019). According to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), when Black women commit to their purpose/calling, it creates a strong sense of self and "a reason for living that go beyond their own individual welfare" (p. 81).

With further reflection on the main themes, in addition to infusing them with new meaning from BFT, Collins (2009) asserts that "a new consciousness" can surface that "utilizes Black women's every day, taken-for-granted knowledge" (p. 36). It is in the desire to cultivate

this new consciousness where the following implications of this study, I will call attention to the demands of daughtering presented by Evans-Winters (2019) through affirmations. Through crystallization, Ellingson (2009) encourages researchers to be "open" to presenting data through genres (not to be confused with musical genres) that "best represents the truth" (p. 6). One of the truths from this study is that Black women composers have learned to accept the adversities of racism and sexism as part of their journey. Their level of acceptance of those adversities is the key to understanding how adversity impacts their careers.

The following affirmations constitute a different representation/genre and reflect a desire to provide armor for and to humanize the efforts exhibited by Black women composers in their lived experiences. Quotes extracted from participants' statements are interwoven with the affirmations as part of this effort.

Affirmation #1

There Is Grit within Your Gifting/Giving. It requires a certain amount of grit to gift/give to the world in spite of facing challenges that are outside of your control.

When you succeed in spite of, there's a strength in that.

The findings in this study illustrate that even though Black women composers are prone to multifaceted legacies of struggles, past and present, you have not been deterred when it comes to creating. You demonstrate a grounding in your ancestors' gifts while also advocating for your own.

> *We need to stop being surprised about product coming from black people. We have to stop being surprised because there's nothing that we haven't accomplished. There's nothing that we can't do.*

You do not shy away from embracing the sound of who you are. This is because you do not minimize your gift the same way that the world tries to minimize you based on what they see: your race and your gender. While your experience may come through in your melding of sounds, you know your music is cannot be defined by the social constraints of the world.

> *A good portion of my commissions have a lot to do with my identity, which I'm okay with… but that's not all that I am.*

There is freedom in that knowing. Be encouraged, for your grit is not in vain. Trust that the giving of yourself through your music is the gift that this world needs. It called you and you answered. It chose you. Like a magnet, it pulled and drew you closer until you fully embraced and accepted what it was. In that reckoning, you find peace. You find fulfillment. You find a calling beyond your understanding. You find the grit to keep giving/gifting.

> *And knowing that I knew I had the talent, I knew I had the skill and no matter what they said to me, it couldn't deviate from what I wanted to do and the dreams I wanted to accomplish.*

Affirmation #2

You Are Tenacious through Your Journeying to Just "Be." You are confident in your assertion that Black women composers and their works deserve more than celebrations in February (Black History Month), March (Women's History Month), and other commemorative events that have been assigned by the dominant culture. You refuse to be limited to only these spaces. You create your own opportunities because you know you're not the only one. You bring others with you into opportunities in order to show the world that you're not the only one. You speak the names of your ancestors and others who have been marginalized in non-sacred spaces, invoking their presence because you know you're not the only one. You

reject tokenism. You make it a point to validate your presence and the presence of others in opposition to a world that has cultivated elements of invalidation.

> *When you see people like us in positions of power it says to you, if they can do it I can do it. So, it's about fostering that legacy and keeping the art alive because I think music is one of the most powerful and significant forms of expression that we have.*

You are wise in rejecting this oppression. You are enough. Press on.

> *I can walk in these gifts. I can write my own music and sing it. I don't know why I had in my head, "Oh no, somebody else has to sing it for it to be validated or for it to be whatever."*

Do not give up. Be encouraged, for your tenacity is not in vain. Keep doing it because it is inspiring to those who are watching and admiring you from a distance. You are not alone.

