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Two Marching Band Directors' Insights about Their Bands' Musical Achievement and Satisfaction in the American Deep South: A Qualitative Analysis

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Two Marching Band Directors' Insights about Their Bands' Musical Achievement and
Satisfaction in the American Deep South: A Qualitative Analysis

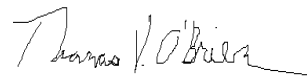
By

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of Honors Requirements

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ABSTRACT

High School marching band is an intricate facet of music education that operates in several varieties across the United States. Depending on the style as well as many external and internal factors of a marching band, marching bands can have goals and definitions of musical achievement that can vary drastically. This qualitative study aims to assist those in the world of marching music education to better understand these distinct types of marching bands on a deeper level. The study gathered detailed perspectives of two directors in juxtaposed marching programs to a view of what drives these bands and directors to achieve their specific goals in each season and better understand why they do what they do in music education. This particular study took place in the region of the U.S. known as the Deep South and was conducted in a small to mid-sized southern city with two distinct high schools and marching band programs. One program is composed of predominately White students at a predominately White school and led by a White director. The while the other program is composed of predominately African American students at a predominately Black school and is led by an African Americans director. While both high schools have free and reduced lunch populations of 99.8 percent, the predominantly White high school's average household income is \$60,830 while the predominantly Black high school's average household income is \$39,531 (NCES, 2021). With this lens of focus, the researcher analyzed what each director believed about musical achievement and band success, chosen style of performance, choices for competitions, and several internal and external factors including finances, family and community support, and booster clubs. The findings reveal that each director made stylistic decisions and prioritized distinct types of competition. However,

regardless of style, each director set their definitions of musical achievement on what the students wish to achieve. The interviews reveal that each director shares a “student-first” mentality when setting their goals which could ultimately lead to the most satisfactory learning and personal experience for all parties involved in the program.

Keywords: Music Education, Music Teachers, Music Activities, Job Satisfaction, Recognition, Perceptions of Achievement, Music Instruments, Music Facilities

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my mother, Dr. Kathleen Klee, my father, Dr. Richard Klee, and my sisters Julia and Courtney Klee, for always keeping me humble and kind and for being there for me every step of the way. To Dr. Thomas V. O'Brien for his amazing mentorship and assistance in the thesis process. To Band Directors A and B for being so kind to help with this research study and for helping both myself and many others better understand the world of music education. To all of the music educators that helped me reach this point and who continuously inspire me to be the best I can be in every way. To my best friends from Michigan to Mississippi, thank you for helping me to stay sane and encouraged while also helping me remember what this study is all about. All of you in this dedication mean so much to me and this thesis would never happen without your kindness and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOA	Bands of America
DCI	Drum Corps International
HBCU	Historically Black College or University
IRB	Institutional Review Board
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
R&B	Rhythm and Blues
SES	Socioeconomic Status

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Adrenaline-pumping, eardrum-thumping, perspiration-filled; the definition of an academically valuable facet of schooling institutions lasting decades, also known as marching music education. Marching music education, more commonly referred to as marching band, is a unique, performance art that has been taught in both in-school classes and extracurricular capacities. This study found its home quite far below the Mason-Dixon line, way down in the American Deep South. In this thesis project, I sought to discover and explain marching band directors' insights of their bands' musical achievement and satisfaction in this specific region.

Marching band, in its most current American composition, dates to the early 1890s, and was both popularized and inspired by John Phillip Sousa (Levine, 2020). Sousa revolutionized the field of marching music education by composing hundreds of marches for his military ensembles, inventing a tuba that was much more manageable to march named the sousaphone, and he is also credited for establishing the common instrumentation for marching ensembles (Holmes, 2015). Even before Sousa's profound impact on marching bands, the field has evolved immensely into several different forms and functions both domestically and internationally. In fact, the field dates even further back to American Revolutionary times with "strictly military" field drum and bugle corps, however, the most current capacity of marching band more closely resembles the more modern advancements led by Sousa (Nash, 2017). Depending on a program's location, the ensembles within said program may serve several different purposes and may function in drastically unique fashions.

Marching music education across the United States typically serves three main functions including competitions, halftime shows during football season, and parades. With the freedom that comes with a decentralized educational system, as well as different priorities and varied missions for every band program, students' and directors' will have different expectations and personal goals in their marching seasons. Due to band programs' diverse sets of expectations and goals, their personal definitions of musical achievement and satisfaction will vary as well. For competitive band programs, most bands seek the top trophy for the best band in the nation, region, or state, depending on the size of the circuit in which they typically compete. Organized in 1972, Drum Corps International is a professional marching band association that has played an influential role in transforming marching band from its roots in military history to a more competitively natured, high-intensity form of artistic expression (Odello, 2016). As Drum Corps International (better known to insiders of the marching music education field as "DCI") has furthered the goals and purposes of marching band, most high school programs have modeled their missions after DCI and compete in a very closely related fashion. Most marching bands that primarily focus on the high school or college football game halftime show, aim to create the most entertaining show and audience-pleasing musical atmosphere possible. From the very first halftime show in history, performed by the University of Illinois marching band all the way back in 1907, halftime marching bands have evolved extensively but still aim to fulfill the same purposes (Zellner, 2012). These "halftime bands" also seek to excite and inspire their football teams and serve to motivate the athletes to perform at a higher level. There are also "parade bands" that prioritize performances at holiday or special event parades. In these such settings they

represent themselves, their city, and their organization to the best of their ability. Parade bands originated from the very first military bands created by Turkey in the 1500s and in their original iteration, they would display the region's power and status through their performances in military parades for their nation (Block, 2021).

Justification

In describing these specific types of marching ensembles, it is important to note that any one marching band program can participate in one, a combination, or all of these different performance capacities. That said, each of these types of performances carry different expectations and priorities. The literature about these distinct types and varying expectations of marching band ensembles, has been helpful to both researchers and practitioners as they seek to make sense of this distinctly American experience. However, researchers and practitioners know much less about students' and directors' definitions and insights of success and satisfaction while participating in these ensembles. Thus, a deep exploration into band directors' insights of musical achievement and satisfaction is warranted.

