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The purpose of this study was to investigate Black music teacher candidates' experiences with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music examination*. Specifically, the study examined the connection between teacher candidates' preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music examination*, at selected HBCUs in the Southern Region of the United States. This focus is in response to the issue that there is a continued shortage of music teachers, especially Black music teachers, and many music education majors are not passing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music examination* on their first attempt.

Participants in this study consisted of five Black music education majors, and five provisionally licensed Black music teachers, who attended or graduated from Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Southern region of the United States at the time of the study. The states represented in the current study include Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana. Data analyses revealed seven emergent themes: (a) anxiety and fear, (b) unfamiliarity, (c) unpreparedness, (d) engagement, (e) course content and scheduling, (f) competence, (g) communication, and (h) need for resources.

BLACK MUSIC TEACHER CANDIDATES' PREPARATION AND PERFORMANCE  
ON THE *PRAXIS*<sup>®</sup> *MUSIC* EXAMINATION

by

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Approved by

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To my late husband, Joplin (1978-2018), daughter Lakaiya, mother Alma, father Keith, and brother Brooks, who have supported me unconditionally and gave me the courage and strength to keep striving to reach my goals, I dedicate this dissertation.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Even though license examinations are in place to assure educational stakeholders of teachers' qualifications, teachers of color are having a more difficult time passing those examinations, and therefore the number of teachers of color have continued to decline in the teaching profession (Tyler, 2011; Madkins, 2011). According to Boardman (1990), licensing practices in music education developed in the twentieth-century, due to the increase in teacher training institutions following the Civil War, and the endorsement of music teaching as a specialty area by state licensure agencies. Educational reform and changes in educational policies throughout the twentieth century, as well as increases in teacher salaries, led to increased mandatory examination requirements throughout the United States for teacher licensure (Doel, 2012; Irvine, 1988). This study investigates Black music teacher candidates' experiences with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination.

Teacher candidates are required to pass standardized examinations measuring basic skills for admission into teacher education programs. Content specific examinations are required to obtain teacher licensure, and some institutions require a passing score before the teacher candidate receives approval to student teach or graduate (CAEP, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). In the field of music education, the examinations most widely used today are the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Core* Examination, that measures basic skills necessary for teaching (i.e., reading, writing, mathematics), and the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*

examination, that measures subject specific knowledge in music history, music theory, and instructional practices in music (Educational Testing Service, 2019). The *Praxis*® *Music* examination offers two assessments, including: (a) *Music: Content Knowledge (5113)*, and (b) *Music: Content and Instruction (5114)*. Each state of the United States differs in the adoption of which *Praxis*® *Music* assessments are required, or if they are required (Educational Testing Service, 2020).

Black teacher candidates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) are facing many difficulties in passing the *Praxis*® *Series* examinations on their first attempt (Albers, 2001; Elpus, 2015; Graham, 2013; Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg, & Tyler, 2011; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004). One of the main problems affecting the viability of Black music teachers is the inability to pass the *Praxis*® *Music* examination (Elpus, 2015). Failure on these exams often deters Black teacher candidates from entering the teaching profession (Albers, 2001; Barum, 2017; Grimes-Crump, 2001; Latham, 2000).

According to Jones (1917), the struggle of Black teachers on standardized assessments was evident as early as 1917, when he reported that only thirty-six percent of the Black teachers passed the state examinations in Virginia. In 1931, Horace Mann Bond administered the Stanford Achievement Examination in reading and arithmetic to 306 Black teachers teaching in six Alabama counties. The results of the assessment indicated that the teachers' average scores were below the national norm score for ninth graders (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2009, p. 38). Although there was notable growth in the academic achievement of Black Americans during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, they still

consistently performed lower than Whites and other ethnic groups on standardized examinations (Grissmer, Flanagan, & Williamson, 1998).

Once teacher licensure examination began after 1980, passing rates for Blacks across the nation were sometimes half of those for Whites (Ferguson & Brown, 2000). According to Allen (2008), “high stakes examinations, such as Praxis I and Praxis II, continue to be barriers to African American students’ success in a teacher education program” (p. 61). Gitomer’s & Latham’s (2000) report indicated a 61-69 percent pass rate for Blacks on the Praxis II examination, as opposed to a much higher 91-93 percent pass rate for White teacher candidates. Johnston, Spaulding, Paden, & Ziffren (1990) stated, “As a result of low pass rates, minority candidates, including adult career changers, often cited admission and licensure examinations as a reason for not entering teacher education programs or the teaching profession (p. 39-32).”

### **Background of the Study**

Music education in the United States of America was influenced and shaped by ancient practices of the Greek education system; specifically, the system in Prussia. The German music education system was based on Pestalozzian principles, echoing Pestalozzi’s belief that the purpose of education was to prepare people to reach their highest potential, and that pupils should be able to relate education to life activities (Mark 2008). German music education became a model for American music education in schools in the early nineteenth century (Mark & Gary, 2007). In the New England colonies, church ministers developed and provided the foundation upon which American music education evolved (Mark, 2008; Pemberton, 1988). Through the emergence of

singing schools, known as the Singing School Movement, music instruction was led by ministers John Tufts and Thomas Walter (Britton, 1961). The goal of the singing schools was to improve the level of singing in churches through the implementation of musical instruction and note reading.

As music instruction progressed throughout the colonies, so did the belief that public schools should include music in the curriculum (Mark & Gary, 2007). When the popularity and need for singing schools declined, many of the singing masters became music teachers in the public schools (Mark, 2008). Lowell Mason was the pioneer of music education in America, paving the way for the inclusion of music in the school curriculum. In 1837, Mason was granted authorization to teach music in the Hawes I School of Boston and agreed to do so without pay (Pemberton, 1988). In 1838, Lowell Mason signed the Magna Carta of Music Education at the Boston Academy of Music Teacher's Convention, and the inclusion of music in the school curriculum grew across the country (Pemberton, 1988).

### **Teacher Education and Licensing**

Teacher licensing was inaugurated in Virginia in 1683, when King Charles II instructed Governor Lord Howard of Effingham to guarantee that every schoolmaster teaching in the colony held a license issued by the Bishop of London, or from the Governor himself (Lucas, 1997). Other colonies soon followed suit and required schoolmasters to hold licenses issued by the governor or ecclesiastical representatives of the Bishop of London. In Connecticut, an assembly was formed to serve as a licensing

authority for all teachers in the colony (Lucas, 1997). As licensing requirements continued to develop, so did the demand for qualified or formally trained teachers.

Lowell Mason, George J. Webb, and other musicians founded the Boston Academy of Music in 1833 to train vocal music teachers. The original goal of the academy was to apply Pestalozzian principles in music instruction for children (Mark & Gary, 2007). Several songbooks and teaching materials were developed to provide resources to music teachers. Vocal music programs were the earliest to develop and were approved as a subject of the public-school curriculum in 1837. This development was referred to as “The Magna Carta of Music Education,” in the 1838 report of the Boston Academy of Music (Mark 2008). Music teachers were expected to teach the elements of music and develop musicians’ skills.

The Boston Academy began hosting music conventions for music teachers and musicians to offer training and discussions of current issues and developments in music and music instruction. In 1839, post-secondary educational institutions known as normal schools were created to provide teachers with the needed training and professional development for licensure. The Boston Academy of Music developed Normal Institutes as a part of their annual conventions to provide pedagogical training for those interested in teaching music. Initially, the institutes were hosted as a 3-month session and held each summer, until the Academy closed in 1847 (Mark, 2008; Grove Music Online, 2020).

This role of the music specialist was officially established in the 1850s. Music specialists became known as music supervisors, who were responsible for supervising classroom teachers and the quality of music instruction for students (Mark & Gary, 2007;

National Association for Music Education, 2017). Prior to 1884, normal schools only provided music teacher training for grade school music teachers, primarily in vocal music. Music supervisors did not receive formal training in supervision and music education until the Potsdam Musical Institute opened in New York in 1884. Founded by Julia Ettie Crane, the Potsdam Musical Institute “balanced the curriculum of future music educators,” (Mark 2008, p. 72).

Toward the end of the nineteenth-century, music teacher education was incorporated into the normal school curriculum (Doel, 2012; Pemberton, 1988). As the enrollment of students in high schools increased, there was an increased need for teachers with specialized instrumental and vocal skills. In response to this need, some conservatories, colleges, and universities established music education programs.

The continued growth of school music programs across the country increased the demand for licensed music teachers (Doel, 2012; Pemberton, 1988). In response to this demand, college music programs and faculties expanded, and professors and administrators sought ways to make their music education programs stronger (National Association for Music Education, 2017). At the National Education Association (NEA) Department of Music Education meeting in 1902, a committee formed to formulate a plan of study for music teachers. The committee presented several standards for the expectations of music teachers to include, “(a) literary qualification at least equal to those of high school graduates; (b) musical qualification to include proficiency on an instrument or as a singer, knowledge of theory, music history and conducting; and, (c) familiarity with school music textbooks and courses of study” (Mark 2008, p. 131).

In 1907, a group of music teachers met in Keokuk, Iowa, forming the Music Supervisors National Conference, with a primary focus on enhancing music teacher training (Lee, 2007). States became concerned about the quality of teacher education, and the disparity of the quality of education between the various types of institutions offering teacher education programs. (Mark & Gary, 2007). In 1916, many states only required two years of college for those who wanted to become music supervisors. At the Music Supervisors National Conference in 1921, music supervisors met to expand and unify standards relating to music teacher training. They developed the first four-year curriculum for the collegiate music education baccalaureate degree (Lee, 2007). By 1930, the new curriculum developed by the Music Supervisors National Conference eventually was implemented across the country, and licensure requirements became standardized.

Prior to the establishment of the four-year baccalaureate degree curriculum by the Music Supervisors National Conference in 1921, music teachers were not required to go to school for formal training. By the 1960s, however, a baccalaureate degree became the minimum requirement for music teacher licensure in every state (Doel, 2012; Irvine, 1988; Pemberton, 1988)). Music teacher training became an important component of the normal school curriculum, as music education spread nationally during the middle of the nineteenth century. Music teacher education developed in distinctive college and university settings, including the music conservatory, liberal arts college, teachers' college, and research university. The preparation of music teachers varied according to the type of curriculum at each institution (Boardman, 1990).



## **History of Black Teachers and Teacher Shortage**

Before the Civil War, higher education opportunities for Black Americans did not exist, as they were denied admission to traditionally white institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Slavery prohibited the education of Blacks in the south, and Black teachers ran schools in secret to teach enslaved people how to read and write. In the northern states, Black teachers worked with White teachers to educate black students. Following the Civil War, public schools emerged for Black and White students across the country. Schools were segregated, and those designated for Black students were often underfunded and had inadequate resources (Madkins, 2011). Black teachers taught Black students, and were mostly situated in the southern states, as 90% of Blacks lived in the South during that time (Madkins, 2011). While higher education institutions still did not exist in the South for Blacks, three institutions were established in the North. The Institute for Colored Youth (currently Cheyney University) was the first higher education institution for Blacks, founded in 1837 in Cheyney, Pennsylvania (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Lincoln University of Pennsylvania was founded in 1854, and Wilberforce University was founded in Ohio in 1856.

The enactment of the Second Morrill Act in 1890 provided public support of higher education institutions for Black students. The Act “required states to provide land-grant institutions for Black students whenever a land-grant institution was established and restricted for White students,” (U.S. Department of Education 2019, paragraph 6). This Act paved the way for higher education institutions in each southern state, and its bordering state, and additional institutions for Blacks in other parts of the country. These

higher education institutions founded to teach Black students were later designated as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and were established with the mission of “serving the educational needs of Black Americans,” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019, paragraph 1).

The primary task of HBCUs was to provide elementary and secondary education for students who had no prior education. In the early 1900s, HBCUs began to offer postsecondary level courses, which included training teachers at the normal schools at these institutions, such as Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University). In addition to receiving training at the normal schools, teacher candidates could attend training institutions established at the county level of each state to become licensed teachers (Madkins, 2011).

Black teachers often educated Black students with inadequate resources, and in poor working conditions (debilitated facilities and unequal pay); however, they maintained high standards for students and taught with a dedicated mission of educating and uplifting the race. Teaching was a prominent profession, and the most common type of professional work for many Blacks. Prior to 1954, there were approximately 82,000 Black teachers employed in U.S. public schools across the nation (Madkins, 2011; Ahmad & Boser, 2014). This number was impacted in 1954 with the Supreme Court ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in Topeka, Kansas. This ruling led to the desegregation of schools, sparking a period of rapid loss of Black teachers nationwide. The integration of schools caused Black students to be bused to majority White schools throughout the South. While schools were beginning to be integrated, classrooms were

not. Black teachers were only assigned to teach Black students, and many lost their jobs due to limited opportunities, and the refusal of Whites to be taught by Black teachers (Madkins, 2011). According to Madkins (2011), “by 1978, Blacks comprised only 12% of the national teaching workforce” (p. 420) These numbers continued to decline, and by 2016, only 6.7% of the teachers in public schools nationwide were Black, and only 3.6% in private schools nationwide (NCES, 2017).

Currently, since there is a growing need for teachers from diverse backgrounds, in public and private schools, many studies have focused on the shortage of Black teachers entering the profession. There are numerous studies (Irvine, 1988; Gordon, 1994; & Shipp, 1999) regarding factors contributing to the Black teacher shortage, including “inadequate academic preparation for college entrance and graduation, increased opportunities for people of color to pursue careers in other fields, and standardized examination requirements for teacher licensure” (Madkins 2011, p. 419).