> *Hearing you all's stories was letting me know that I'm not by myself. You guys are doing it in spite of and I can too… We can start to let them know that you can't get away with the same shit you used to. It's a new day.*

Affirmation #3

There is power in your presence. Know who and whose you are. You are more than being "other-ized." The presence and legacy of thee women who have gone before us is vast. The ancestral roots run deep. Harriet Tubman. Sojourner Truth. Angela Davis. Maya Angelou. Those same roots are intertwined with those of the women whose lives and music paved the way for you. Florence Price. Margaret Bonds. Phillipa Schuyler. Julia Perry. Undine Smith Moore. Eva Jessye. The list goes on and is continued by you and your music. You are part of a lineage that has sustained itself through the power of presence. Do not be afraid to make yourself known. Do not be afraid to make yourself heard. Your ancestors didn't, so neither should you. Your voice

matters. Be as loud as you want to be. Write all of the things you want to write. Compose in whatever style you want. There is no right or wrong way. And even if there is, don't worry about it. The world will adjust.

Suggestions for Future Research

Possible directions for future research involving Black women composers are vast. There is certainly a need for more research on Black women composers in general. Examples of more focused areas of study illuminated by this study include:

- Experiences of Black women composers within undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs in music composition
- Experiences of Black women composers as faculty at PWI institutions
- Experiences of Black women composers as faculty at HBCUs
- Experiences of Black women composers who create opportunities of their own: publishing, performances, etc.
- Trends in the publication and programming of works by Black women composers in major publishing houses and concert venues
- The inclusion of Black women composers in music education curriculum

Exploration of these areas can highlight the need for music educators to adjust their pedagogical and performance practices in order to cultivate the musical equity.

Further research on "mus"ogyny within music and music education is also encouraged. This may highlight other challenges experienced by Black women, as well as women as a collective, within music and music education and in other concentrations such as conducting,

performance, pedagogy, etc. This additional research can shed further light on the oppressive systems that are being perpetuated and hopefully bring solutions for dismantling them.

Lastly, there remains the inquiry regarding Black women composers who chose the alternative route: to not be a composer. While the findings from this study support the overall resilience of BWCs within the field, it cannot account for the talent that has been lost as a result of exhibited levels of "mus"ogyny, racism, and toxic masculinity in the field. Future research that focuses on this particular area can further challenge the oppressive systems that perpetuate the marginalization of BWCs. This study serves as part of an initial conversation that needs to be expanded.

Final Thoughts

Many Black women respond to racial and gender discrimination by fighting back (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Additionally, Angela Davis (2016) asserts that "as our struggles mature, they produce new ideas, new issues, and new terrains on which we engage in the quest for freedom" (p. 11). It is my hope that through this study I have highlighted new ideas, issues, and terrain involving Black women composers. Ten composers bravely came forward and willingly shared their trials and tribulations. Yet, the ultimate impression that was left was one of unquestionable courage and strength. While their experiences contribute to the academic knowledge gap in music and music education, they can also serve to empower aspiring Black women composers. This includes me and many others, who question(ed) their potential because they did not "see" those like them in books, professional opportunities, etc.

As a black woman composer and a music educator, I knew that a study of this nature was important. However, I believe I naively underestimated the level importance. The results of study exuded the multitude of underlying and intersecting systems of oppression that Black women

face within composition. The domino effect of the marginalization of Black women composers continues to impact the overall knowledge, opportunity, and visibility they receive in the field. Music educators can combat this by including Black women composers in their programs and curriculum. Black women composers create music for a variety of ensembles and in an array of genres and styles outside of the stereotypical gospel and jazz. Programming Black women composers, and including them outside of just Black history and women's history months, will demonstrate the type of music educator who is intentional about diversity and inclusivity.

In addition, music educators can include Black women composers in their curriculum. Most music history books are centered around the traditional Western European classical canon and the "great men" trope. Music educators should feel charged to challenge the blatant disregard of Black women composers in textbooks and find creative ways to incorporate them. The lack of visibility in music performance and music education impacts not only Black women composers currently in the field, but aspiring ones as well. Eve recalled the following as she reflected on the invisibility of Black women composers within her journey:

> On a subconscious level, if I saw myself reflected in the repertoire, it would've made a difference definitely. You have to see yourself. You have to see yourself reflected. If not, then the stereotype continues. That this is just, that "serious" music is just written by white male composers. It perpetuates that stereotype.

Lack of knowledge can longer be an excuse to not introduce Black women composers into the music curriculum. True equity and access within the field will be attained when students can finally see themselves reflected back within the standardized curriculum and canon that is taught.