Statement of the Problem

Defining achievement or satisfaction within and among marching bands is not an easy task; especially in a field with such variety based on countless internal and external factors. Few subjects in music have such drastic variation as marching band. The problem at hand is that in these drastically different variations of marching band, they all share many similarities, but their definitions of musical achievement can vary greatly. To understand these programs more thoroughly, band directors, adjudicators, and school administrations would benefit from properly defined definitions of musical achievement

for each of these types of marching band. If these groups understand the variations of marching band and their goals more clearly, they can better lead, support, and fund the programs at hand to ensure the most positive and productive educational experiences possible.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose this research is to identify, analyze, compare, and discuss several underlying factors that impact two band directors' feelings of musical achievement and satisfaction in two high school marching bands in the American Deep South. This is a study of two band directors from two differing types of programs. My goal was to investigate the priorities of these marching ensembles so that musical achievement and success can be more deeply understood. To continue to dive deeper in this area of marching music education, one can first observe the qualifications of myself as a researcher from both "insider" and "outsider" perspectives in the upcoming Personal Orientation section.

Methodology and Sampling

Although, more detail about methods and sampling is provided in Chapter 3, what follows here is a brief summary of the methods used and reasons for taking this particular approach to my research. This project makes use of a qualitative research design. In this thesis, I am the primary data collector and facilitate all analysis. In short, I am the instrument. I decided to use a qualitative research design due to the nature of the field of marching music education. In this performance activity, there is an immense amount of sweat, tears, injury, and time invested that cause it to be a highly emotional area of research. Since this is an incredibly emotion evoking field, I wanted to learn about it

qualitatively to process and discuss those emotions involved with how they relate to defining musical achievement. Originally, I planned on sampling students and high school directors from three major Deep South cities; this turned out to be an overwhelming sample size for this qualitative study. To narrow the scope of my research, I decided to limit the research study to one mid-sized city which would ultimately lower the sample size greatly but would also in turn dramatically increase the amount of specific detail and in-depth information provided in the study. I then further narrowed the sample size by eliminating students from the study. The amount of consent forms and barriers for communicating with students in these marching programs would have taken an outstanding amount of time which would prevent the thesis from being completed according to its necessary timeline. This changed the scope of the thesis' research, however, the amount of data collected from the two high school directors was more than enough to complete one research study; adding the students would have driven this study to the depth of a dissertation. Exhibiting information only from the high school band directors was still appropriate because the scope of the study became that much clearer and more concise.

Personal Orientation

In any research study and especially in a research study such as this one where the prior research has been limited, any reader would appreciate a researcher with experience in said field. Inspired by a research study in my literature review, I sought to explain my expertise in the field in detail (Iliff, 2018). The field of marching music education is an area that I am very well-acquainted with through my personal history. I have participated in eleven seasons of marching band in several different capacities. My personal

background in this area began with four years of competitive high school marching band. The four years in this program were well spent due to the elevated levels of satisfaction experienced in this ensemble in competition and in overall experience. This high school marching experience was very synonymous with the style and culture of one of the bands in this very study. During these four years, not only did I compete but I also held leadership roles in the ensemble which allowed me to see the band and many others from a whole new perspective. In this leadership role, I was able to recognize and realize many other factors that go into members and directors' insights of musical achievement including community support, fundraising, budgeting, and many more. In these first four seasons I was also able to see many diverse types of bands come to our home stadium and then see many others at competition. These bands included inner-city ensembles, rural band programs, and unique bands that ranged all in between those. Seeing these diverse types of marching bands in high school allowed me the opportunity to discover that these different bands all have quite different goals in mind and with that, they also share many different definitions and insights of success.

During my high school years of marching band, I also participated in our indoor winter color guard program for two years. This was a microcosm of what I had observed in the summer and fall marching seasons. The groups were by nature, much smaller, needed less funding, and were also competitive ensembles. Indoor marching ensembles do not typically perform at any winter sporting events; their sole purpose is competition. This allowed me to continue to observe what makes competitive marching bands different from halftime and parade band programs. Most winter color guard groups formed using almost solely fundraising which helped me realize the importance of

budgeting and fundraising in all varieties of marching ensembles. I continued only on a competitive track for high school but then transitioned to a vastly different type of ensemble in college.

I am currently a senior instrumental music education major in the honors college at a mid-sized university in the American Deep South. Our marching band here is a non-competitive ensemble that solely focuses on performing halftime shows and performing at parades. This was a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree shift from my prior experiences in competitive marching ensembles, however, I learned an immense amount about this fresh style of band and how we perceive musical success and achievement in our own way. In this type of band, we are solely focused on creating the most exciting game day atmosphere and performing for the audience to enjoy our show as much as possible rather than performing for judges. Not only have I participated in all the major varieties of marching ensembles, but I have also helped lead and teach in such ensembles. Teaching at my former high school presented many opportunities to collaborate directly with my past director to review budgeting forms, administrative details, and how a competitive ensemble is truly organized and run to accomplish that specific group's goals of success. I also taught another high school that was more like the other type of band program in this study, and we mainly focused on performance for parades and halftime. This experience teaching at that high school as well as being a section leader at my college halftime band gave me entirely unique and differing perspectives on these contrasting ensembles. Lastly, as vice president of my music fraternity, I often have met many other band programs and their members. At these meetings, I was able to discuss how the program's goals are different and what these ensembles do to accomplish said goals.

Interactions such as these allow me to communicate and better understand the marching music world. These experiences and my expertise ensure my quality and capabilities to do said research.

Even with my strong experiences and quality time spent in the field of marching music education that qualifies me as more of an insider on this topic, there are also ways that this topic is very new to me as well where I would be more of an outsider. An outsider perspective, however, is not an inherently dreadful thing. Being able to perceive a situation without that specific type of experience can help you understand a situation or topic in a unique light. An outsider can view a situation with less internal biases and expectations of how the experience “should” be or typically happens. Now with this explanation on the outsider perspective, I will continue my personal orientation by reviewing my prior experiences with the outsider lens being applied.

As stated earlier, my personal marching band experience started in my larger, upper-middle-class, predominantly White, high school in Southeast Michigan. I was fortunate to be in this typically successful and well-funded program where we usually placed in the top three competitive marching bands in the state. Compared to one band in this qualitative study, I would very much be considered more of an insider, however, for the other inner-city marching ensemble, I am much more of an outsider. Just outside of my city marching band, down the road there was a more inner-city and halftime style marching band that served as a very stark contrasting ensemble to ours. This marching ensemble down the road was extremely successful in the ways they wished to succeed, but their goals and insights of musical achievement were entirely different from my insider experiences in high school and observations as a researcher. This band is a

remarkably similar ensemble to the second marching ensemble that I discuss in this research study. After this explanation, one could see that I was not incredibly involved with that type of ensemble in high school, but I did know that they had vastly different sets of goals than us. As an outsider in this research study, like my experience with the band down the road from my high school, I was able to enter the data collection process with more limited biases and less prior expectations of what the band should look like, how they should function, and what they perceive as success or musical achievement.