Irvine’s (1988) article focuses on the decline of Black teachers and principals, attributing the decline to political, economic, demographic, and sociological factors. Findings of her study revealed four causes of the decline of Black teachers and principals, including (a) decline in the number of college students choosing education as a major, (b) decline in the number of enrolled Black college students, (c) increases in career options for Blacks, and (d) teacher competency tests. Gordon’s (1994) article emphasizes negative educational experiences as the reason students of color do not select teaching as a career. The article captures the perceptions of students of color of education programs and the desire to go to college and become a teacher. Participants in the study articulated

that lack of preparation and poor counseling deterred them from entering college or the teaching profession. Participants felt inadequately prepared for the rigors of college, and that the support they received from counselors was based on their socioeconomic status.

Shipp's (1999) article examined factors that influenced the career choices of Black college students. The study surveyed both education and non-education majors at a predominantly White university and a historically Black university. Results of this study showed that salary, prestige, career advancement, and job security were decisive factors in career choice for Black students, and the reason many chose careers other than teaching.

### **Education Reform**

Federal, state, and local government agencies mandated several guidelines for education reform throughout the twentieth century. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, that was a part of his *War on Poverty* initiative. Enacted as a civil rights law, ESEA appropriated \$1.3 billion of federal funding to states to improve educational opportunities to disadvantaged children (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

The initial focus of ESEA was to provide equal opportunities and access to education for low-income families and children with disabilities. *Title I* of the ESEA outlined the details of financial assistance for schools and students in low-income areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). *Title I* was beneficial to improving the quality of education for Black students, and to increasing the availability of resources to Black

teachers and public schools in areas that had a large population of Blacks and other people of color. *Title I* enabled access to music education for all students.

Congress continues to allocate funds to support ESEA annually; however, the law must be reauthorized every five or six years (National Education Association, 2017). Since 2001, the ESEA has been reauthorized under another name; for example, the *Every Child Succeeds Act*—an ESEA reauthorization in 2015. Through Congress' commitment to a better education for America's youth, these reforms strengthened and increased the requirements for teacher licensure by outlining policy and guidelines for educational funding and developing expectations regarding the licensure qualifications of teachers and teacher candidates.

### **Teacher Education Reform**

In addition to K-12 educational reform efforts, several efforts have been made to improve the quality of teacher education programs at colleges and universities across the nation. The release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*, a report by the Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, indicated a decline in interest in the teaching profession, the need for improvement in teacher education programs, an increase in the number of teachers leaving the profession prematurely, and a growing shortage of teachers across critical subject areas (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). In addition to suggestions for rigorous examination of students, the report also argued that teacher candidates should meet high academic standards, demonstrating competence in an academic discipline and an aptitude for teaching. Moreover, teacher education programs should be evaluated based upon graduates meeting these criteria (U.S.

Department of Education, 1983). The federal government increased standards for teacher qualifications and performance, adopting a national curriculum, and a nationwide student assessment system (Fenwick, 2001).

The Arts Education Policy Review (AEPR) is a peer-reviewed journal that discusses major policy issues in arts education (AEPR, 2020). The journal examines teacher preparation programs, and trends and issues in arts education curricula and reform. The AEPR represents a variety of viewpoints from educators, administrators, and advocacy groups.

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) researches and evaluates teacher preparation programs. They evaluate elementary and secondary undergraduate teacher preparation programs based on the following criteria: (a) admissions, (b) knowledge (i.e., content knowledge), and (c) practice (i.e., clinical practice, classroom management, secondary methods practice) (NCTQ, 2020). The NCTQ also proposes changes to teacher education program policies and curricula and provides resources to support teacher education program reform.

As the United States government acknowledged the low achievement of the nation's students, the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* in 2001 prompted renewed focus on teacher licensure and the desire for highly qualified teachers. This increase in the demand for highly qualified licensed teachers caused shortages, especially in the representation of licensed Black teachers. Although there had been a decline in Black teachers since the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in Topeka, Kansas, *NCLB* accelerated this disturbing trend.

### **Standardized Examination and Black Teacher Candidates**

The preparation of Black teachers began with free schooling following the Civil War. One of the early objectives of the Freedmen's Bureau was to recruit and train a "native" teaching force to educate African American children in the South (Anderson, 1988). The demand for teachers was greater than the supply; therefore, the qualifications for teaching in these schools often amounted to the possession of only the most rudimentary literacy skills. Because of this practice, the Freedmen's schools and the teachers who taught in them were criticized (Anderson, 1988).

With the increase in normal schools and other institutions across the country, the process of teacher licensure through local and state written examinations declined, and the increase in licensure based solely on college or university credentials characterized the early 1900s (Murnane, et al., in Madkins, 2011). This emphasis on academic preparation, as opposed to passing a local and state test, served as an advantage to Black teachers. The elimination of such tests may have slowed substantial decreases of Black teachers in the South during the integration years (Dilworth, 1984). During this period of time, teacher preparation and effectiveness were determined by completion of courses of study in higher education, and by classroom observations rather than by formal local and state tests (Dilworth, 1984; Madkins, 2011).

As schools continued to grow and new policies were implemented regarding education reform, written examinations resurfaced and standardized teacher licensure tests reduced emphasis on academic preparation and classroom observations, and gradually became the decisive factor in licensing teachers (Doel, 2012; Murnane et al., in

Madkins, 2011). As a result, the ratio of certified teachers quickly shifted, and there was a decline in the number of Black teachers achieving licensure (Dilworth, 1984; Fultz, 1996). Over the past 50 years, the teaching profession has become predominantly White and female. Based on reports between 2014 and 2017, while students of color make up nearly half of the nation's public-school population, teachers of color make up less than 15% of the public-school teaching force (e.g., Ahmad & Boser, 2014; NCES, 2017).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Extensive revisions in state teacher licensure standards have been occurring for more than thirty years. With an increase of focus on educational reform, teacher examination and teacher quality have become top priorities (Fenwick, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Currently, fifty states and three territories of the United States require candidates to complete teacher preparation programs that culminate with the completion of standardized examinations designed to verify and assess basic academic achievement and pedagogical proficiency (Educational Testing Service, 2020; Pearson, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). With this increase in standardized licensure requirements as validated by state and/or nationally standardized examinations and portfolios, teacher shortages have occurred in music education. These shortages have been particularly prominent among Black music teachers, and have decreased the supply of Black music teacher candidates (Elpus, 2015).

The purpose of this study is to investigate Black music teacher candidates' experiences with the *Praxis*® Music examination. Specifically, the purpose is to identify the connection between preservice teachers' preparation for the *Praxis*® Music



Examination, and their performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* Examination at selected HBCUs in the Southern Region of the United States. The Southern Region of the United States, as defined by the United States Census Bureau, encompasses three areas: (a) South Atlantic, (b) East South Central, and (c) West South Central. The states represented in the current study include Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the researcher in the study.

1. What are the lived experiences of HBCU music education students and graduates who are provisionally licensed teachers when taking the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination?
2. How did HBCU music education students believe their undergraduate music education programs prepared them for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination?
3. What resources were available and/or accessed by HBCU music teacher candidates to prepare for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination?

### **Need for the Study**

Very few studies have been conducted related to Black music teacher candidates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* Examination. This study is important to music education majors, college professors and administrators, and K-12 administrators, because results of the study will help to identify factors influencing student performance on licensure examinations. Findings will also aid in the development of courses and resources to improve student preparation and performance

on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* Examination. The findings of the study also may make a meaningful difference in the field of education, as results of the study will contribute to the professional literature addressing how to increase the number of licensed music teachers of color in the nation; and more specifically, in the Southern region of the United States.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Potential weaknesses of the study, the selection of institutions and participants for the study, in that this study focuses on select Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Southern region of the United States. The participants were attendees of HBCUs in the Southern region. Additionally, HBCUs chosen were those that are accredited by SACS, CAEP (formerly NCATE), and NASM.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms used for this study are defined as follows:

**Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)** – Established July 1, 2013 as the result of a merger between the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC).

**Licensure Requirements** – courses and examination requirements required for a teaching license (Allen, 2008)

**Educational Testing Service (ETS)** – Founded in 1947, this organization designs and administers standardized examinations nationwide, including the Scholastic Aptitude Examination (SAT), Graduate Records Examination (GRE), and the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> Series examinations for teacher licensure (Educational Testing Service, 2017).

**Historically Black College and University (HBCU)** – Institutions originally founded prior to 1964 whose principal mission was, and is, the education of African Americans (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

**Highly Qualified** – A teacher was considered to be highly qualified when he/she completed an accredited educational program, fulfilled their student teaching experience, and passed the required state licensure examinations (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

**National Association for Music Education (NAfME)** – Founded in 1907, this organization, one of the world's largest Arts Education organizations, works to ensure that every student has a well-balanced, comprehensive, and high-quality program of music instruction taught by qualified teachers (NAfME, 2017).

**National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)** – Founded in 1924, this organization establishes national standards for undergraduate and graduate degrees and other credentials (NASM, 2017).

**National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)** – Founded in 1954, this organization's key purpose was to help establish high quality teacher, specialist, and administrator preparation (NCATE, 2017).

**Praxis® Series** – a battery of examinations that measure teacher candidates' knowledge and skills. Examinations are available in three categories: *Praxis® Core Academic Skills for Educators*, *Praxis® Subject Assessments*, and *Praxis® Content Knowledge for Teaching Assessments*.

**Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)** – Founded in 1997, this was a non-profit organization that served to improve academic degree programs for professional educators in grades PreK-12 (CAEP, 2020).

### **Organization of the Study**

This research study consists of five chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction and background of teacher education and music education in America, background of education for Black students and teachers, challenges of standardized examination, and the overall format of the study. Chapter II presents a review of literature and studies related to teacher preparation, licensure and licensure assessments, standardized examination, and Black teacher candidates. Chapter III outlines the methodology of the study, including a description of the participants and tools used to collect data. Chapter IV provides an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data gathered throughout the interviews. Finally, Chapter V summarizes the data analysis and findings of the study, implications of the study, and offers recommendations for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

One of the main problems affecting the availability of music teachers, and specifically Black music teacher candidates, is the inability to pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. There is a problem at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) where many of the HBCU music education majors are not passing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination on their first attempt. Students at HBCUs are facing many difficulties in passing these assessments, and failure on these tests often deters them from entering the teaching profession. This chapter presents a review of relevant literature and research regarding music teacher preparation, certification and licensure assessments, test preparation and performance, and Black teacher candidates and standardized testing.

#### **Music Teacher Preparation**

Toward the end of the nineteenth-century, music teacher education was incorporated into the normal school curriculum. As the enrollment of students in high schools increased, there was a greater need for teachers with specialized instrumental and vocal skills. In response to this need, some conservatories, colleges, and universities established music education programs (Boardman, 1990). According to Boardman (1990), licensing practices in music education developed in the twentieth-century, due to the increase in teacher training institutions following the Civil War, and the endorsement of music teaching as a specialty area by state certification

agencies. By the 1960s, a baccalaureate degree became the minimum requirement for music teacher licensure in every state. While Boardman's research highlighted the education and licensure requirements for music teachers, it did not discuss the implementation of standardized testing as a criterion for licensure, nor did it mention the training or licensure of Black music teacher candidates. Today, in addition to a baccalaureate degree, teacher candidates must pass a standardized assessment to be admitted to the teacher education program, and a second assessment to obtain licensure.

Few studies have addressed the issue of Black teacher candidates related to teacher preparation, licensure assessments, and interest in the teaching profession. Even fewer have addressed the performances of music education majors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Early research in this area began in the twentieth-century, and key research conducted prior to 1990 included the studies of Clark (1940), Bryant (1963), Claybon (1981), Ivie (1982), Dilworth (1984), Clark (1988), Lacy (1985), and Ramanauskas (1988).

Of the earlier research, Lacy's (1985) study was one of the first to analyze the music education curricula of HBCUs. Her research focused on select private HBCUs and their music education programs. The central purpose of her study was to "identify the competencies needed in teaching music, as perceived by graduates of these institutions, and how they believed the development of those competencies could be achieved," (Lacy 1985, p. 22). While her research offered invaluable information about admission requirements, the curricula of these selected music education programs, and the

implementation of teacher testing for licensure, it did not discuss the results of music education majors on these teacher tests.

### **Teacher Licensure**

Following the release of the 1980 report *A Nation at Risk*, states re-evaluated and strengthened the rigor of their teacher licensure requirements (Doel, 2012). Therefore, as a result of the report, in addition to the completion of a degree program, teacher candidates must successfully pass the appropriate licensure examination. The National Teacher Examination (NTE), developed in the 1940s and revised in the 1950s, was the examination of choice. The NTE measured general and professional knowledge, and communication skills. Teacher candidates faced challenges with passing the NTE on their first attempt; especially minority teacher candidates (Dilworth, 1984; Irvine, 1988). Controversy quickly arose surrounding the NTE, sparking questions and concerns about racial bias (Dilworth, 1984; Ramanauskas, 1988). As educational reforms continued, Congress' concerns in 1998 regarding the quality of teacher preparation sparked the establishment of Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA), which "authorizes accountability measures in the form of reporting requirements for institutions and states on teacher preparation and licensing" (Doel, 2012, p. 50).

Currently, the most widely used teacher licensure examinations have become the *Praxis*® *Series* examinations (administered by the Educational Testing Service or ETS), which replaced the controversial NTE. Results of the examinations have been reported on the United States Department of Education website and may have affected the status of an institution and their education program, including funding (Doel, 2012; U.S.

Department of Education, 2020). The performance of teacher candidates on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Series* examinations has often been viewed as a direct reflection of the quality of the candidate's degree program and institution (Albers, 2002; Doel, 2012). Title II required that institutions and states report passage rates for all teacher candidates on licensure examinations. As stated by Doel (2012, p. 49), this reporting can "significantly impact teacher education programs due to the performance of students on standardized tests such as the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *II*." The impact of scores may have affected enrollment and funding, as well as program accreditation.