Lastly, national and state associations for music educators need to position themselves as organizations who not only promote advocacy but also demonstrate it. If mission statements are

focused on advocacy and advancement, it should be a priority to consistently include Black women composers within publications, reading sessions, conference sessions and other resources for continuing education. The keyword is *consistently*. The Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 challenged many of these organizations to issue statements of solidarity with the Black community. While they can express their solidarity through press releases, they can also demonstrate it by actively dismantling the systems of oppression that have disadvantaged the visibility, opportunity, and knowledge of Black women composers within their organizations.

The ten participants in this study boldly rejected being boxed in on account of their race, gender, age, education, etc., through the understanding that their sense of self and their musical gifts exist outside of the social constraints imposed by society. In spite of combating "mus"ogyny, Black women composers have remained true to themselves and their craft. External identity doesn't eclipse internal identity. As Collins (2009) said, "U.S. Black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression… and it can take the form of music" (p. 11). For Black women composers, that opposition to oppression lies within remaining committed to the craft of composition, with or without the validation of the outside world. For us, the power has always been in the knowing.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Georgia State University Department of School of Music

Purpose:

The investigator would like to invite you to participate in research. The proposed study is looking to examine the lived experiences of Black women composers. You are invited to participate because you fit the criteria as a participant who identifies as a Black woman composer. Those who are selected to participate in the study will contribute information through in-depth phone interviews, as well as a private online focus group.

Procedures:

If you accept the invitation, you will participate in a one-on-one phone interview with the principal investigator where you will be asked questions about your musical development, compositional style. Questions surrounding the roles of race and gender as a Black composer will also be part of the interview. The investigator will use responsive interview techniques in which you may be asked additional questions about material you have shared. The in-depth interviews will last approximately one hour each. Each interview will be recorded so that verbal data can be transcribed and analyzed at a later date. The online focus group will answer a series of prompts throughout the study. Replying to others will be encouraged so that data from the responses can also be analyzed.

Future Research:

Researchers will not use or distribute your data for future research studies even if identifiers are removed.

Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

Benefits:

This study is not designed to benefit you personally. Overall, we hope to gain information about the lives of Black women composers in order to share with society.

Alternatives:

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- **The principal investigator, Brittney Boykin**
- Research advisors – Dr. Natalie King and Dr. Jennifer Esposito
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

We will use aliases rather than your legal name on study records to protect your privacy. We may cite anonymous excerpts from the interview in research papers and presentations. The information you provide will be stored on a password and firewall protected computer. The audio recording will be discarded after the data coding is complete. When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you.

Contact Persons:

Contact Brittney Boykin at bboykin5@student.gsu.edu and 404 -734 -1364 if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

Contact the GSU Office of Human Research Protections at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu

- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant
- if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research

Copy of Consent Form to Participant:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. Please indicate verbally that you consent to participate in this study and that you consent to be audio-recorded.

A waiver of documentation of consent has been granted and will be used for this study.

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

Dear [Composer],

My name is Brittney Boykin and I am a graduate student at Georgia State University. I am writing to request your participation in my dissertation research. As the student principal investigator, I am looking to examine the lived experiences of Black women composers.

As soon as last year, I have been in professional conversations and circles where the mentioning of Black women composers creates an enigma – people ask "Who are they?" because they don't know their names to even begin to look for information about them…they ask "what music have they composed?" because it appears that the scores that have been archived are not easily accessible or if they've been published, they're currently out of print. This then leads to "where are they?" – The consistent inability to acknowledge the voices of Black women composers in the musical realm gives opportunity for their musicianship and existence to be questioned.

You are invited to participate because you fit the criteria as an accomplished composer who identifies as Black and as a woman. Eight people will be invited to participate in the study. The study will consist of a Zoom interview that will last about an hour, as well as a Zoom focus group with the other participants that will also last an hour, totaling two hours for participation in the entire study. James Baldwin who said in his 1955 essay that "It is only in his music…that the Negro in America has been able to tell his story." It is my hope that with this proposed study, myself and the world as collective will finally be able to listen. Please respond if you are interested participating. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brittney Boykin (Student Principal Investigator)

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Knowledge

1. In your own words, describe what “Black woman composer” means.
2. What moment did you realize that you wanted to be a composer. Please explain.
3. Describe when you were first introduced to the music and/or knew of a Black woman composer.