As I continued my experiences in the high school field of marching music education, I continued by also participating in our winter color guard. These winter color guard experiences helped shape my abilities in the field of marching music education and helped me make some incredible connections in that field of indoor marching ensembles. This was all great and helped with my insider perspective on these schools' winter color guard programs but something I did not realize till later was that the overwhelming majority of these winter color guard programs were predominantly White. In my research study, that only aligns with the one marching music ensemble population and leaves me as a total outsider for the other party in this study. During this time while these different schools and programs were functioning and performing, I was an outsider to what the "halftime band" type programs were doing in that meantime and if they had separate goals during this winter season. This helped me realize that I needed to learn more and that I had no prior biases on what an ensemble should be accomplishing in the winter season if they are basing their goals on halftime in the fall. Now that I can see how I am an outsider in this area of my past experiences and my future research, I can better understand what several types of ensembles seek to accomplish in the winter season.

In college, I have marched in a “corps-style” traditional marching ensemble; this type of ensemble is the predominantly White and more strictly Eurocentric tradition-based band. This band is more like one of the two bands in this research study. The other band in this study that is more of a “halftime band” is more like the type of band we would play with in the first game of each of my marching seasons. This “halftime band” would share a style much more synonymous with Jackson State University, Grambling State University, or even North Carolina A&T. Because of these two types of ensembles being so different, I can comfortably share that I am an outsider when it comes to learning about halftime bands. Our schedules for band camp were different lengths for differing reasons, our uniforms were slightly different, our choices of music were often stark in contrast, and even how we marched was vastly different but we both performed to the greatest of our abilities with our very own perceptions of musical achievement and success. As an outsider viewing halftime bands in this study, I will be able to approach this program more confidently and more comfortably in the research study because I should hold less biases and perceptions of how they do things due to how different it has been.

Both perspectives, both being an outsider and insider on different sections of this research study can give certain advantages in uncovering the valuable information this study seeks to find. Insider experiences help me compare what I have experienced to similar situations and areas of research to ascertain differences and similarities from my past experiences to present. Outsider experiences allow me to enter a brand-new field of research with limited biases and expectations of that section of research which offers an

interesting new perspective. Ideally, after explaining this personal orientation of mine, one shall be able to see that this will be a well-rounded perspective and study.

Limitations of the Study

All social science research has its limitations, and this study is no different. In this section I briefly explain the limitations of this study. This study is an incredibly comprehensive thesis about directors' definitions and perspectives on musical achievement; meaning that this study excludes student perspectives. As mentioned earlier, there were far too many factors involving student participation to allow those perspectives to be included in this study. Students are the group in this area of research living through all these experiences in high school marching band first-hand while also feeling the impacts of varying definitions of musical achievement and the factors relating to the topic on a much deeper level. Since these students experience this area of focus on a much closer level than directors, the study is limited to more of an outsider perspective than the students directly participating in the activity. This study is also limited to only one mid-sized city. Research on this topic could be conducted in both larger and smaller cities in this region then could be replicated in different regions of the United States such as the Pacific Northwest, Midwest, Southwest, or others. On a smaller scale, this study could also be reproduced in other states than the singular in this thesis to increase sample size and potential validity.

CHAPTER II: ANNOTATIONS ON THE LITERATURE

In previous studies in the field of music education, several researchers have highlighted the disparities in success between different bands and or choirs at state competitions or evaluations. Many of these researchers have stated that there is a blaring link of socioeconomic status to musical success at these state evaluations regardless of the choir or band. This study by Bailey in 2018 is seeking to further prove that socioeconomic status has an incredibly adverse impact on the equality between fellow competing music groups at in-state competitions. Not only is this study incredibly detailed, but it was also produced in one of the finest states for public school music education in the country, Texas. Bailey discusses primarily socioeconomic status which is one of the largest concepts of my research in which I plan to focus. Whether it is private instruction or local clinics, this extra focus and attention on the musicians and their playing is imperative to the success of many higher-ranking SES musical ensembles. Bailey also was able to point out that the majority of higher-achieving bands at their state music festival had much less students that qualified for free or reduced lunches from the schools which they attended. This data does not explicitly state that one school is wealthier than another, however, it presents that more students have families that struggle financially in traditionally lower-achieving band programs. Due to this focus that Bailey showed, it inspired me to ask more questions related to these same issues to highlight potential disparities that contribute to differences in musical achievement.

Out of all the sources in my literature review, the study by Costa-Giomi and Chappell in 2007 is the source most closely related to this thesis. In this thesis, Costa-Giomi and Chappell are focusing on a singular large urban school district which is

precisely one of the data groups that I studied intensively. The purpose of their study was to describe in strong detail using numerical data, the characteristics of several band programs in their range of focus to distinguish inequality more clearly in these uniquely culturally composed schools. This was an effective way to scientifically describe the programs and highlight the differences in equality in each school within said district. However, I utilized several additional steps in my research process that this thesis did not. Using their own scales and methods to collect data, they discovered unique modern forms of data to explain the relationships and characteristics between band programs. In my thesis, I have been researching qualitatively rather than quantitatively, and only focused on teacher's perceptions about the program. This is a great piece of research to reference to review how their methods and data-collecting process ran so that I was able to efficiently plan my own methods of research for this topic. Not only did I often refer to this research in defining how my research process would progress, I also closely referenced their questionnaire for my interviews with directors to help validate the study even further based on questionnaires already completed in the field.

One of the very first articles that I discovered in my literature review was this strongly detailed and more recently composed piece by Elpus and Grisé (2019). Since this thesis was written in 2019, it helps to validate the accuracy of the information at hand due to how recent it was written and how similar the band cultures are since the period when this was published. In this research, the authors focused on the specific issue of music boosters and fundraising in public school music programs. By focusing primarily on music boosters and fundraising as well as their role in "alleviating or exacerbating inequality," they were able to research a broader audience by researching this issue on a

national scale. In my research, I simply focused on a singular city's two primary band programs rather than a national study of all music programs and investigated the impact of all cultural, socioeconomic, and background factors rather than only researching one potential facet of inequality. This thesis does assist my research in the aspect of questioning directors about fundraising events/opportunities as well as band boosters and how they impact their band programs. I often referred to this thesis when focusing on the funding aspect of the band programs as well as how involved the programs are in the process of fundraising while also including the band boosters in this topic. The information that they found on a national scale allowed me to compare the programs' data that I found to further validate not only my research, but theirs as well.