Studies after 1990 became more focused on licensure requirements, examinations, and the performance of Black teacher candidates. The studies of Grimes-Crump (2001), and Nnazor, Sloan, and Higgins (2004), provided great insight into selected teacher education programs, licensure examinations, reform initiatives, and the growing shortage of teachers of color. They also, however, focused primarily on the core subjects (i.e., reading, math, writing) when measuring the challenges of Blacks and other people of color on teacher licensure examinations. They also chose to focus on only those licensure examinations that had large pools of candidates.

Grimes-Crump's (2001) study examined licensure policies in the state of Virginia, and the effects of licensure examinations on the availability of teachers, with an emphasis on the representation of teachers of color. The study focused on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *I* examination (now *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Core*), and reviewed data from the 1995-96 and 1996-97 testing cycles on the reading, mathematics, and writing assessments. Passage rates for candidates of color during the 1995-96 testing cycle were 34 percent (reading), 18



percent (mathematics), and 18 percent (writing), compared to that of White teacher candidates, whose passage rates were 72, 62, and 58 percent respectively. For the 1996-97 testing cycle, passage rates were 36 percent (reading), 35 percent (mathematics), and 28 percent (writing). The passage rates for White teacher candidates were 74, 66, and 63 percent respectively. Despite increases in passage rates, candidates of color were still significantly underperforming White teacher candidates on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Core* (*Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *I*). Results of the study indicated that the increase in passing requirements in the state of Virginia impacted the increase in interest in becoming a teacher, and the decline of teachers of color in the profession.

Nnazor, Sloan, and Higgins (2004), highlighted initiatives at Kentucky State University developed to address the challenges of low passing rates on licensure examinations. Initiatives that were implemented included “sensitization and enlightenment activities,” to educate students and faculty of the significance of licensure tests as it related to mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (p. 450). Additional initiatives included licensure examination workshops, curriculum alignment, the use of data management systems, test-taking practice workshops and tools, peer mentoring and tutoring, and other motivational strategies. Results of the study revealed candidates performance on licensure examinations improved with the assistance of the implemented initiatives, however, there was a growing concern that “faculty and students now tend to be more concerned with passing licensure tests than with liberal and professional knowledge and skills” (p. 451).

Allen (2008) focused mainly on student perceptions of their collegiate experience, perceptions of success in the field, and licensure examinations. Allen collected data regarding student perception of professors, advising, courses, curriculum plan, *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> examination preparation, collaboration, and class composition, as it related to their success in completing licensure requirements. Findings of the study suggested that advisors, professors, and curriculum flexibility, were critical components to students' success in the teacher education program. While Allen provided survey questions related to participant's *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> examination preparation, the study focused primarily on students persisting through graduation and completion of their degree program, and not passing rates or challenges associated with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> examination.

### ***Praxis*<sup>®</sup> Examination Preparation and Performance**

Gitomer and Latham (2000) articulated that while there were challenges with passage rates across all *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> licensing areas and groups, not all areas experienced the same challenges with candidate performance. They argued that a key factor in the disparity was the disproportionate number of people of color that were taking the exams, let alone passing them. An important factor presented in the article concerns disparities with passing scores from state to state. Gitomer and Latham (2000) indicated that if the highest scores in one state were implemented across all states, “fewer than half of the candidates would pass *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> I (now the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> CORE), and fewer than two thirds would pass *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> II,” (p. 218) Moreover, they contended that without the proper interventions, the supply of teacher candidates of color would continue to decline. According to the authors, the disparate passing rates suggested that candidates of color

did not receive the same support or access to learning opportunities and resources that White candidates received.

Nugent (2005) investigated the impact of test preparation study groups used by candidates on *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> I examination scores. Specifically, the author examined whether differences between the types of study groups preparing for the examination, whether structured or unstructured, influenced the results. Results of the study revealed that those who participated in structured study groups scored higher on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> I examinations than those who did not. The study focused primarily on overall performance on the examination (aggregate scores) based on the type of preparation in which candidates engaged and did not focus on the exam content (reading, writing, math).

Similarly, Hunter's (2009) study was focused on designing a process for identifying basic skills deficiencies among pre-service teacher candidates and created an intervention plan for improving performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> I examination. The author suggested that candidates performed better on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> I examination when they were provided access to a structured preparation program. The study utilized a triangular approach of faculty support involving three methods: the implementation of a PLATO test preparatory lab that offered practice tests and learning modules on computers, a faculty and peer mentoring program, and preparatory seminars, to impact student performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> I examination. An increase in passage rates was noted with the implementation of this model. Studies by Nugent (2005) and Hunter (2009) primarily concentrated on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> I examination, and although the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> II (specific content examinations, like music), was mentioned, neither study went into depth about the

content of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> II examination for any subject, or the performance of Black teacher candidates on those exams.

Albers' (2002) article was one of few that focused on a specific cohort of students, and their performance on licensure assessments. The study explored the performance of seventeen pre-service English teachers on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> II examination in Georgia. Of the seventeen pre-service teachers, five did not pass the examination, although they were confident about their level of preparation. Albers contended that the local and national press, and the government was biased in their beliefs that the quality of teaching was measured solely by successful performance on licensure exams. The article addressed media representations; specifically, reports by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, of the quality of teacher education programs based on *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> II examination pass rates and the education of Blacks and Black teacher candidates. The article also addressed the impact of teacher testing on four Black pre-service teachers in her cohort.

Further, Albers (2002) criticized *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, as their basis for recommending funding cuts and restructuring of teacher education programs was based on *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> II examination scores only, and not an accurate review of the teacher education programs in question. She also argued that forcing the Historically Black Colleges and Universities to align their curriculum to match the content of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> II examination, went against the founding principles of those institutions. Albers' article provided valuable insight regarding the history of teacher certification tests, requirements of certification tests used across the country, and the challenges Blacks and other

candidates of color faced when attempting to pass these examinations. The article provided narratives that highlighted personal experiences of four Black students who failed the English content area *Praxis*® II examination and identified areas in need of further investigation related to teacher testing equality and equity.

In a comparable study by Brown, Brown, & Brown (2008), the researchers identified three obstacles teacher candidates faced: (a) being admitted into a teacher preparation program, (b) navigating the complex education curriculum, and (c) passing the legislatively mandated norm-referenced examination (teacher licensure examination) before they were able to be licensed as teachers. The primary research question of the study aimed to determine the relationship between prior test performance of candidates during their teacher preparation programs and their *Praxis*® II examination scores. While the study measured variables associated with scoring and general performance, it did not provide information regarding the number of attempts a teacher candidate made to successfully pass the *Praxis*® II examination. The authors suggested several areas for future research, which included: (a) using the number of times students attempt the *Praxis*® II prior to earning a passing score as a covariate in the analysis process, (b) an examination of why a strong correlation between SAT and *Praxis*® II scores existed (c) an examination of other variables, such as SAT scores, *Praxis*® II scores, and performance in student teaching to determine if there are any correlations or predictors; and, (d) duplication of the study at other colleges and universities to compare results.

In a report to the Educational Testing Service, Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg, & Tyler (2011) highlighted the under-representation of people of color in the teaching pool,

and teacher candidates' performance on licensure examinations, including the *Praxis*® *I* (now entitled the *Praxis*® *Core*) and the *Praxis*® *II*. The report included data regarding the overall and minority teaching workforce, *Praxis*® program data, and interviews of faculty and students from selected college and university teacher education programs. The aim of the study was to address the issue of supply, achievement, and performance gaps between prospective teachers of color and White teachers. The focal group of this report was Black teacher candidates, as researchers measured the effect that performance on the *Praxis*® has on the supply of prospective Black teachers and offered suggestions for closing the achievement gap (Nettles, et al. 2011). The report excluded data from other people of color as the pool of candidates was not large enough to produce sufficient data or make valid inferences. Questions that guided this study were: (a) What are the trends in minority representation among teacher candidates (b) What are the differences between majority and minority candidates' performance on both *Praxis*® *I* and *Praxis*® *II*, (c) Are the performance differences reflected in the state license passing rates of majority and minority candidates, and (d) What factors should be targeted to reduce or eliminate racial/ethnic group performance differences on *Praxis*® *I* and *Praxis*® *II* (Nettles, et al., 2011).

The results of the study (Nettles et al., 2011) included data regarding the three components of the *Praxis*® *I* examination (reading, writing, math); however, it did not include the *Praxis*® *II Music* subject area examination data. Interview data provided valuable insight into the concerns of faculty and students in teacher education programs. Among the concerns, was the need to provide faculty members with the opportunity to

participate on content review panels for licensure examinations. Moreover, faculty believed that increasing test items that were relevant to the experience of people of color could help to close the gaps (Nettles, et al., 2011). Interview responses indicated that a suggested strategy might be to involve minority educators in the development process of the exams, as test writers or reviewers. While this study provided valuable insight regarding achievement gaps between ethnic groups, it only focused on those *Praxis*® tests with relatively large volumes of test takers.

Doel (2012) aimed to determine the impact of teacher education curriculum sequencing and course length, as well as student teaching experiences, on teacher candidate performance on the Elementary Education *Praxis*® II examination. Research questions that guided the study highlighted an interest in relationships between grade point average, scores on the basic skills examination (C-BASE), length of upper level education courses, and the timing of enrollment in student teaching on student performance on the *Praxis*® II examination. Researchers determined that positive relationships existed between the measured variables and student performance on the *Praxis*® II examination. While this study focused on elementary education, the research questions were relevant to the field of music education and student performance on the *Praxis*® Music examination.

In a study conducted by Latiker, Washington, Johns, Jackson, & Johnson (2013), student preparation practices and their subsequent performance on the *Praxis*® I examination were examined. Additionally, the researchers examined the effect of student performance on the *Praxis*® I examination on the matriculation of teacher education

students attending a Historically Black University. The aim of the study was to determine how students were preparing for the *Praxis*® I assessment, and to develop better interventions to improve student success. Subjects were administered a survey to gauge their level of preparation for the *Praxis*® I exam, and their resulting experience with taking the exam and receiving their scores. One hundred students were surveyed, and results revealed that majority of the students did not seriously start thinking about taking any of the *Praxis*® exams until their sophomore and junior years (p. 64). Over 50 percent of the students surveyed did not take the exam until their junior year, and several waited until their senior year to take the test for the first time. The authors wrote that students did not adequately utilize university resources to prepare, and that peer information and personal research influenced how students prepared for the *Praxis*® I exam (p. 65). The researchers established that most students surveyed were successful on the *Praxis*® I exam on their first attempt. The writing portion of the test showed the highest passing rate. The authors also conveyed that fatigue and boredom contributed to poor performance on the *Praxis*® I, and that this presented a challenge for most students. Latiker and Washington (2013) concluded that additional studies to further examine the relationships between factors and African American student performance on licensure exams were necessary to further illuminate the issue and close the achievement gap. They also suggested that additional peer efforts were needed to share knowledge regarding the *Praxis*® I with underclassmen.



### **Black Teacher Candidates and Standardized Testing**

According to Madkins (2011), “there are a disproportionate number of Black teachers in the workforce” (p. 418). Standardized testing has long been a challenge for Black students and teachers (Jones, 1917). Historically, Blacks have been educated in schools that were often overcrowded, received inadequate funding, and had lacked resources (Garibaldi, 1991). Scholars contended that “minorities are undereducated during their K-12 school experiences, leaving them inadequately prepared for higher education” (Irvine, 1988 in Madkins 2011, p. 419).

The article by Memory, Coleman, & Watkins (2003), followed the development of warnings and implications that barrier examinations to teacher education programs may “prevent or discourage capable African Americans from entering into teaching” (p. 217). Increased teacher salaries during the 1980s required teachers to have more education and demonstrate a specific level of competency in their subject areas. This, in turn, sparked an increase in the required passing scores for teacher licensure examinations (Murnane, et al., 1991 in Madkins 2011, p. 420). “In North Carolina, there was a 73% decline in Black teachers between 1975 and 1982,” due to increases in cut scores for licensure examinations (Madkins, 2011, p. 421). Fluctuations in passing scores of teacher licensure examinations across the various states, and their impact on teachers of color in the field are an ongoing issue.

Memory, et al. (2003) examined preservice teacher performance on the *Praxis*® I examination and sought to determine the impact the test may have had on teacher effectiveness if the required passing score was increased by one point. The focus of the

article centered around the effects an increase in cut score would have on the participation of Blacks in the teaching profession. The researchers also reported that if the cut score for the *Praxis*® *I* examination were raised by one point, the strength of the teaching profession and the bargaining power of teachers unions would increase; however, increases in the cut score may negatively impact the pool of Black teachers. Furthermore, the authors posited that raising the *Praxis*® *I* examination cut score by one point would present additional challenges with passing the test, discouraging Black teacher candidates from entering the profession.

According to Strunk, Locke, & Martin (2016), the achievement gap among White teachers and teachers of color has widened over the years. These challenges often sparked fear of job loss for provisionally licensed candidates, and failure to complete degree programs for education majors (Pendergrass, 2017). While Pendergrass's study (2017) highlighted challenges with the *Praxis*® *II* examinations, the author only focused on assessments in core educational areas (language arts, mathematics, social studies, science) which were found on the Elementary Education assessment. An examination of performance on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination was not included in this study.

Elpus's (2015) article was the first to examine the demographic performance of music teacher candidates on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination. The purpose of the article was to "analyze the demographic profile of candidates seeking music teacher licensure in the United States and to understand whether performance on the *Praxis*® *II* music teacher licensure tests varies systematically as a function of various demographic characteristics" (p. 314). Elpus examined the *Praxis*® *Music* examination scores of 20,521 candidates

from 2007 through 2012. Results of the study showed that White candidates scored significantly higher than Black candidates, and that males earned higher scores than female candidates (p. 314). Additionally, results revealed that certain candidates took the examination multiple times, with 0.77% attempting the examination “six or more times” (p. 319). According to Elpus, although researchers have suggested that “students from marginalized populations may encounter barriers to entering and completing music education degree programs, there is no extant research on the Praxis performance of music teacher licensure candidates” (p. 316).