Visibility

1. Describe your music education experience, from primary years through college.
2. During your education, how were Black women composers introduced? What was said about them and their music?
3. As a composer, how do you define support for you and your music?

Opportunity

1. How has being a Black woman composer impacted or defined your career? Positively? Negatively? Please explain.
2. When thinking about your journey as a composer, from education until now, what recurring theme or word comes to mind to describe you? Please explain.
3. What advice would you give to aspiring, Black women composers?
4. If you could advocate for Black women composers to be given more opportunities for writing music, what would you say?

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Protocol

This focus group is the last portion of the study. I ask that you stay for the duration of the focus group. You may choose to skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. Please be reminded that this is completely confidential and to not use names or identities in your responses.

1) Participants will then be asked to elaborate on the major themes that surfaced during individual interviews.
2) In being a Black woman composer, please share your thoughts when it comes to navigating knowledge, opportunity and visibility within field of music/composition.
3) When terminology like “micro aggressions” and “systems of oppression” or “discrimination” are heard, please provide examples from your experience in being a Black woman composer.
4) In thinking about the lineage of Black women composers to now, tell me more about what it means to be a Black woman composer in today’s world….is there/will there be progress?
5) For the aspiring Black women composers out there, share with me the advice you would give them. Be encouraged? Sister circle…what would you say to each other?

APPENDIX E

Code Sheet

Code	Description	Occurrences
Self-Awareness	Expressed an understanding of what being a BWC personally meant; combination of what it means to be a Black woman, in addition to positive and negative music experiences	95
Racism/Sexism	Experienced racism/sexism within their career academically or professionally	77
Empowerment	Internal affirmation	65
BWC Definition	Expressed how BWC is defined by those in the field	58
Minimal Exposure	Expressed as a contributing factor to the invisibility of BWCs; this included issues in programming and curriculum/music history	49
Music Performed	Expressed as critical for the longevity of BWCs	42
Early Music Education	Expressed as part of the development of being a BWC	39
Drawn to Destiny	Expressed that being a BWC was spiritual and intuitive	38
Network	Expressed and experienced that connecting in the field is important	37
Mentorship	Expressed and experienced that this was important to the early development of being a BWC	31
“Do-It-Yourself”	Experienced as essential in order to create opportunities for visibility and opportunity in the field for themselves and others	26
Musical Family	Experienced as an influential factor	24

Music Major	Experienced in college	20
Tokenism	Experienced as the "only one" in academic and professional settings; also expressed and experienced the challenging of tokenism in the same spaces	17
Doubt	Experienced self-doubt through various points through the journey	16
Racial Opportunism	Expressed and experienced various opportunities/inquiries to check the box for an outside party's diversity agenda; particularly exploitative during Black and Women's history months	12
Publishing Problems	Expressed and experienced that the music of BWCs isn't easily accessible	12
Creative Freedom	Expressed that this is ideal when creating new music	11
Sistering	Expressed and experienced that there's power in the idea of BWC unity	11
Allyship	Expressed that this is important from those outside of BWC	10
Advocacy	Expressed that this is important from those outside of BWC	8
Internet	Expressed and experienced that this helps with BWC visibility	6
Ageism	Experienced that this can also contribute to adversities within the field	2

APPENDIX F

Resource List

Helpful resources for music educators on topics related to this dissertation include and are not limited to:

1. The Institute for Composer Diversity - https://www.composerdiversity.com/
2. The African-American Art Song Alliance - https://artsongalliance.org/
3. Videmus - https://www.videmus.org/
4. National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc. – https://www.nanm.org/
5. Resources for Diversity in Early Music Repertoire – https://inclusiveearlymusic.org/bibliography
6. Music by Black Composers - https://www.musicbyblackcomposers.org/
7. Composers of Color Collective – www.composersofcolorcollective.org