Hoffman's (2013) study was a quite useful work of information to assist in my literature review. The research offered a broader and more simply stated overview of the entire issue at hand. In this article, Hoffman discusses the situation of inequality in music education due to race and status in American public schools but also primarily focuses on the classroom practices and procedures that factor into the issue. Rather than looking at every single issue relating to the larger problem at hand, Hoffman focuses on those two fundamental issues to reveal potential solutions to diversify music programs in the battle of inequality in music education. Hoffman's article has been immensely useful in my research process because it covers issues that I had previously not acknowledged, recognized, or been informed about. This piece has inspired me to think deeper about all factors that influence the issues of inequality in music education, and it gave me many extensive ideas of different questions to ask in my interview process for this thesis. This study was also qualitative based, similar to how I researched this topic which provided

me with a great deal of ideas on how to describe the data from my interviews more effectively. Using information from this study most importantly influenced my ability to gather data from my qualitative interviews. From learning more about the research process in a qualitative fashion from this research, it allowed me to build on that process in this thesis in my own way.

Another recently published article, this lengthy dissertation written by Iliff (2018) directly focuses on the same group of data that I will research later. This dissertation has great validity due to it being recently published and since it focuses on a similar subject. I plan to focus on high school marching band programs whereas Iliff focused primarily on high school concert band programs. Filled with an amazing wealth of statistics that play into the issue of inequality in music education, this piece of research will assist me in many ways. Not only did Iliff present many fascinating questions related to the issue of inequality, but the author also largely inspired many of my questions that stemmed from associated topics they were discussing. When Iliff talked about expectations for ensembles, amounts of instructional time/rehearsal time, and what the atmosphere was like for students at each program, it opened my eyes to many other specific questions I could potentially ask in my interviews for my research. Iliff focused on these issues of inequality to find the best practices for band directors to bridge the gap of equality between band programs which is what I am seeking to accomplish. I will reference this work when describing the aim of my research as well as the research design and interview questions involved in my thesis.

This study by Kinney (2019) was an informative overview of all the factors that could play a role in urban students' choices to further their music education in middle and

high school programs. It was an incredibly detailed and thoughtful work that focused on all aspects of music education on multiple levels including middle and high school. My study will differ due to my scope being much more focused in researching only high school marching programs. However, many of the details and non-music predictors that Kinney discussed in this research directly influences the same group that I will be researching. When diving into potential research questions for my thesis, the extensive range of non-music factors that Kinney discussed broadened my mind when thinking of specific areas of inequality to target. There is such a wide range of factors that inspired me and allowed me to dive into many distinct aspects of inequality for the interview questions I wrote. This research by Kinney will be a splendid work to reference in my research design plan because it was so well organized and serves as a solid example for my research. Lastly, I plan to reference these predictors in the background and purpose of my research to validate the vitality of this thesis of mine.

This dissertation by Mulcahy (2017) directly touched on several of the larger ideas for my thesis at the beginning of my literature review. I have a wealth of experience in competitive high school marching band and wanted to strictly focus on what Mulcahy had focused on at first, however, I realized that not all bands share the same priorities or goals for performing or competing. Mulcahy's dissertation focuses on the impacts of funding and resources on the success and achievements of similar competitive high school marching bands. What differs from our two research ideas is the fact that different director's share different views on what capacity their band should perform in and what kinds of performances the band should pursue. Especially down south, many bands find "Friday Night Lights" halftime performances as the peak and primary source of their

performance opportunities and depending on the program, many schools also do not even compete. This is a valuable source to reference to touch on why bands perform and why they compete if they so choose. In my interviews I plan to ask several questions relating to performance opportunities as well as evaluations or competitions depending on the program which was partially influenced by the effect of this dissertation.

This comprehensive work of research was an immensely valuable resource during my literature and in the beginning of my thesis research. A Survey of Music Teachers' Working Conditions (2014) describes the many factors in their classrooms and schools that play a role in impacting music teachers' feelings of success and happiness in their careers. Many varied factors affect what a classroom looks like as well as its atmosphere. Factors including funding, administrative support, community support, functional supplies, and many more can result in drastic differences in music teachers' feelings of success and fulfillment from their work in schools. This piece is incredibly detailed, culturally relevant, recently published, and is very well validated due to the number of co-authors and editors. Not only has this piece inspired me to focus more on environmental conditions in classrooms in my research, but it has also allowed my brain to develop new questions about how race and socioeconomic status impacts the issue of classroom environments. These questions that I have developed will be instrumental in my interviews of directors and students making this source an incredibly helpful source for my thesis process as I move forward. Specifically, I will reference this source when discussing my research design as well as when I discuss the purpose of this research.

This detailed and data-driven thesis stated some significant issues within the field of music education regarding inequality. Salvador and Allegood produced a quantitative

study in 2014 that focused on two large, urban, American cities, and their public schools. In this study, they collected data from these larger cities to discover which areas and what types of students had access to music education and the reasons why this was consistently plaguing public education systems in urban areas. By focusing on which students were not able to pursue opportunities in music education, this study highlighted a significant grouping of students that were adversely impacted by their own race and socioeconomic status. This study was deeply influential on my research due to it being one of the first articles I discovered in my literature that showed how stark of a contrast there was in music education simply due to a student's race or socioeconomic status. After reviewing this piece of research, I was influenced to research public school's diversity in the categories of race and status by looking at the National Center for Education Statistics. Therefore, I will be referencing this piece when discussing the purpose of my research and potential solutions for the inequality at hand.

Like the dissertation by Mulcahy, this thesis by Speer seeks out inequality in music education by way of examining bands from a competitive standpoint. Speer relates the success or lack thereof in state band contest ratings to socioeconomic status. The author points out that there is a great deal of issues tied to socioeconomic status that negatively alter the chances of success possible in any band program for band contests or competitions. This thesis allowed me to focus more strictly on the socioeconomic status link to inequality in music education rather than looking at several factors at once such as race and status. By taking the time after reviewing this thesis to analyze several factors of status impacting music education, I was able to think further about specific questions to include in my interviews for data collection. Questions that related to funding, support

from parents and administration, and participation costs instantly arose in my mind, and I plan to reference this article when discussing my interview questions for inspiring several. This article will also help me in discussing my research method. The research had several of its own challenges in pursuing this data and the way they designed their research around these issues will help me in writing my own methods of research.