### **Summary**

In general, few studies have addressed the issue of Black teacher candidates in relation to teacher licensure examinations and the lack of interest in the teaching profession. Even fewer articles have addressed the performances of music education majors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. With an increase in the licensure requirements to become a teacher, there has been a decline in the availability of Black music teacher candidates. According to Nettles, et.al. (2011), to fully understand the relationship of assessments to the supply, quality, and demographic composition of the teaching workforce, we must begin with an examination of all assessments used for these purposes. The purpose of the current study, therefore, was to investigate Black music teacher candidate’s experiences with the *Praxis*® *Music* examination.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for this descriptive study regarding the preparation and performance of Black music teacher candidates on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination. Following a re-statement of the purpose and research questions for the study, I describe the *Praxis*® *Music* examination. I discuss the applicability of qualitative research methodology, and why a descriptive approach is appropriate for this study. Participant selection (including an in-depth description of the participants and their background); procedures; unit and method of analysis; and, ethical concerns, are also the foci of this chapter.

#### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate Black music teacher candidates' experiences with the *Praxis*® *Music* examination. With this study, I sought to address the following questions:

**RQ1:** What are the lived experiences of HBCU music education students and graduates who are provisionally licensed teachers when taking the *Praxis*® *Music* examination?

**RQ2:** How did HBCU music education students believe their undergraduate music education programs prepared them for the *Praxis*® *Music* examination?

**RQ3:** What resources were available and/or accessed by HBCU music teacher candidates to prepare for the *Praxis*® *Music* examination?

### ***Praxis*® *Music* Examination**

The *Praxis*® *Music* examination offers two assessments: (a) Music: Content Knowledge (Test Code 5113), and (b) Music: Content and Instruction (Test Code 5114). *Music: Content and Instruction* measures student knowledge of similar content found on the *Music: Content Knowledge* assessment, however, the *Music: Content and Instruction* includes three constructed response questions. Score reports provide candidates with an overall scaled score and raw points earned per category.

#### **Music: Content Knowledge**

Currently, The *Music: Content Knowledge* assessment is required by twenty-six states in the United States, and three United States Territories. The assessment takes approximately two hours and is divided into a listening section and a non-listening section (Educational Testing Service, 2020). There are approximately 120 multiple-choice questions on the assessment, divided into four categories: (a) Music History and Literature, (b) Theory and Composition, (c) Performance, and (d) Pedagogy, Professional Issues, and Technology. The largest category on this assessment is Pedagogy, Professional Issues, and Technology, containing approximately 56 questions (ETS 5113 Study Companion, p. 5).

Materials on the test reflect the diversity of examinees' music instruction specialties as well as the cultural and demographic inclusiveness of modern music instruction. These materials also reflect instrumental (woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings), vocal jazz, and general music instruction specialties across the K-12 grade range. Questions selected for the test represent and

equitable distribution of topics, including topics unique to each specialty as well as those that are common across all specialties. (ETS 5113 Study Companion, 2020, p. 6)

*Music: Content Knowledge* measures student knowledge of musical eras and compositional practices, world music, composers and literature, performance techniques and analysis, technology for music instruction and production, instructional practices, and educational laws. The highest score possible on this assessment is 200. The minimum required passing score varies from state to state. Currently, the lowest minimum passing score is 139 (e.g., Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam), and the highest is 161 (e.g., Alabama, Colorado, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico) (Educational Testing Service, 2020).

### **Music: Content and Instruction**

Ten states in the United States, and one United States Territory currently require the *Music: Content and Instruction* assessment. Similar to the *Music: Content Knowledge* assessment, this assessment takes approximately two hours, and is divided into a listening section and a non-listening section (Educational Testing Service, 2020). There are approximately 84 multiple-choice questions and three constructed-response questions on the assessment, divided into four categories: (a) Music History and Theory, (b) Performance, (c) Instruction, Professional Issues, and Technology, and (d) Instructional Activities (constructed response). Although the content assessed is evenly distributed amongst the categories, the largest category on this assessment is Music History and Theory, containing approximately 32 questions (ETS 5114 Study Companion, p. 5).

Approximately 50 percent of the test assesses content related to teaching music. The other 50 percent covers music content knowledge foundational to professional practice and indicative of the training expected by the field. The majority of the 84 selected-response questions emphasize knowledge and skills common to all music education specialties, such as history, theory, classroom practices, professional issues, and applied technology. (ETS 5114 Study Companion, 2020, p. 5)

The highest possible score on the *Music: Content and Instruction* assessment is 200, and a minimum passing score of 162 is required in ten of the eleven states and territories administering this assessment (e.g., Alaska, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, & the Northern Mariana Islands). Nebraska requires a minimum score of 152. It is interesting to note that Alaska and the Northern Mariana Islands currently require candidates to pass both assessments (Educational Testing Service, 2020).

### **Design**

This descriptive study uses a qualitative method. According to Ejimabo (2015), qualitative studies utilize social interaction to gain an understanding of a problem. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that qualitative research is the method for “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 6). The purpose of this study was to investigate Black music teacher candidates’ experiences with the *Praxis® Music* Examination. It was important to look beyond the quantitative data of test scores and talk with Black music teacher candidates directly, to gain an understanding of their study skills and test preparation, detailed information about their individual performance on the *Praxis® Music*, and perceived barriers to success.

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (Creswell, 2014, p. 4)

The use of a qualitative research method for this study allowed me to explore preparation strategies, test performance, perceptions, and feelings of pre-service and provisionally licensed music educators, utilizing open-ended interview questions to engage participants in dialogue about their experiences. Formal interview questions were structured with two points of focus in mind: (a) What has the participant experienced in terms of the phenomenon of low test scores and challenges with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*, and, (b) What contexts or situations have typically influenced the participant's experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2013)? Each open-ended interview was recorded, and those recordings were transcribed for accuracy and data interpretation.

A descriptive research design was used to bring awareness to the unique lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. Given (2008) defines a lived experience as a representation and understanding of human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge. I sought to understand the personal experiences and subsequent decision-making processes specific to Black music teacher candidates at HBCUs and their preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. Participants chosen for this study were selected because they are currently living the experience of challenges related to passing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. This research design is appropriate because it describes the meaning of participants' lived experiences of a



concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). I wanted to know if there was a connection between Black music teacher candidates' preparation for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* Exam, and their performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. Moreover, I wanted to know if commonalities existed between participants and their perceived challenges with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*.

With limited research related to Black music teacher candidates and the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examinations, and the increasing shortage of licensed Black music teachers, a qualitative descriptive design was the most appropriate for identifying and describing the nature of the phenomenon.

### **Procedure**

Typically, qualitative studies do not have a predetermined number of participants, and researchers often cap the number of participants when they believe they have reached saturation, however Creswell (2012) recommended “researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon,” (p. 61). Saturation is defined as “data adequacy” and the process of “collecting data until no new information is obtained,” (Morse, 1995, p. 147). Saturation is the point in data collection where the researcher can be assured that additional data collection would yield similar results, further confirming emerging themes and conclusions (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017).

In qualitative studies, the researcher determines when saturation has been met, whereas in quantitative studies, formulas are utilized to determine the sample size required to reach saturation. Saturation refers to the “richness of data,” and not the quantity of data collected (Morse, 1995, p. 148). Morse (1995) referenced anthropologist Margaret Mead, and “Mead’s boredom,” indicating that an indicator of saturation

occurred when “investigators had heard it all,” (p. 147). In comparing the lived experiences of participants, I selected ten participants for my study, determining that this was the point of saturation in my data.

Formal interviewing was the primary method of data collection for this study. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix A. Interviews were recorded electronically using both a video conference recording service, and an Olympus® VN-541PC Recorder. All interviews were conducted during the fall of 2019. It was necessary to conduct two interviews per participant. The first interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and consisted of sixteen questions. Follow-up interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, utilizing the same sixteen questions, with the purpose of clarifying participant responses from their initial interview session. Follow-up email questions were used to verify that their demographic information provided in their initial survey (i.e., age, years of teaching experience, number of times they took the *Praxis*® *Music* Examination) was correct.

Interviews began with open-ended questions about the participant’s background and their initial interest in music and becoming a music teacher. More detailed questions followed, aimed at gathering data with more depth on *Praxis*® *Music* preparation and test performance. The interview concluded with more open-ended questions, to gauge participant perspectives and views on needed changes in music education at HBCUs, and for Black teacher candidates to increase success on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination.

Interviews were conducted in person and via videoconference on the Zoom™ platform. The interviews were recorded electronically using a conference recording

service and an Olympus® VN-541PC Voice Recorder. No interview was conducted without the verbal informed consent of the participants. Each session was transcribed using my personal Hewlett Packard Pavilion laptop. From the experiences captured in these interviews, I intended to identify and develop emerging themes based on the research questions. Moreover, paying close attention to body language, voice inflection, and mood of the participants when answering questions, provided me with great insight as it relates to their experiences.

I utilized emergent and *in vivo* coding to analyze data. Following the transcription of each interview, I read the transcripts several times, highlighting key words or phrases that were prominent and recurring in each transcript. Transcripts were reviewed again to connect these words and phrases to *a priori* codes related to each research question: (a) experience, (b) undergraduate preparation, and (c) resources. In addition to coding the data, I also assigned codes and pseudonyms to each participant in the study. Participants that were current music education majors were assigned S numbers to identify them as students (i.e., S1, S2, etc...). Current teachers were assigned P numbers to identify them as provisionally licensed teachers (i.e., P1, P2, etc...). Pseudonyms were generated using a random generator of the most common baby names for the year 2019.

### **Materials**

For this research study, audio of face-to-face interviews were captured using an Olympus® VN-541PC Recorder. Videoconference interviews were captured using the recording device on the Zoom™ platform. Interview transcriptions were completed using a Hewlett Packard Pavilion laptop, which was secured with a password, and the files

were saved and stored in BOX™. The laptop was stored securely in a locked file cabinet when it was not in use. To playback interviews for transcription, Skullcandy S6HCWL003 Venue Wireless Headphones were used, and interviews were transcribed in a private setting in my home office.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis for this research study is the lived experiences of pre-service music teacher candidates ( $n = 5$ ) and provisionally licensed music teachers ( $n = 5$ ), affiliated with public HBCUs in the Southern region of the United States, accredited by CAEP, SACSCOC, and NASM. Reflections on those experiences led to the development of themes to answer research questions of the study, related to the preparation and performance of Black music teacher candidates on the *Praxis*® Music examination.

### **The Researcher**

The overall purpose of qualitative research is to “understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). Describing my researcher identity will help readers understand my experiences and how these experiences impact my research. I am a middle-class, widowed, Black female in my late thirties. I hold a Bachelor of Music Degree and a Master of Music Degree in Music Education from two Historically Black Colleges and Universities located in the Southern region of the United States. I have also completed additional studies in Education Administration and Post-Secondary and Adult Studies. Finally, I have fifteen years of experience as a music educator, with seven years in K-12 education as an elementary music teacher, a middle and high school chorus teacher, and a middle and high school

band director, and seven years of experience in higher education as a Director of University Bands and Assistant Professor of Music Education. In my current position, I also serve as the Coordinator of the Music Education degree program.

I grew up in a family rich with singers and musicians and was exposed to a wide variety of music at an early age. My family always promoted the importance of education and service to others. There are many educators in my family; quite a few are band and choir directors, which ultimately played a role in my own career decision. This is important to my researcher identity as I have always expressed an interest in helping and teaching others, and helping marginalized populations succeed academically.

Part of my research, and my core interest for on-going study, focuses on examining and improving HBCU music education programs to enhance learning, and improve the preparation and performance of minorities on teacher certification assessments; specifically, the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. This study focuses on Black music teacher candidates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. I chose to focus on Historically Black Colleges and Universities because of my experience as both a student and teacher at several HBCUs. The study stems from personal experiences as a HBCU student, witnessing classmates and music education major friends from my home institution and other institutions. Several of my classmates and friends changed their major, failed to complete their degrees, or completed their degrees but failed to become certified, because of challenges faced with passing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Series* examinations.

As an educator, I have taught several upper level music education courses, and tutored students at my assigned HBCU and HBCUs throughout the United States, in

efforts to help them pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. These exams served as the gateway for entrance to upper level teacher education courses, clearance to student teach, graduate, and become a licensed music educator. Witnessing the struggle of my students and others with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, and facing decisions of changing their major, fueled my interest in researching this phenomenon.

My experience as a music education major, and my entrance into the field after passing these examinations, also impacted my research. While I passed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *I* (now *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *CORE*) on the first attempt, it took two attempts to pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, missing a passing score on the first attempt by just one point. The experience of my preparation during both attempts, my knowledge of the content assessed, and my current experience as a university professor and a *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> tutor, has a direct impact on how I perceive music education, and the preparation of pre-service teachers; especially minority pre-service teachers.

My experiences as a doctoral student at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro provide me with a new lens in concepts related to music education and teacher preparation, research in music education, and how to utilize that research to inform decisions and create an agenda for change. This knowledge, coupled with the support and guidance of my masters thesis advisor many years ago, led me to my research topic. Over the past few years as a university professor, I have had many conversations with music educators and administrators. While many of our conversations are related to music performance and creating a holistic experience for our students, many of our conversations have been centered around student preparation and

performance on teacher certification examinations. I have had the honor and privilege of facilitating and leading various workshops and week-long training sessions to help music education majors prepare for these examinations; however, I became concerned about the achievement gap, and the concerns many HBCU music education professors and administrators shared across the nation about student performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. This served as my motivation to begin research studies to identify root causes for certification examination failure and to offer plausible solutions to students, provisionally licensed teachers, university faculty, and administrators.