The thesis produced by Blackwell focused primarily on how prepared music educators felt to teach based on their backgrounds and educational experiences. Reading this piece helps to understand how certain cultural and socioeconomic factors influence music educators' levels of expertise and comfortability to teach. Broadwell assessed skills such as relationship building, leadership skills, project management, persuasive speaking, clear writing, creative thinking, taking feedback, broad knowledge, and education, as well as critical thinking (Blackwell, 2018). By focusing on how prepared educators feel in their profession of music education sometimes due to cultural and socioeconomic factors influencing their preparedness, this presents how the directors in this thesis may be impacted because of their experiences before entering the profession. In this research study, both directors felt decently prepared for their careers in music education except they both acknowledged that there were several things they wished they had more knowledge about or were exposed to more prior to teaching at their respective programs.

In the research conducted by Ma & Hall, it provided an intensive insight on how competitive bands function and learn together in rehearsals. Naturally, this serves as concrete background information for one band in this research study; however, it is important to understand how their rehearsals were conducted so Band A can be analyzed

on a deeper level. This study is based primarily on competitive marching band programs such as Band A, but it also exhibits many transferable data points about how marching bands work together and how they cultivate productive learning environments. The data in this study helps with understanding Band B by explaining how they can work together as an ensemble for a more positive learning environment. Findings from this study declared that ensemble learning is a skill that carries through life and that students take responsibility from their learning when the ensemble is working towards common goals (Ma & Hall, 2016).

Like Ma & Hall, the study by DeAmon focused a great deal on culture within each ensemble but in separate ways than the previous thesis. The primary focus of the study was to inform the music education audience of the unique cultures that represent several different states and areas amongst the United States. Style and culture were found to often be representative of the socioeconomic status or cultural makeup of the area the bands represented (DeAmon, 2019). For example, more bands from the south had poorer economic standings and were primarily non-competitive whereas midwestern and northern groups competed much more often due to better funding and higher socioeconomic status in those areas. Another example is how bands who are predominantly Black are much more likely to perform as halftime showbands rather than competitive marching bands compared to bands that are predominantly White. In this study, urban bands were found much more likely to perform as halftime showbands compared to rural and suburban band programs that were more likely to perform competitively. Learning about the different respective trends for bands with unique socioeconomic and cultural situations serves this study by helping to better understand

what influences these types of bands' definitions of musical achievement and what factors impact that definition.

Stern exclaimed to begin this study that, "marching band is one of the most visible manifestations of music education in American culture" (Speer, 2012). Taking notes from this idea, one that can thoroughly understand the impacts of marching music education in America can ultimately understand American culture as well as how this facet of learning impacts the groups involved. The research study aimed to discover if there were correlations between socioeconomic statuses and if so, what the correlations that were found were. Socioeconomic status is majorly impactful in a plethora of educational facets such as taxes that directly impact school funding, free and reduced lunch programs, money for student school supplies, and much more of the sort. If socioeconomic status has large waves of impact in these other areas, one may wonder how it impacts the area of marching music education. Stern's study resulted in finding that there is unmistakable evidence to reaffirm the concept that SES (socioeconomic status) directly impacts marching band competition scores. Factors such as funding, money for supplies, participation fees, and more were found to disadvantage marching programs from lower SES groups in scoring evaluations (Speer, 2012). This data goes to show that bands with lower SES may be impacted when setting their goals and definitions for musical achievement due to these external factors at hand. Since this may impact the marching programs' concepts of musical achievement, this is extremely relevant to the study.

One major factor that this research study was unable to cover when discussing definitions of musical achievement in high school marching bands in the American South

was the student perspective on this topic. In the dissertation by Antos, they discuss how much high school students value the educational and musical experiences in marching band as influenced by their competitive contest scores. Student perspectives are the prime focus, and the dissertation mainly discusses the extent to which scores influence this experience. This would not impact Band B in this respective research study but viewing how influential and informative student perspectives can be, can affect how directors define musical achievement due to these influencers. The dissertation discovered that student perceptions of musical achievement based on competitive scores are significantly influenced (Antos, 2017). In simple terms, the study found that naturally, “winning bands enjoy winning more than losing bands enjoy losing” (Antos, 2017). This is a simple concept, but it can influence how directors set their goals for future marching seasons and this information directly impacts this study.

The study by Clark (2019) holds a wealth of background information that is vital to understanding Band B in a clearer fashion. This article describes in detail the history of African American marching bands as well as the culture and style that identifies them. Between the two programs in this study, Band A is more predominantly White with Band B containing a vastly Black majority. Each band shares their own unique styles, culture, and choices in each season when defining musical achievement. In the article, the history of Black marching bands dates all the way back to the revolutionary war when African American men participated in drum and fife corps for battle (Clark, 2019). The article went on to discuss how Black bands have evolved from the drum and fife corps all the way to the halftime show band or “HBCU” (historically Black college or university) style used today. This article discussed the style of Black marching bands by breaking down

the different techniques employed in their performances, the tonality in which they play comparatively to White marching bands, and they also explained differences in conducting and drum major roles. This information is all majorly impactful to this research study because understanding the history of African American marching bands can help us understand Band B more easily while also potentially understanding the logic and reasoning behind Director B's definition of musical achievement.

Although this study by Matthews (2017) was based in the realm of college marching band, the information collected is still relevant to high school marching programs. In this study, Matthews researched how students' view their marching experiences and reasons for participation throughout a performance season. The main themes that data revealed in this study included connectedness to their band and school, how the band represents a family environment, acceptance/belonging to a group, the role of music in their lives, and "time, the temporal beliefs of the group throughout the season" (Matthews, 2017). The study primarily focuses on group beliefs; however, this can directly reveal how students view musical achievement. Since this study does not cover student perspectives, the study by Matthews at least provides insight on what students feel as a group which can highlight some of what inspires directors to set their definitions of musical achievement. Later in this research study, directors A and B revealed that one of their greatest influences when setting goals and defining musical achievement is the band students. Due to students having so much influence, this study gives insight to what students value most in a marching season.

As stated in my personal orientation in this thesis, I have accumulated a hefty marching music education resume which will assist me in this area of research. I still

have a great deal to learn and this study by Levine (2020) helped provide a more detailed, intensive view on marching music's illustrious history. Marching band has its first origins in the 1300s during the Ottoman Empire, then evolved increasingly through different chapters of history such as the Revolutionary War and has developed into several diverse types of marching band between organizations like Drum Corps International, Bands of America, and even your local marching band contest (Levine, 2020). Levine described the different evolutions of marching band through chapters of history to display how much the activity has changed and developed to be what it is today. Learning the history of the marching arts helps many easier understand why we have the formats of marching bands that are common in American culture now. This research article helped the thesis in providing deeper understandings of both Band A and B and why they perform the way they do in their respective styles.

Lastly, one aspect of this research study that needed stronger background information for a more coherent discussion of results was the economic factor of marching band. Believe it or not, marching band is quite the costly field, but most educators see it as an investment. One piece of information that dramatically assisted this thesis in displaying the economic impact marching band has on band family pocketbooks was that the cost of spending on average per year for a season of marching band is about \$7,110.77 (Lincoln, 2011). This fact among many others provided in the study highlights how much power money holds in marching bands regardless of performance style. If you have or lack money in marching band, that can make or break your season no matter how strong your students or Band Director Are in rehearsal. The study helps this thesis by helping introduce the topic of how large money's influence is in this educational field.

Stating these facts for the audience provides meaningful insight into how vital school funding, fundraising, participation fees, and donations are to any annual marching band season.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Quality Checks before Data Collection

As noted above, this project makes use of a qualitative research design, in which I am the primary data collector and analysis instrument. Thus, this research required a lengthy process involving many different quality checks and reviews to ensure validity. Far before the actual research process began, I needed to make preliminary choices and plans for data collection and interviewing. To start this entire process, I met regularly with my thesis advisor to finalize the topic for this research. Once we had decided on the topic area of the research, we focused on creating a specific and effective research question for this area.

After producing a valid research question for this study, I chose a research method to use to pursue the topic. I read up on basic qualitative research methodology and specific methods. This study along with almost all educational research is meant to help solve societal issues through the findings of this thesis and researching how to properly conduct qualitative research helps this process continue successfully (Folajogun, 2020). Another study reminded me that “educational research can be a vehicle and target for ethical, political, and methodological attack” which helped to prepare me to be as thorough, specific, detailed, and unbiased as possible in my research (Karagiozis, 2018). After reviewing sources such as these, I was effectively more prepared to pursue a qualitative research study. Then I began the work of developing interview questions for data collection in the field. I had reviewed the literature and collaborated diligently with my advisors and other professionals in the music education field to formulate impactful questions for interviews to learn as much as possible about these different band programs

in the American Deep South. These questions were created by myself, inspired by the design of one research study (Costa-Giomi et al, 2007), and then were reviewed by several figures in the music education field at my university such as the director of the school of music, the director of bands/director of marching band, and the head music education faculty member. They reviewed these interview questions in deep detail, giving comments and suggestions so that they could better fit the research study. After the review of these faculty members, I focused on the process of IRB approval.

The Institutional Review Board is an institution that focuses on ensuring the ethics of proposed research studies (Oermann, 2021). In the process of starting my thesis, I was required to explain my research study in deep detail for approval to start the data collection process. In the IRB application, I had to complete a description of my study/abstract, detail the research focus group, explain the research's goals/mission, describe how to protect my research participants' privacy during data collection, how I would reach out in the data collection process, discuss any potential risks in the study, and I needed to gain IRB approval through several diverse sources. First, the primary researcher (myself) reviews the entire application for error, then I sent the IRB application towards my thesis advisor. Once my thesis advisor had signed off on said application, it was then sent to the director of the school of education where I was doing my research through at the university, and then lastly it was sent to the overarching review board.

Once gaining IRB approval, I was then free to pursue my research data collection process however, this research study went a step further. To ensure success, proper data collection, and a productive interview process even further, my thesis advisor and the

head of the music education faculty at my university sat down with me to complete a mock interview for practice. In this mock interview, all the same research interview questions from my thesis were asked, and the entire process was modeled just as the true interviews would progress. This process was extremely effective in improving the data to be collected and the overall process; it helped to establish even deeper validity in this study. A copy of the IRB approval letter can be found in Appendix A.

Finding Interviewees and Conducting the Interviews

Once my topic had been set and I had completed the IRB approval process, now was time to begin deciding how I would work through the data collection process. My first task at hand was to find the participants that I was going to be interviewing. Originally in this process, I was intending on talking to both band directors and students who have participated in these band programs, however, for several reasons I decided to solely focus on the band directors' points of view. If I were to interview students participating in these marching bands, I would be directly interviewing minors. When minors participate in research, it "reflects the view that young people are capable of doing research about their lives" (Ruiz-Casares, 2016). Youth participation can have a majorly positive impact on a research study; however, it can be quite complicated. If I were to pursue these interviews, I would need parental consent, director permission, and administrative support to complete the data collection with students. Due to these factors, I decided to not put the study through all the hoops previously mentioned. It would have been easier to attempt to reach out to former students, however, I realized that most directors do not keep an ongoing list of graduated band members. Not only would it have been difficult to track down these former students, but I also felt that I had very solid and

informative interviews with the directors that certainly offer enough information for the study to thrive. Once I had decided I would only task myself with interviewing said band directors, now it was time to decide on a city to focus the lens of my research.

I had originally set my sights on researching three different mid-sized cities in this deep-southern state. Each fit the description of having two majorly different high school programs with vastly diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. As I had continued researching each of these cities, I realized the amount of data that each city with the programs would produce would be enough for an extensive dissertation. After reviewing each of these cities with the new need to narrow down and focus on one, one particularly stood out especially because it was in the same city as my university. Researching the area and city that I have grown accustomed to would help me be more effective in my interviews in how I communicate, and I would have more understanding of the ensembles after having gotten to see both perform on several occasions. It simply became a much clearer decision, and I began to realize the closer I was to the research area, the more in-depth background information I could receive. Now with an area to focus on with two programs of varying backgrounds, I was ready to begin the process of contacting the directors so that I may begin the interview process.

One of the incredible benefits to leading research in a city in which you have already immersed yourself and grown accustomed to, is that I had built great connections that would be helpful later on in life. At Band Program A, I had already spent at least ten observation hours through my college music education program; because of this, I was already well-connected with Band Director A, and it was simple to contact him in starting my data collection process. This connection has given me much more of an “insider

perspective” on this program, however, as previously mentioned in the Personal Orientation section, I still am an outsider in many other ways throughout the study. Prior to contacting Band Program B, I was thankful enough to already be well-connected with the band director there as well. In my first year of college marching band, I became close friends with our drum major at the time. My former drum major was best friends with the student who soon became director at Band Program B. Due to the proximity of my connections with this peer group, contacting Band Director B was quite the easy task. I had personally reached out to my former drum major to introduce me to Band Director B, and we had then formed contact to begin the data collection process at his high school band program.