Qualitative research is subjective. As a researcher, I must always consider the relationship and collaboration between the participants and myself. I took careful steps to assure that while I facilitated each interview, I did not impose a theory, belief or preconceived assumption upon the participants. It was critical that participants were able to share freely and openly, their experiences as it related to preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*.

### **Participants**

Participants were chosen from a population of HBCU pre-service and recent graduates who currently hold provisional teaching licenses, affiliated with a public HBCU in the Southern region of the United States. There were no restrictions on age for this study, however, it was important to ensure both female and male music teacher candidates were represented in the study. The participants were selected from public, four-year Historically Black Colleges and Universities that are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the Southern Association of

Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM).

Connections through existing professional networks, and various connections with HBCU music faculty and administrators assisted in the selection of participants for this study. A copy of the email sent to faculty and administrators can be found in Appendix B. Several music education faculty and administrators also were contacted via phone to request leads to candidates that fit the criteria.

Potential candidates were asked to respond to a brief demographic survey, as shown in Appendix C, to help identify the selected sample population of participants for the study. The demographic survey captured information about the potential candidate's age, gender, school affiliation, major, graduate status, number of times they took the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* Examination, whether or not they passed, and whether or not they held a provisional or temporary teaching license. Forty-five candidates completed the survey; ten were chosen for the study.

Patton (2002) describes purposive sampling as a qualitative research technique for identifying and selecting information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. Additionally, purposive sampling consists of identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon being studied (Creswell, Clark, & Plano, 2011). An Informed Consent Form, as shown in Appendix D, was required for each participant prior to participating.



### **Background of Participants**

Ten participants were chosen for this qualitative research study. Five were current music education majors, and five were provisionally licensed teachers. Each participant in the study failed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination on their initial attempt, or one or more subsequent attempts. Demographic information was obtained from potential candidates prior to conducting the interviews, to help identify and select the sample population. Participants in the study met the minimum criteria for the study as follows: (a) Currently enrolled, or a graduate of a HBCU in the Southern Region of the United States that is accredited by SACSCOC, CAEP, and NASM; (b) Attempted the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination at least once, but did not pass; or passed after several failed attempts, and, (c) Consented to participation in the study.

The study sample consisted of seven males and three females. Seven participants were under the age of thirty. Three of the provisionally licensed teachers have held a license for three years, and two have held a license for less than three years. Eight of the participants have taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* four or more times. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographics*

Coding	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Classification	Praxis Attempts
S1	Shawn	Male	23	Senior	5
S2	Kiara	Female	23	Senior	6
S3	Jada	Female	22	Senior	1
S4	Adrian	Male	23	Senior	4
S5	Malik	Male	24	Senior	1
P1	Andre	Male	36	Teacher	> 6
P2	Corey	Male	31	Teacher	6
P3	Michelle	Female	40	Teacher	> 5
P4	Isaiah	Male	26	Teacher	4
P5	Jason	Male	28	Teacher	> 4

**Music Education Major Participants**

Five participants in this study were current music education majors. Each was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Shawn was a twenty-three-year-old male and was a senior music education major. Shawn began music instruction in middle school and started playing the trombone in the ninth grade. His original desire was to play a percussion instrument, but he was encouraged to play a brass instrument by his high school band director. Musical ability came naturally for him, and by the twelfth grade, he had developed the desire to become a band director. While Shawn has generally performed well in his academic courses, he struggles with standardized testing. He has attempted the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* five times and was in the process of changing his major to music performance out of frustration and the desire to graduate. He intended to go to graduate school and possibly enter the teaching profession via a lateral entry program.

Kiara was a twenty-three-year-old female and was a senior music education major. Kiara began playing the trumpet in the seventh grade after being inspired by four of her cousins who were members of the high school band. She was also an athlete and played basketball while in high school. She attributed her leadership skills and confidence to her experience in her high school band program. While she originally intended to join the Air Force and later major in Criminal Justice, Kiara chose to major in music education after receiving a band scholarship to go to college. Kiara had several musicians, music educators, and other teachers in her family, and believed that pursuing a career in music was something she was “destined to do.” Kiara was strong academically in school, but struggled with standardized tests, stating that she “wasn’t really confident with standardized tests, but by luck, always ended up passing them.” She passed the *Praxis*® I (now *Praxis*® Core) on her first attempt but has struggled to pass the *Praxis*® Music. Kiara has attempted the *Praxis*® Music six times and has considered changing her major to music performance to graduate.

Jada was a twenty-two-year-old female and was a senior music education major. She began music instruction in middle school; inspired by her grandfather, who was the only musician in her immediate family. Her experience in the high school band also inspired her interest in becoming a music educator. In addition to playing in the band, Jada was exposed to music theory in high school, successfully passing *Advanced Placement (AP) Music Theory*. Jada has always been an honor roll student, but indicated she was not a strong test taker. With the aid of study materials, she was able to pass the *Praxis*® Core on her first attempt; however, she was unable to pass the *Praxis*® Music on

her first attempt, missing the minimum passing score by two points. At the time of her interview, she had planned to retake the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* within the next month.

Adrian was a twenty-three-year-old male senior music education major. Adrian began music instruction in the fifth grade, learning recorder, and later transitioning to saxophone in the sixth grade. His high school band experience included having a new band director each year; however, he credited one of his high school band directors with inspiring him to pursue a career in music, stating they considered being a music educator “a career and not a job; something that doesn’t feel like work and they enjoy doing.” While Adrian was prepared for college, he admitted that his college education started off “rocky,” and he failed several courses. He began to improve by junior year; however, he has struggled to pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. Adrian has taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* four times, and, like Shawn, has considered changing his major to music performance to graduate.

Malik was a twenty-four-year-old male senior music education major and served as a temporary music teacher in a local school district. He began music instruction in middle school and continued to participate in band throughout high school. His exposure to classical music in high school and the enthusiasm of his band director inspired his decision to pursue a career in music education. Although he originally planned to major in Graphic Design, the university he chose did not offer a degree in that area. He chose to major in music because he was already a member of the band and felt familiar and comfortable with pursuing it as a career. Malik performed well academically throughout school, however, standardized tests have always been a challenge. He asserted, “I felt I didn’t develop the skills necessary to be successful on standardized tests while in school.”

He also stated he has difficulty preparing for and passing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* because the examination covers a very broad range of content. Malik has taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* one time but was not successful.

### **Teacher Participants**

The remaining five participants selected for the study were HBCU graduates currently holding a provisional license in music education. Each participant has attempted the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* one or more times but has not passed. These participants were also assigned pseudonyms. Andre was a thirty-six-year-old provisionally licensed high school band director, with six years of teaching experience. He began music instruction in elementary school and joined the middle and high school band. In addition to developing skills as a tuba player, he was also a trained pianist, and served as a church musician. His high school music teacher inspired him to become a band director. Andre maintained good grades throughout high school and college and has typically done well with standardized tests; however, he attributed test anxiety as a contributor to his challenges with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. He changed his major from music education to music performance because of challenges passing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* and graduated with a liberal arts degree in music. Andre has taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* more than six times.

Corey was a thirty-one-year-old provisionally licensed high school band director, with three years of teaching experience. He began music instruction in elementary school, starting band in the fourth grade. He performed on clarinet until the ninth grade, then switched to French horn in tenth grade, trumpet in eleventh grade, and tuba in the twelfth grade. He transferred from a community college to his four-year institution,

where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Music degree, after facing challenges with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*, and changing his major from music education to music performance so that he could graduate. Corey has taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* six times.

Michelle was a forty-year-old provisionally licensed middle and high school band director, with two years of teaching experience. She began playing the trumpet at age ten, inspired by her older sister, who was in the high school band. Her original goal was to become a dentist; however, she decided to major in music education after completing her first semester in college. She credited her high school band director with inspiring her to become a music educator. Michelle maintained good grades and did well with standardized tests throughout school; however, challenges with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *I* (now *Core*) began her struggles with certification assessments. Her inability to pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *I* prompted her to change her major to music performance in order to graduate. To date, Michelle has not passed *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Core* or *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* and has taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* more than five times.

Isaiah was a twenty-six-year-old provisionally licensed middle school choral teacher, with four years of teaching experience. He began playing music in the church, and later joined the middle and high school choir. His experience in middle school inspired his interest in teaching music. Isaiah performed well on standardized tests in middle and high school but struggled on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Series* exams. He has taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* four times and was studying to retake the exam before the end of the school year.

Jason was a twenty-eight-year-old provisionally licensed choral teacher, with an interesting assignment to teach band this year. This assignment was interesting because Jason does not have any prior experience with band, as a student nor teacher. Although interesting, his assignment was not uncommon, as many public-school music teachers across the country have been assigned to teach both band and chorus, or they have been assigned to teach one of the ensembles with which they were not familiar.

Jason's musical experience began as a child in the church. He was the son of a pastor and began playing the keyboard at age eleven. He was an active participant in his middle and high school chorus; however, his inspiration for wanting to become a music educator did not come from his music teachers. His interest was inspired by a television show, *The Steve Harvey Show*. This show chronicles the career and lifestyle of fictitious character Steve Hightower, who is a former professional saxophonist and funk band member, and the current music teacher and vice principal at Booker T. Washington High School. Jason indicated that "watching the show, and how Mr. Hightower dressed, carried himself, and interacted with the students—especially the troubled students—made me want to become a teacher." Jason asserted that he has always struggled with standardized testing, and especially the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*, because professors "made the test sound scary." He has taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* more than four times.

### **Trustworthiness**

To increase the trustworthiness of this research study, I utilized (a) participant review, (b) content validity, and (c) researcher identity. Each participant was asked to review the codes I utilized in the data analysis, and the themes that emerged from the study. Participants verified that the themes generated from the data were accurate.

Additionally, two HBCU college music professors – experienced with qualitative research studies and interviewing – were asked to review interview questions for clarity and appropriateness regarding my research questions and ethical considerations.

### **Ethical Concerns**

Whether conducting a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods study, knowing what and when ethical issues may arise, and how to address them, was of extreme importance. Due to the minimal risk associated with this study, written consent forms were not required. Each participant was read and provided with a copy of the informed consent form and agreed verbally to participate in the study. Because the participants' voices would be potentially identifiable by anyone who heard the recording of their interview, confidentiality of things said on the recording could not be guaranteed. I sought to limit access to the recordings by utilizing headphones in an isolated setting—my home office—to protect confidentiality of participants. Audio recordings were kept in a locked file cabinet in my office until transcription was complete, and all files were deleted or destroyed immediately after transcription.

All information obtained in this study was strictly confidential unless disclosure was required by law. Because absolute confidentiality of data provided through the



internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access, participants interviewed via Zoom<sup>TM</sup> were encouraged to close their browser upon the completion of the interview, so that no one else would be able to see what they have been doing. I also closed my browser to exit the application and cleared the Internet history after each interview.

### **Summary**

Ten participants were chosen for this qualitative research study. Participants included current music education majors ( $n = 5$ ) and provisionally licensed music educators ( $n = 5$ ) who had not passed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Participants were selected from Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Southern Region of the United States that are currently accredited by SACSCOC, CAEP, and NASM. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and using the Zoom<sup>TM</sup> platform. Interviews captured the experiences of pre-service and provisionally licensed teachers relating to their preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. Data were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative methods. Findings of the study will be discussed in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate Black music teacher candidates' experiences with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Specifically, the study examined the connection between teacher candidates' preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, at selected HBCUs in the Southern Region of the United States. This focus is in response to the issue that there is a continued shortage of music teachers, especially Black music teachers, and many of the HBCU music education majors are not passing *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination on their first attempt. I investigated ten participants' experiences with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination and their respective music education programs.

The data analyzed in the study were collected via formal interviews, from current music education majors, and provisionally licensed teachers affiliated with HBCUs in the Southern Region of the United States, that are accredited by SACSCOC, CAEP, and NASM. As mentioned previously, the Southern Region of the United States encompasses three areas: (a) South Atlantic, (b) East South Central, and (c) West South Central, and the states represented in this current study include Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix E.

The findings of the study may make a meaningful difference in the field of education, as results of the study will contribute to the professional literature addressing how to increase the number of licensed music teachers of color in the nation; and more specifically, in the Southern region of the United States. With this study, I aimed to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of HBCU music education students and graduates who are provisionally licensed teachers when taking the *Praxis*® *Music* examination?

RQ2: How did HBCU music education students believe their undergraduate music education programs prepared them for the *Praxis*® *Music* examination?

RQ3: What resources were available and/or accessed by HBCU music teacher candidates to prepare for the *Praxis*® *Music* examination?

### **Data Analysis**

The purpose of conducting the formal interview was to explore the problem of low passing rates on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination among Black music teacher candidates, by capturing the lived experiences of participants related to preparation and performance on the examination. Emergent and *in vivo* coding was used to analyze data. Transcripts were read several times to identify key words or phrases that were prominent and recurring in each transcript. Transcripts were reviewed again to connect coded words and phrases to *a priori* codes related to each research question: (a) experience, (b) undergraduate preparation, and (c) resources. In addition to coding the data, Codes and pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in the study. Current music education

majors were assigned “S” numbers to identify them as students (i.e., S1, S2, etc...).

Current teachers were assigned “P” numbers to identify them as provisionally licensed teachers (i.e., P1, P2, etc...). Pseudonyms were generated using a from the most common baby names for the year 2019.