To begin the data collection process, I needed to formally reach out and schedule an interview with both directors. The ordeal of recruitment for research study participants can often be very daunting and a challenging process for many researchers. Oftentimes, one does not realize how complex and time-consuming the recruitment process can be until after the researcher has invested a major amount of time and effort (Bonisteel et al, 2021). In the process of scheduling said interviews, I emailed a formal research recruitment invitation to both band directors to provide background information on the study, what would be expected of them if they were to participate, and the risks and benefits associated with participation in this study. Upon understanding the research study and thoroughly reading the recruitment email, I asked for and required them to sign a consent form for the research process. This form granted me the permission to collect data from the band directors and it also granted me the permission to record our interviews via video/audio/transcript recording so that I could review the results at any

time during the thesis process. Even though consent forms are thoroughly composed and carefully crafted per Institutional Review Board procedures and approval, they are still often likely to be skimmed or not completely reviewed by study participants (Douglas et al, 2021). As soon as I received the consent forms from both directors, I requested a sample of their schedule to find a time that works best for both parties to conduct the interviews. Once we had found a time that worked efficiently for our busy schedules, I sent Band Director A copy of the interview questions that I would be asking in the interview so that the participant was fully prepared and comfortable with all that was being asked in the interview. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Although 2020 was an extremely unpredictable year, we learned that throughout the madness, many of our typical duties can be conducted via alternate and asynchronous platforms despite being distanced (Howlett, 2021). Band Director A and I talked for seventy-five minutes in our one and only Zoom interview throughout this thesis process. This interview was simultaneously recorded on the Zoom platform and transcribed for future reference strictly to be reviewed only in the thesis-creating process. After completing this first interview, it was then time to sort out a time for the second interview with Band Director B.

Like Band Director A and I, Band Director B had an extremely loaded schedule with incredibly limited free time to participate in the interview process. Fortunately, I had planned for this very situation in the process of composing my IRB proposal. I had stated in the approved IRB proposal that if a band director were unable to complete a Zoom interview for any reason, I would offer them the ability to still participate in the study by completing a form with all the interview questions. Due to Band Director B being so

busy, I had sent the interview questions for them to complete and forward directly to me after they had finished typing their responses. In their limited time off in the summer from marching band camps, they completed the questions on their own and sent me back their responses in the middle of the summer. With the completion of the Zoom interview with Band Director A and the collection of the interview response document from Band Director B, I had effectively completed the data collection process for this thesis research study.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Transcription and Coding

In the thesis research process, once all the data had been collected, it was then time to transcribe and code them. For my first interview with Band Director A, I had a conversation with them on the Zoom platform. Since our interview was on Zoom, our conversation was recorded, and our transcript was also simultaneously recorded and transcribed. Once the interview had ended and I had received the Zoom version of the transcript, I replayed our interview while keeping the transcript document open so that I could correct any errors or formatting issues. Any issues from the transcription or formatting issues would have potentially prevented me from providing the most accurate information possible in this study thus making it crucial to have a completely precise transcript for the next step of data analysis (Jenkins et al, 2021). Fortunately, enough, for the second interview with Band Director B, all their responses were typed by them; this effectively created a handwritten and personally reviewed transcript of their answers. Again, this helped the study to provide the most accurate depiction of the interview participants' information possible.

To begin the data analysis process, it was most important to review the transcripts and to relisten to the interviews so that the information was as recent in my mind as could be. After reviewing and replaying the interviews, it was time to discover recurring themes and similar quotations to relate to the thesis topic at-large. The best way to identify these themes and quotations for this research study was by using the process of coding. To begin coding, I started by highlighting the same themes with one color. Through the

process of highlighting these similar themes and quotes, I was then able to group said themes to create a more cohesive idea of topics to cover in the data discussion later in the thesis project. This analysis process in most simple terms is the process of understanding my data so that I know how to explain it and how to section it off in the thesis. Once I finished the highlighting and coding process for all research data collected, I was then able to process the many ideas this thesis discusses so that the project would have a more consistent flow and a deeper meaning. Included in the Appendices are the a) IRB Approval Letter, b) Thesis Recruitment Email, c) Research Participation Consent Form, and d) Interview Questions.

Findings about the Two Bands and their Directors

As noted above, the purpose of this thesis is to define band directors' definitions of musical achievement or success in high school marching bands in the American Deep South. Not only are bands unique in their student composition, location, facilities, and funding, there is a much more extensive list of internal and external factors that play a role in how their directors define their goals and view of musical achievement. After discussing the many impactful factors that influence this topic with two informative high school marching band directors the data generated deepens understanding why these bands do what they do and how they accomplish these goals. In what follows, the reader will be able to discover on a deeper level how each individual factor plays a role in defining music achievement for their unique high school marching program in the Deep South.

To better understand how Band Directors A and B answer the question at-large, first we need to take a deeper look at their experiences in the field of music education to

view how this shapes their experience. Band Director A is a middle-aged Caucasian male with an extensive resume of teaching experiences in different districts across the state of Mississippi. He grew up in Alabama with tuba as his primary instrument then moved to Mississippi during his youth where he graduated from a larger, predominantly White, upper middle-class, high school with a highly competitive marching band program. From that high school, he attended a smaller local public community college with a strong music education program and college marching band of a traditionally medium size equating to about 150 members which was almost identical to his high school marching band's size. However, instead of a competitive style, the band was primarily a halftime-based marching ensemble who also participated in local parades. From community college, Band Director A then transferred to a larger Southeastern Conference university which was a major shift from his prior experiences in music education. At this university, the marching band was twice the size as his previous bands, yet it maintained a similar style to his community college and the music school. Additionally, it was much more competitive than both of his previous bands. Upon his graduation from this university, he then acquired a master's in music education from a different Southeastern Conference university to further his skills and knowledge. Following his masters, he began teaching at a large, upper middle-class predominantly White high school in Mississippi with a competitive-style marching ensemble where he stayed as a director for several years. After running a successful competitive marching ensemble at that high school, the high school band director position at his high school alma mater opened; he could not help but return home to collaborate with familiar colleagues and at a program he had known and loved deeply. The already successful program at his alma mater had only grown to

flourish more with larger membership and high community support. It continued to do so under his direction. Let us now become acquainted with Band Director B.