## **Experience**

The first research question was intended to capture the experience of participants’ performance on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination. Data analysis revealed three emergent themes: *Anxiety and Fear*, *Unfamiliarity*, and *Unpreparedness*.

### *Anxiety and Fear*

Seven participants indicated test anxiety or fear as a factor of their preparation and performance on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination. Participants believed the pressure of high stakes testing and the consequences of not passing, added stress and hindered performance on the examination.

Kiara: I wasn’t really confident with standardized testing, but somehow, I always passed. With the *Praxis*® it was different. I just can’t seem to pass the test.

Anthony: I don’t like standardized tests. I get nervous, and no matter how much I prepare, my anxiety causes me to forget information.

Corey: I am not a good test taker. I do okay with regular class tests, but something like a standardized test, my anxiety gets very high. Knowing that a test can decide if you get into college or not, or if you get a job or not, is very stressful.

Two candidates asserted they were scared to take the *Praxis*® *Music* examination.

Michelle: They scared us! The first thing that was mentioned when I learned about the *Praxis*® *Music*, was that if you don’t pass you can’t get a job! I felt like I was doomed from the beginning. I was too scared to even take the test at

first, out of fear of failure. Each time I took the test, I was so focused on the consequences of not passing, that I forgot a lot of the information I studied.

Jason also indicated that professors in the department “scared students about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*.” He mentioned waiting until senior year, out of fear of failing the test.

### *Unfamiliarity*

The second theme that emerged from the first research question was *unfamiliarity*. Participants felt that poor communication and lack of information about the content of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination hindered their success on the examination. Participants recalled learning about the requirements of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination late in their degree programs, and not receiving adequate information regarding the content assessed on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, or the scoring process. Shawn’s body language became agitated as he spoke about receiving information about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination as a requirement for graduation and licensure.

Shawn: I was blind-sided with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *II*. I was not told I had to take this test, nor what was on it, by anyone in my department until the second semester of my junior year. I feel like my department let me down, and just as I started taking *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *II*, and getting closer to the passing score, which was a 151 at the time, I was then told the passing score had been raised to 161.

Adrian, Kiara, and Jason also indicated learning about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination requirement late into their degree programs. Adrian and Kiara were informed at the beginning of their junior year, and Jason was informed towards the end of his junior year. Adrian also stated that he “was not provided with much information about

what was on the test or what to expect when I went to take it.” “I had to figure it out on my own.”

### *Unpreparedness*

Participants believed that although they studied and used a variety of resources to prepare for the *Praxis*® *Music*, they still felt unprepared for the examination. Each candidate indicated that some of the content assessed in the Music History, Theory, and Instructional Practices portion of the examination was not covered in the courses they took.

Michelle: I did very poorly on the Music History portion, because a lot of the questions were about composers or pieces we never covered in class. I am an instrumental person, and I had no knowledge of some of the vocal works I saw on the test.

Andre: I felt I was not prepared for the Music History portion because most of the information was not covered in my classes in college, or they were rushed over, so I never learned it.

In addition to issues related to the content assessed on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination, participants believed the examination was too broad, which created challenges with information recall and the accuracy of their responses. Isaiah stated, “the test covers almost everything in music, instrumental and vocal, and it’s hard to try to remember all of that information, and even harder when some of the information was not covered in classes.” Moreover, for those taking the Music: Content and Instruction (5114) assessment, participants felt their lack of experience and regular practice with constructed response questions hindered their preparation and performance on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination.

## Undergraduate Program Preparation

The second research question was aimed at gathering information about participants' perceptions of their undergraduate music education programs, and the level of preparation and support provided in relation to the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. Data collected revealed four emergent themes: *engagement*, *course content and sequencing*, *competence*, and *communication*.

### *Engagement*

Participants felt professors did not adequately engage students in lessons and course activities. All ten participants recalled challenges with connecting course content, mastering concepts, and relating content to other courses or the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Each participant indicated challenges with Music History, and the professor's ability to deliver the content, engage students, connect concepts, and identify areas critical to success on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination.

Three participants recounted difficulty with connecting content taught in instrumental methods courses. An inadequate supply of instruments prohibited these participants from hands-on experience with playing the instruments and applying performance concepts (i.e., tone production, articulation, proper hand position, etc...) or evaluative concepts (i.e., correcting intonation or performance errors, overcoming mechanical challenges, etc...). Participants had to rely solely on PowerPoint<sup>™</sup> presentations, textbooks, and teacher-made handouts, to learn these concepts.

Andre: I attended a small institution, with limited funding for our department, so resources and instruments for our methods courses were slim to none. Unless we knew someone in the band who played the instrument we were learning, we never

got a chance to touch the instrument or play it. We did worksheets and looked at pictures of the instruments.

Adrian and Andre asserted that the hands-on experiences would have prepared them to better answer the questions related to instrumental performance.

All ten participants articulated that their Music Theory courses provided several opportunities for students to engage with the concepts and immediately apply those concepts to “real-life” situations. Through classroom activities, homework assignments, and listening example, participants could identify, analyze, and construct responses pertaining to the topics presented (i.e., secondary dominants, part-writing, score analysis, identifying errors). These concepts are assessed in both the listening and non-listening sections of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination.

#### *Course Content and Sequencing*

Participants indicated frustrations with the content covered in music history courses, and the sequence of those courses. Music history courses did not provide an equal balance between genres, composers, and compositional techniques for instrumental and vocal works; placing instrumental majors at a disadvantage with their knowledge of choral works, composers, and style, and vocal majors at a disadvantage with their knowledge of instrumental works and composers. Moreover, data revealed inconsistencies as to the sequence of music history courses in participants’ respective programs. Four of the participants took Music History starting their sophomore year. The remaining six participants did not take Music History until junior and senior year.



When asked about content taught in Music Theory, participants indicated that their theory courses were the strongest. Many participants expressed their appreciation for the hands-on opportunities they received in their theory courses, through analysis and part-writing assignments, listening assignments, and other projects. Six out of the ten participants indicated that their scores were higher on the theory portion of the *Praxis*® *Music* examination because of these activities, and for three participants, prior theory training in high school.

Although participants believed their instrumental/vocal methods courses provided hands on activities, through opportunities to explore and learn how to play various instruments or learn various vocal techniques, many felt those courses were “rushed,” and not thorough enough to aid with success on the *Praxis*® *Music*. Participants who were vocal majors indicated weaknesses with instrumental methods, highlighting challenges with understanding *transposition*, *instrumental ranges*, and *how to correct performance errors* (i.e., intonation, shrill or airy tone, etc...).

Anthony: I learned a lot in the methods courses like woodwinds, and brass, but I wish the professor went into more detail in strings class. If you are not used to playing or teaching strings, spending only a week on an instrument is not enough time to effectively learn how to play it or teach it, or learn how to correct problems.

It is interesting to note that four out of the ten participants only covered one or two instruments the entire semester in their instrumental methods courses, and never received instruction on the other instruments in that instrumental family.

Two out of the ten participants articulated that their participation in their institution's instrumental or vocal ensembles was beneficial to their performance on the *Praxis*® *Music*. Of the participants who did not agree; each indicated their desire to engage in more “teachable moments” in their ensembles.

Kiara: I really do not feel my participation in the marching or concert band prepared me for the *Praxis*® *Music*. While it was a great experience, I feel the director could have highlighted more teachable moments for the music majors during warmups or when we were working on music. He could have explained the tuning process, or information about reading the score, or even helpful hints about rehearsal techniques. This would have really helped me on the constructed response questions on the *Praxis*®.

Shawn: There was so much emphasis on getting ready for the performance in marching band and concert band, that we really didn't focus on things that could benefit music education majors.

Corey: I feel my director could have utilized the music majors more to help warmup the band or rehearse sections of the music, so that we could apply the skills we learned in conducting class and other methods classes, to a real live ensemble. I think this would help when answering the questions about correcting performance errors on the *Praxis*®.

Although participants believed teacher education courses were helpful, each shared that the teacher education courses did not prepare them to answer educational questions from a musical perspective. Corey stated, “There was nothing set aside in our teacher education courses that would help someone teaching performance-based classes like physical education or music.” Kiara articulated the benefits of the teacher education courses and opportunities to “go out into the field” and observe music classes at different schools. She attributes these experiences to her confidence and strong performance on the Instructional Practices portion of the *Praxis*® *Music*.

Jada: The teacher education courses were informative, but a lot of the information covered was not on the exam. I feel I needed more content relevant to music teacher education. My education courses spent a lot of time teaching Piaget and other theorists, but did not focus on music theorists like Dalcroze, Orff, Kodaly, and others.

### *Competence*

Participants shared concerns about their professors' preparation and delivery of course content, and their knowledge and application of best practices for student engagement and instructional methods. Additionally, participants expressed concern that professors' lack of knowledge of the structure and content of the *Praxis*® Music examination, impacted their ability to plan instruction, focus assignments, and provide content relevant to success on the examination.

Corey: I feel that my professor was never really prepared for class when I took Strings Methods. He would come into class, give us handouts, and end class about five minutes later. He didn't know anything about the *Praxis*® exam, and our assignments were often very basic. I don't feel I really learned anything in that class that was beneficial. I struggled with questions relating to string instruments on the *Praxis*®.

Jason: I believe my professors knew the material for themselves but did not know how to explain it to us as students. A lot of my older music professors didn't even know what the *Praxis*® exam was, and so they didn't really know how to narrow down what we were learning in Music History to make it helpful for those of us that needed to take the test. They taught the class like we were planning to be historians, and not teachers.

Kiara: My professors lectured every class, straight from the book. If we had questions about a composer, or genre of music, they told us to read the book. I don't mind reading, but it would have helped to also hear the music we learned about. I had no clue who wrote many of the songs I heard on the *Praxis*®, so I just guessed at most of those questions.

Shawn: I had a hard time in Music History, because my professor was never prepared for class. He never used PowerPoints, each class was a straight lecture

and we were expected to take notes. We didn't use many listening examples and the professor would jump from one topic to the next. It was hard to make connections between different composers and genres, and definitely hard to remember who wrote the songs on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup>.

Corey articulated that he performed well in his music theory courses because of the number of hands on activities, and opportunities to immediately apply the content learned. He mentioned the need for music history professors to provide the same opportunities for students to immediately apply concepts learned or engage in activities directly related to “identifying composers and genres, musical eras, and other historical information.”

### *Communication*

I asked participants about communication within their music departments regarding the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Each participant articulated that communication regarding the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, its requirements, and when to take it, were limited and not regularly discussed in their programs. Three out of the ten participants recalled having a meeting with the department chair during freshman year regarding degree requirements and the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination; however, it was a one-time conversation and content provided was vague. Other participants indicated they learned about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination late in their degree program, during their junior year, as they were seeking admission into the teacher education program for access to their upper level courses.

Corey: Our department had some communication about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*, but not often. They only mentioned we had to take it, but never discussed with us what was on it, and what score was required. We were left to figure that out on our own.

Kiara: I learned about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination my junior year, when I filled out my application for the Teacher Education Program. I was shocked. If I had known sooner that I would need to take this test, I could have planned better. I wanted to change my major right away because I felt blind-sided.

Adrian: My advisor mentioned the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination casually, but never really talked about it. I guess it was because he didn't know anything about it or what was on it, so he only told me as much as he knew.

Jada: My advisor informed me of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> freshman year and did a very good job trying to keep music majors informed about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup>. He even set up a DropBox<sup>™</sup> folder and added study resources and other items to try to help us prepare for the exam. That has been very helpful (Jada).

Isaiah: Our department had one meeting to discuss the degree program and the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*, but that was it. We were only given basic information about the test.

Shawn: I feel my department let me down. I was blind-sided by the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*. I wasn't told I had to take this test until junior year. Then when I finally accepted that I had to take it and started getting closer to the passing score, they raise the required score by eleven points.

The lack of early and regular communication about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination was unsettling for participants, as many believed that earlier, more detailed communication, would have helped them pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination on their first attempt.

## Resources

The final research question asked candidates about the resources they utilized to prepared for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Each candidate indicated use of online study resources, as well as notes and textbooks from their undergraduate courses to prepare for

the examination. The most common online resource utilized was the Study Companion and practice tests provided by the Education Testing Service® (ETS). Quizlet™ was also a popular resource for candidates.

*Table 2*

*Study Resources*

Resource Used	# of Participants
ETS Study Companion	10
Quizlet™ (quizlet.com)	8
MusicTheory.net	4
ETS Practice Tests	7
Self-made Flash Cards	6
Old Textbooks	5
Professor Resources	1
Course Notes & Assignments	6
YouTube®	4
Hired a Tutor	3

All ten candidates indicated a need for a *Praxis*® *Music* examination preparatory course. Additionally, they felt professors and administrators in the department needed to take the *Praxis*® *Music* examination for themselves, to become familiar with the content and structure, to better serve their students.

Corey: Professors need to seek out the information, and learn more about the test for themselves, so that they can adjust their course syllabi and lessons to teach content that is also relevant to the test.

Kiara: Professors should make training music majors a team effort and work together to provide us with information to pass the *Praxis*®. Professors should tell music majors early about the *Praxis*® and communicate often to remind us about the exam and what items are on it.

In addition to the desire for professors to take the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination assessment, candidates also expressed concern about taking courses such as music history and methods courses late in the degree program, or taking the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination years after they have completed music history and theory courses. “I believe if I could have taken music history during my freshman or sophomore year, I would have passed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> on my first try” (Anthony). “I am currently taking percussion methods and strings. While these courses are good and very helpful, I wish I could have taken them earlier than my junior year” (Jada).

### **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the experiences of Black pre-service music teacher candidates, and provisionally licensed music teachers, in regard to their preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Qualitative data were collected via informal interviews, and emergent themes from the interviews were coded and analyzed. Although many of the findings in this study were consistent with existing studies related to Black teacher candidates and standardized testing, and the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Series* examinations, new information emerged from this study. A discussion of the findings of this study, as well as their relation to the literature, will be presented in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to investigate Black music teacher candidates' experiences with the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Data were collected via formal interviews utilizing sixteen structured open-ended questions and were analyzed and coded for emergent themes.

Participants in this study consisted of five Black music education majors, and five provisionally licensed Black music teachers, who were attending or graduated from Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Southern region of the United States at the time of data collection. Participants were from the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana. Participants were those who have failed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination after one or more attempts (N = 10), or who passed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination after multiple attempts (N = 0) (Elpus, 2015; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016). The institutions selected for this study were accredited by SACSCOC, CAEP, and NASM. The formal interview was the main data collection procedure and captured the experiences of the participants.

The primary objective of the current study was to acquire an increased understanding of the challenges faced by Black teacher candidates as related to their preparation and performance on teacher licensure examinations. The participants of the



current study were Black music teacher candidates who were open about their experiences in taking the *Praxis*® *Music* examination more than once.

What follows in this Chapter is a discussion of each of the three research questions that guided this study. The subsequent themes that emerged from the data are discussed in detail.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Question One**

What are the experiences of HBCU music education students and graduates who are provisionally licensed teachers when taking the *Praxis*® *Music* examination (Pendergrass, 2017)? Three themes emerged from the interview data on participant experiences with performance on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination: (a) anxiety and fear, (b) unfamiliarity, and (c) unpreparedness.

#### *Theme 1: Anxiety and Fear*

Participants indicated that while they did well academically in high school and in their college courses, they struggled with standardized testing (Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016). Test anxiety was a common factor mentioned by the participants (N = 8), and they also discussed their fears associated with the consequences of standardized testing (Elpus, 2015). Although participants possibly performed well in individual courses throughout high school and college, standardized tests, such as the *Scholastic Aptitude Test* (SAT) and the *Praxis*® *Music* examination induced stress within several of the participants (Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016). Additionally, participants speculated that their fears associated with inability to student teach, graduate with a music education degree, or to

get or keep a job hindered their success on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Albers, 2002; Elpus, 2015; Pendergrass, 2017).

### *Theme 2: Unfamiliarity*

The participants shared a common point of view, including a lack of knowledge about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, and the content to be assessed. Participants asserted that unfamiliarity with the test content contributed to their poor performance on the initial and subsequent attempts to complete the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Pendergrass, 2017). Four participants stated that they were “blind-sided” by the requirement to take the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, and its implications for graduation and licensure. Five participants articulated that they were not informed of the exam requirement until their junior year, as they attempted to be admitted into the teacher education program and their upper-level education courses (Elpus, 2015; Gitomer & Latham, 2000; Latiker, Washington, Johns, Jackson, & Johnson, 2013).

Participants who were informed about the test felt the information provided was vague. Moreover, the information provided about the exam did not provide details as to what content was assessed, how to structure a study plan, or the necessary steps to take to begin preparing for the test (Albers, 2002; Gitomer & Latham, 2000; Latiker et al., 2013). Participants were not provided information from their advisors or department regarding the Educational Testing Service website or other online sources (e.g., State Department of Education websites, institution Teacher Education Department links, etc.), as a source for increasing understanding about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Gitomer & Latham, 2000).

### *Theme 3: Unpreparedness*

All ten participants contended that their high school music experience impacted their performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Participants attributed experiences with music ensembles in high school with the ability, or inability, to recognize instrumental timbres, understand transposition, and characteristics associated with the various instruments. Those who took courses in music theory in high school revealed they performed well in theory courses in college and on the theory portion of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Participants who were vocal music education majors described challenges with questions about instrumental music teaching methods on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Similarly, instrumental music education majors described challenges with questions about vocal music teaching methods on the examination.

Seven participants expressed beliefs that their high school experience hindered their performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Elpus, 2015). They recounted their level of unpreparedness as they entered their degree program during freshman year. They also discussed negative characteristics of their high school music experiences, such as a high turnover rate of their music ensemble directors, and a lack of focus on music theory and other instrumental and vocal techniques (e.g., range, transposition, complex rhythms, reading fluency, etc.) throughout high school. Moreover, while pursuing their undergraduate music education degree and their music teaching licensure, participants stated that they felt these challenges often placed them at a disadvantage as compared to other students, and that they consistently felt unprepared to study music theory content in college (Albers, 2002; Elpus, 2015; Pendergrass, 2017; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016).

## Research Question Two

How did HBCU music education students believe their undergraduate music education programs prepared them for the *Praxis*® *Music* examination? Participants were asked to describe their experiences in their undergraduate music education courses, and to describe how well they believed those courses prepared them for the *Praxis*® *Music* examination. Participants shared experiences in their courses in music education, music history, music performance, and music theory. There were four themes that emerged related to this research question: (a) engagement, (b) course content and sequencing, (c) competence, and (d) communication.

### *Theme 1: Engagement*

The overarching concern of participants was their experiences in music history courses. Participants asserted that the information in music history courses was often too broad and overwhelming to understand. Additionally, they felt music history content was not delivered in a way that engaged students, or that promoted retention and mastery (Albers, 2002; Allen, 2008). One participant recalled forgetting the music history material covered from lesson to lesson. For many of the participants, the typical lecture-only style of delivering the content of music history courses produced barriers to mastery.

Participants maintained that implementation of hands-on activities or relatable examples would have helped them to master the concepts and information included in music history courses (Lacy, 1985; Allen, 2008). Additionally, they asserted that these experiences would have strengthened their performance on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination questions related to listening for performance errors, more concrete

knowledge of composers, compositional style, and works, and answering constructed response questions related to music history, theory, and literature.

### *Theme 2: Course Content and Scheduling*

Participants perceived that music education and music theory courses were more supportive of preparation for completing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination than music history courses (Albers, 2002; Allen, 2008). While many participants felt professors could have selected and organized the curriculum in a way that aligned with content assessed on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, they appreciated the opportunity for hands-on activities in music education and music theory courses. Participants felt positive about the content received in methods courses and ensembles; however, they also felt many of the instrumental/vocal techniques courses rushed through the content and did not provide in-depth information enough for application (Allen, 2008; Brown, Brown, & Brown, 2008). Additionally, participants felt that, while they gained knowledge of how to play certain instruments, they did not gain much knowledge on how to teach those instruments. Such knowledge would have been beneficial to answering those types of questions on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Brown, Brown, & Brown, 2008; Lacy, 1985).

Several of the participants referenced the content of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, indicating that a large amount of the content assessed was unrelated to what is typically taught in elementary, middle, or high school music programs. They maintained that the content assessed by the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination applied more to those seeking to teach on the college or university level, than to someone teaching middle

and high school band, chorus, or orchestra, or high school theory and music appreciation (Brown, Brown, & Brown, 2008; Lacy, 1985).

Additionally, participants compared the requirements on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination with other *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *II Subject Assessments*, pointing out that many of those subjects (such as Mathematics) have a *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *II* test for specific subjects or grade levels. The *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, however, has been inclusive of K-12 music and combined vocal and instrumental elements into one broad assessment (Brown, Brown, & Brown, 2008; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016). This combination has been reflective of state licensure designations. Music teachers have been licensed as K-12 educators, and separate licenses were not provided for elementary and secondary music teachers, nor instrumental and vocal concentrations.

Lacy's study (1985) identified three competency content areas needed to teach music, including knowledge of practices in music history and theory, instrumental and vocal pedagogy, and teaching strategies. Results of the current study captured participants' perceptions of those same concepts related to the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Findings of the current study and Lacy's findings were similar yet different. The results of the studies are similar in capturing the experiences of graduates in their music education programs. The current study, however, also acquired information from both current music education majors and graduates, and about their experiences associated with teacher licensure examinations.

### *Theme 3: Competence*

Participants expressed challenges with some of their professors' competencies, especially in music history courses. Participant concerns included: (a) inadequate lesson planning and preparation for class, (b) content delivery, and (c) unfamiliarity with content assessed in the music history portion of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Allen, 2008; Brown, Brown, & Brown, 2008). Participants maintained that professors' lack of knowledge of the content and structure of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination impacted instructional planning, content delivery, and design of focused and relevant assignments.

### *Theme 4: Communication*

Participants voiced concerns regarding the lack of knowledge held by academic advisors of the content assessed on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination and what they perceived as limited departmental support and preparation (Allen, 2008). Participants stressed the need for early and regular conversations between academic advisors and music education majors about teacher licensure requirements, including equal emphasis and communications about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *CORE* and *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examinations. Additionally, participants maintained that they wished their academic advisors and professors would have expressed knowledge of the content of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, because that would benefit candidates' preparation and performance on the examination (Allen, 2008).

### **Research Question Three**

What resources were available and/or accessed by HBCU music teacher candidates to prepare for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination? While discussing resources

utilized in preparation for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, participants shared similar responses. Because of the nature of the question, the responses were more varied than the responses to the other Research Questions.

Although participants used a wide variety of resources while pursuing their music education baccalaureate degree and teaching licensure, lack of departmental resources, and unfamiliarity with test content impacted participants' initial attempt at passing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Latiker et al., 2013; Pendergrass, 2017). All ten participants believed that their scores on the music history portion of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination were negatively impacted by unfamiliarity with composers and important historical compositional practices. Seven participants believed their performance on the Pedagogy and Professional Issues portion of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination was attributed to lack of instruments and other resources in music education courses (Allen, 2008; Elpus, 2015; Hunter, 2009).

Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins (2004) highlighted the intervention initiatives at Kentucky State University, which included workshops and mentoring sessions. Professors and administrators created test workshops and data management systems to track the growth and performance of teacher candidates on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *II* examination. Additionally, they incorporated motivational strategies to enhance positive preparation and support as candidates studied for and took the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *II* examination. Facilitators of the workshops and mentoring sessions also reviewed and adjusted curriculum alignment to better prepare candidates for the exam. While this study focused primarily on core



subjects (English, math, science), the success of the intervention program serves as a great model for other teacher education programs.

Participants conveyed the need for a preparatory course and adequate departmental resources, to improve teacher candidates' preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Brown, Brown, & Brown, 2008; Hunter, 2009; Latiker et al., 2013; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004; Nugent, 2005; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016). A course designed to focus specifically on elements assessed on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, inclusive of key points from each of the relevant courses in the degree program (e.g., music education, music history, and music theory courses), would help to focus students' attention on the areas that may be addressed in the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Hunter, 2009; Nugent, 2005).

In addition to the need for a preparatory course, participants expressed the need for departmentally developed study aids to help them prepare for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. While one participant indicated that their department had a listening lab to help prepare for music theory exercises and questions, minimal information or guidance was offered to the other nine participants. In fact, the other nine participants in the current study indicated that their department did not provide any resources and study guides for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> examinations (Latiker et al., 2013).

### **Implications and Recommendations**

Student exposure to music fundamentals and introductory theory—intervals, chords, transposition, scales, keys, sight-singing and ear training—as early as the ninth grade will provide students with the necessary foundational knowledge to perform well

on placement tests, auditions, and in music theory and methods courses in college (Allen, 2008; Elpus, 2015). Mastery of these basic skills will further enhance the acquisition of knowledge and understanding as it relates to advanced theory techniques (i.e., part-writing, secondary dominants, modulation, micro and macro analysis, etc.). Acquiring these skills early will also strengthen students' ability to hear these elements as they are listening to musical excerpts on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination.

Understanding the structure of the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, including the content assessed, percentage of weight for each category, and a knowledge of how questions are structured, will allow students the opportunity to focus their study habits in a way that fosters proper preparation for the examination (Hunter, 2009; Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg & Tyler, 2011; Nugent, 2005; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016). Additionally, early awareness of this content will provide students with ample time to gather the appropriate resources and study aids to adequately prepare for the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, leading to a higher pass rate on the initial attempt (Doel, 2012; Elpus, 2015; Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg & Tyler, 2011; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016).

Reflecting on participant responses, I advocate that music history courses should seek to offer content in a variety of ways that foster cooperative, student-centered learning, and critical thinking (Allen, 2008; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004). Additionally, providing opportunities for students to discuss concepts openly in class through presentations or student-led class sessions on the curriculum content, would allow students to draw relevance and deeper understanding from the information taught.

Moreover, I propose narrowing the scope of the music history course content to the key characteristics and works of each era that would most likely be assessed on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, and moving minor composers and works, and other general historical information to “supplemental readings” associated with the course (Doel, 2012). By restructuring the focus, without removing content items, professors can still meet the needs of music majors in every concentration (e.g., music education, music performance, music theory, composition).

In reference to methods courses and instrumental ensembles, I contend that each should be structured to provide practical performance pedagogy, as well as opportunities for teacher candidates to work through “real-world scenarios” as they relate to teaching voice and the various instruments. Further, planning and running a rehearsal, and conducting strategies are also crucial to students’ success on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Professors in these courses should regularly model strategies and behaviors and allow teacher candidates regular opportunities for immediate application of concepts learned. In ensemble rehearsals, involve music education majors in discussions about the music and evaluating performance errors.

Allen’s (2008) findings suggested that advisors, professors, and curriculum flexibility, were critical components to students’ success in the teacher education program. We must not “pass the buck” when it comes to properly educating and informing our students. As professors, we are accountable for adequately preparing for our courses, creating appropriate lesson plans, and delivering content with accuracy and relevancy. Additionally, we are responsible for acquiring and applying knowledge of

current trends in music education, and best practices for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

I charge music professors and administrators to take the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examinations at least once every three years, to familiarize themselves with the content assessed on the exam, the wording of questions, and the pacing of the exam. Taking the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* exams may increase awareness and understanding of the challenges music teacher candidates may face on the exam (Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg & Tyler, 2011; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004). Knowledge of the exam may inform and facilitate necessary adjustments to course curricula, and the delivery of instruction. The construction and administration of formative and summative assessments utilized in courses throughout the degree program is also an important piece of the puzzle.

Information is the key to success. Students should be informed early and often of the requirements of the music education degree program. (Allen, 2008; Elpus, 2015; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004). Professors and advisors must hold regular conversations with music majors in their music education courses, advising meetings, and applied lessons. Our advising sessions should include detailed conversations with music education majors about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. These conversations should offer encouragement, and how to successfully prepare for the exam (Allen, 2008; Hunter, 2009; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004; Nugent, 2005).

Ensemble directors and those designated to recruit new majors for the department must have regular conversations with high school music teachers, as well as community college music professors about the requirements for the music education degree program.

Directors should encourage “feeder programs” to incorporate instruction in music history, theory, and advanced instrumental/vocal pedagogy throughout high school, to adequately prepare candidates for a stronger entrance audition and success on the placement examination.

Perhaps access to listening materials and the music library may be very beneficial for teacher candidates taking the *Praxis*® *Music* examination (Latiker et al., 2013). Two participants stated that their music department had a dedicated listening lab for music majors, however, all ten participants stated that their music library was not functional, and that it was primarily used as a storage room for music and other items (Gitomer & Latham, 2000). I suggest students talk with representatives at their institution’s main library, for access to listening equipment and study rooms, as well as test preparation materials relevant to the *Praxis*® *Music* examination (Latiker et al., 2013).

Providing students with guidance in developing strong study skills, as well as practice with questions similar to those on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination, will aid in improving study and test-taking skills (Latiker et al., 2013; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004; Nugent, 2005; Pendergrass, 2017). Regular formative assessments structured with a variety of questions (multiple choice, listening, constructed response, analysis, problem solving), will provide both candidates and professors with immediate feedback regarding mastery of content necessary for success on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination (Hunter, 2009; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004). Furthermore, practice with these assessments regularly will help to ease test anxiety and eliminate fear associated with standardized testing (Latiker et al., 2013; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016).

Nugent's (2005) study revealed that those who participated in structured study groups scored higher on the *Praxis*® *I* examinations than those who did not. Hunter (2009) suggested that candidates performed better on the *Praxis*® *I* when they were provided access to a structured preparation program. In reviewing the data collected in the current study, I propose the development of a *Praxis*® *Music* examination preparatory course. The preparatory course should be offered to students beginning the second semester of their sophomore year, and should include cooperative learning sessions to review content, with the professor serving only as a facilitator, while students openly engage in discussions and activities relating to *Praxis*® *Music* concepts (Elpus, 2015; Latiker et al., 2013; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004). The professor's role would be to guide and redirect when necessary, for instance, if a concept has been forgotten, or explained incorrectly. The course should include regular formative assessments with questions reflecting the structure seen on the *Praxis*® *Music* examination (e.g., multiple choice, listening, analysis excerpts, constructed response). Formative assessments should be timed to give candidates an "authentic" experience with pacing and working under pressure. I suggest this course be offered for 0 to 1 credit, and for P/F (pass-fail) scoring. If the degree program is already at maximum credits according to institutional standards, and no other courses can be added, I suggest this content be provided in a series of required workshops or seminars, or as required component of the student practicum experience (Hunter, 2009; Nnazor, Sloan, & Higgins, 2004; Nugent, 2005).

Recommendations for continued research related to continuing to examine, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the internal and external factors influencing performance

on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination by marginalized populations (Elpus, 2015; Gitomer & Latham, 2000; Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg & Tyler, 2011; Pendergrass, 2017; Strunk, Locke, & Martin, 2016). Other suggestions for future research include a possible examination of course curricula and sequencing as a factor in the preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination (Doel, 2012). Also, expanding the research to include HBCUs in other regions of the United States, would supplement the current research. And finally, comparisons of Black music teacher candidates at public and private HBCUs, or of Black music teacher candidates at HBCUs and non-HBCUs is also warranted (Gitomer & Latham, 2000).

### **Limitations**

As with any type of research study, limitations may be present. The current study was limited to a purposive sample of ten participants selected for the study. Participants were current music education majors and provisionally licensed teachers that have not passed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination after one or more attempts, or those that passed after more than one attempt. Additionally, participants in the current study were limited to those who attended or graduated from Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Southern Region of the United States that are accredited by SACSCOC, CAEP, and NASM.

### **Conclusion**

I investigated the experiences of Black music teacher candidates and provisionally licensed music teachers, and their preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Qualitative data were collected via formal interviews. Analyses of the

transcribed interview data revealed seven emergent themes: (a) anxiety and fear, (b) unfamiliarity, (c) unpreparedness, (d) engagement, (e) course content and scheduling, (f) competence, (g) communication, and (h) need for resources. Although many of the findings were consistent with existing studies related to Black teacher candidates and standardized licensure testing, new information emerged from this study.

As a result of the current study, challenges associated with preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination were discovered and highlighted. Using a descriptive approach allowed the participants in the study to articulate their lived experiences in relation to the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. Results of this study may assist music professors and administrators in developing resources, support programs, and courses to successfully prepare Black teacher candidates for success on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, thereby increasing the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination passing rates and the number of licensed Black music teachers. This study also provides valuable insight to the existing body of research dedicated to minorities and standardized testing, teacher licensure, lack of interest in becoming a teacher, and music teacher licensure examinations.

Motivation for this study centered around my own lived experience as an undergraduate music education major, and my preparation and performance on teacher licensure examinations. Although I passed the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *I* examination on my first attempt, it took two attempts to pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination. I was competent in my understanding of the standard course content on the examination, however, much of the information that I encountered on the examination was not covered in my major courses.



Furthermore, I noticed many of my classmates struggled to pass the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, and ultimately changed their major or failed to finish the degree program. This experience, the motivation and desire to help my classmates and future music teacher candidates with successful preparation and performance on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination, and my current experience as an Assistant Professor of Music Education and *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> tutor fueled my research interest. Based on results of this study and other studies, I will continue to seek solutions to close the achievement gap and to improve the preparation and performance of Black music teacher candidates on the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music* examination.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A total of 16 interview questions were utilized in the study:

1. Describe your musical background, and your interest in music and becoming a music teacher.
2. Describe your preparation for college and being a music major.
3. What is your experience with standardized testing? Describe your test taking and study skills.
4. In reference to the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*, what resources did you use to prepare for the test?
5. Describe your experience in your music history courses. How well do you feel your coursework in music history prepared you for the exam?
6. Describe your experience in your music theory courses. How well do you feel your coursework in music theory prepared you for the exam?
7. Describe your experience in your institution's instrumental/vocal ensembles. How well do you feel your experience in your institution's music ensembles prepared you for the exam?
8. Describe your experience in your instrumental/vocal methods courses. How well do you feel your coursework in instrumental and/or vocal methods courses prepared you for the exam?
9. Describe your experience in your teacher education courses. How well do you feel your coursework in teacher education prepared you for the exam?
10. Describe your experience with your academic advisor. How well do you feel your advisor prepared you for the exam?
11. Does/did your music department have regular conversations with the music majors about the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> *Music*? If so, could you describe the nature of those conversations? Are these conversations held with all music majors, or limited to the music education majors?

12. How would you describe the current resources and preparation aids available to music majors for the *Praxis*® *Music* in your department?
13. Do you think your high school musical experience influences performance on the *Praxis*® *Music*? If so, How?
14. What role do you feel professors, advisors, and department chairs play, or should play, in the preparation of students for the *Praxis*® *Music*?
15. What is your perception of the *Praxis*® *Music* as a requirement for teacher licensure?
16. Is there anything else you wish to share in relation to your preparation and performance on the *Praxis*® *Music*?

## APPENDIX B

## EMAIL SCRIPT

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Tomisha Brock, and I am a PhD student at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am writing because I am currently conducting research for my dissertation, and my topic is geared towards the Praxis II music licensure examinations. As part of my research, I will be conducting informal interviews with music teacher candidates, as well as current provisionally licensed music educators. Would you be interested in participating in my research study? Any information gathered for my study will be kept confidential, and your identity or personal information will not be disclosed in any publication resulting from the study.

“Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording as described below: **The researcher will only record interviews to ensure accurate transcription in research notes. While listening to the audio playback of the interview, the researcher will utilize headphones in an isolated setting (home office) to protect confidentiality of participants. Audio recordings will be stored in a locked file cabinet until transcription is complete, and all audio files will be deleted or destroyed immediately after transcription.**”

**Completion of the interview is a one -time (one-day) event and will last 30 to 60 minutes.**

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Tomisha Brock, Principal Investigator, [REDACTED], or Dr. Jennifer Walter, Faculty Advisor, who may be reached at [REDACTED]. If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

If you are interested and willing to participate in the study, please respond to this email. If you wish to decline participation, simply reply to this email indicating you do not wish to participate. Thank you in advance for your time. Have a great day.

APPENDIX C  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

(Provided to select eligible participants for the study)

1. What is your age?
2. What is your classification?
3. Have you taken the *Praxis*<sup>®</sup> Music Examination? If so, which one(s) did you take, and when did you take it? Did you pass? If not, do you remember what your score was?
4. Are you currently enrolled in a teacher education program?
5. Are you currently teaching?

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**University of North Carolina-Greensboro School of Music**

**TITLE OF STUDY: Black Music Teacher Candidates' Preparation and Performance on the *Praxis*® *Music* Examination (UNCG IRB File #: 17-0171)**

**INVESTIGATOR(S): Tomisha L. Price-Brock; Jennifer S. Walter, PhD**

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Tomisha Price-Brock at [REDACTED]

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, or for complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact **the UNCG Office of Research Integrity at (855) 251-2351, or via email at [ori@uncg.edu](mailto:ori@uncg.edu).**

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to determine why Black Music Teacher Candidates are failing the *Praxis*® *II Music* examination by conducting a qualitative study in Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Southern Region of the United States.

**PARTICIPANTS:**

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criterion: Black Music Teacher Candidate currently attending a Historically Black College and University in the Southern Region of the United States, or Provisionally-Licensed Black Music Teacher that attended and graduated from a Historically Black College and University in the Southern Region of the United States, that failed *Praxis*® *II* on your initial attempt or one or more subsequent attempts; or, A Black Music Teacher Candidate or Provisionally-Licensed Black Music Teacher that passed *Praxis*® *II* after one or more subsequent attempts.

**PROCEDURES:**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Participate in an interview that will last approximately 30-60 minutes.

**BENEFITS OF PARTICPATION:**

There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study, and there is no compensation for participation in this study. However, we hope to gain insight as to whether or not Black Music Teacher Candidates that are currently attending, or have graduated from Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Southern Region of the United States, are disproportionately failing the *Praxis*® *II Music* examinations; as well as, the level of preparation candidates receive prior to taking the test.



**RISKS OF PARTICIPATION & CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. **Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when finished, so no one will be able to see what you have been doing.** Please note: Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording as described below: **The researcher will only record interview sessions to ensure accurate transcription in research notes. While listening to the audio playback of the interview sessions, the researcher will utilize headphones in an isolated setting (home office) to protect confidentiality of participants. Audio recordings will be stored in BOX until transcription is complete, and all audio files will be deleted or destroyed immediately after transcription. Transcripts will also be stored in BOX, and all files will be deleted or destroyed five years after the completion of this study.**

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or opt out of this study at any time. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study and the information gathered at the beginning or any time during your participation in the research study.

**PARTICIPANT/SUBJECT CONSENT:**

By participating in the interview, you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By participating in the interview, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate.

APPENDIX E  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Mitchell Moore Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH  
INTEGRITY**

PO Box 26170

Greensboro, NC 27402-6170

336.256.0253

Web site:  
[www.uncg.edu/orc](http://www.uncg.edu/orc)  
Federalwide  
Assurance  
(FWA) #216

**From:** UNCG IRB

**Date:** 10/09/2019

**RE:** Notice of IRB Exemption (modification)

**Exemption Category:** 2.Survey, interview, public observation

**Study #:** 17-0171

**Study Title:** Black Music Teacher Candidates' Preparation and Performance on the Praxis Music Examination

This submission has been reviewed by the IRB and was determined to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

**Study Description:**

This study investigates factors contributing significantly to successful initial teaching licensure of Black music teacher candidates. Specifically, the study examines the relationship between preservice teachers' preparation for the Praxis II, and their performance on the Praxis II at selected HBCUs in the Southern region of the United States.

**Modification Information:**

I will be changing my study from a mixed methods to a solely qualitative study. Datacollection will be in the form of interviews, and my study will no longer have 200 Subjects, I will have 10 (5 current music education majors, and 5 current provisionally licensed music teachers).

A survey will not be utilized, and interviews will be conducted face-to-face and via videoconference, using the Zoom (TM) platform.

Recruitment will be done via email, and the script will be revised to indicate data will be collected via interviews, and not an online survey.

**Study Regulatory and other findings:**

All participants will need to review the consent form document prior to their participation.

**Investigator's Responsibilities**

Please be aware that any changes to your protocol must be reviewed by the IRB prior to being implemented. **Please utilize the the consent form/information sheet with the most recent version date when enrolling participants.** The IRB will maintain records for this study for three years from the date of the original determination of exempt status.

Please be aware that valid human subjects training and signed statements of confidentiality for all members of research team need to be kept on file with the lead investigator. Please note that you will also need to remain in compliance

with the university "Access To and Retention of Research Data" Policy which can be found at [http://policy.uncg.edu/university-policies/research\\_data/](http://policy.uncg.edu/university-policies/research_data/).