Band Director B is an African American male in his mid-twenties with fewer experiences as a director than Band Director A, due in part, to his age. This director grew up playing euphonium and singing in choirs in the Mississippi delta which is a primarily rural area. Band Director B went to a smaller rural high school whose composition was approximately half White and half Black which had a competitive-style marching band like the program of Band Director A. Compared to Director A's high school which today has a free and reduced lunch population of 99.8 percent, almost exactly equals Director B's high school which now has 99.8 percent of its students receiving free and reduced lunch (NCES, 2021). After that experience in his hometown, he moved to a small city (also known as a "college town") to attend a mid-sized public, predominantly White university with a recognized music education program. Here is where he first experienced a halftime-based marching band instead of what he had learned in his competitive-style. Upon graduating with his music education degree, he stayed in his college town to teach middle and high school band in a predominantly Black lower socioeconomic status district. In this district, he faced a unique but exciting challenge in that he had never participated in or worked with an "HBCU style" show band previously in his musical career. He saw this as a significant opportunity for potential growth and has been teaching at the district for a handful of years. Now that the background of each director has been revealed, it is time for a more intensive view on the list of factors influencing each director's definition of musical achievement.

Perspectives on Musical Achievement

One of the first questions I asked in the interviews with directors is arguably one of the most influential in their definition of musical achievement; why did you choose to pursue a career in music education? Both music educators can be understood as a product of their experiences. Both Band Directors A and B mostly decided to pursue their careers in music education because of their wonderful experiences doing band in their youth. Band Director A fondly stated in his interview that, “I had great music teachers and they fostered the talent that I had at the time, and I wanted to do the same thing.” In a way, his nostalgia and passion fueled his dream to recreate the same positive experiences for his students. Band Director B was similar in that way, having teachers inspire him to continue in the field to carry on the powerful experiences that he was able to enjoy in his youth. Band Director B also shared a similar memory, “I had a few teachers that showed me that teaching was a gift of mine.” He then went on to explain that his English teacher would always encourage him to create lesson plans every time he taught sign language. This was a passion of his; he started to realize that his English teacher was perhaps trying to prepare him for a future in education because she may have seen early on that teaching came naturally to him. Early on, he recognized that teaching was a passion of his, but it was only a matter of time that he realized the subject he would teach: music. Band Director B discussed, “I began to think about teaching the one thing that came naturally to me and one thing I absolutely love, and that’s music.” Compared to Band Director A, Band Director B seems to have had a much more active and encouraging external force steering him towards a career in education whereas band director more passively became conscious to the fact that he wanted to recreate this special time in his life when he began

a career. Band Director B also shared another quote that similarly reflects the viewpoints shared by director A, “We had an awesome band program at my high school, and I wanted to create my own program that was very similar to that.” One can see that they had comparable positive experiences in their youth band programs. As a researcher I thought that these parallel experiences would lead to similar definitions for musical achievement; however, as the interview went on it became clear that they two had different definitions, perspectives and twists that displayed much more contrast as their careers moved forward.

Perspectives on Job Choice

At this point, each interview led to an in-depth description of each program and their reasons for choosing to be teachers. Band Director A was drawn to be a teacher in part because the position was at his alma mater. Band Director A stated, “It was a little bit of nostalgia, I wanted to give back to the place that had meant so much to me as a teenager.” He had such fond memories in his youth, and he was going back home to where his whole career started which was a full-circle moment. Band Director A most importantly emphasized the strength of the program for his reason for the reunion. Since even before he was a student at said high school, the program was well known in Mississippi for its extensive history of success and production of exceptional musicians. Director A went on to explain that “this band has had a very reputable stint in Mississippi for being a good band program and for having a very supportive community.” He went on to explain that the reputation and history of community support were the most crucial motivators to drive him back to his former program which could show some indicators on what he values regarding accomplishing musical achievement. Band Program A is a

much larger program for Mississippi with a whopping approximate of two hundred students and they employ a corps-style of show and marching in their ensemble. The majority of most marching band ensembles in the Southern region of the United States are smaller in size typically ranging from twenty-one to one hundred members in size (DeAmon, 2019). Marching band at this high school is not only an extracurricular activity, but also a class. As director A discussed, they have had a distinguished history including winning the state marching championship in the year prior to his arrival which has thus driven the community to viewing the marching band as the biggest facet of the program. Even though the high school marching band has been greatly successful, they also have a strong focus on the concert programs which assists in creating a strong marching band. Director A emphasized that same concept, “My personal philosophy is that I want my concert ensembles to be top notch because that’s just going to make everything else better.” Band Director B not only has a contrasting list of reasons why he went to teach at his district, but he also directs a divergent type of program in comparison.

Band Director B had several varied reasons to come to his district but the primary draw to this position was that it was the first job offered to him. At that time, it was also the only job offer he had so he accepted this position. One of the other major reasons why he decided to teach at this school district was that he was excited to discover the world of “show-style” marching bands. In his personal experience, director B had only ever participated in or taught more traditional corps-style marching ensembles. As previously stated, director B emphasized, “all my life I had only done corps style marching, so this was a challenge, but I welcomed it.” He knew he had zero experience in this specific type

of marching band but wanted to grow as a music educator and individual. Not only was this a fresh style of marching band for director B, but this was also a different type of school for him to direct. Director B stated that, “The entire school district is culturally different from any school I’ve ever attended, so that was a challenge in itself.” Like my previous experiences or lack thereof, in show-style marching bands, Band Director B was in a comparable situation but chose this pathway for his personal growth in the field. Band Director B also gave an immensely detailed description of this marching program to better understand his reasonings and interest in directing this ensemble. As mentioned earlier, Band B is a show-style band of fifty members that also operates as a class and extracurricular activity. For their marching techniques they use “high knees” to march instead of the traditional corps-style of rolling through each step while in a move. To continue describing his program, director B went on to say, “Demographically, our program is majority Black, so much of the music that we play is synonymous with our culture; this means that most of our music is hip-hop/R&B.” Due to a focus on these specific genres of music and styles that align with Black culture, everything the band does in performance is practically geared towards the entertainment of their audiences. In “show-style” bands such as Band B, they often employ differing performance techniques from their culture that are linked to historical developments (Clark, 2019). To entertain the audiences in this show-style band, Band B often includes dancing, singing, and even starting chants to cultivate an entertaining atmosphere that entertains the crowds at their football games and parades. Now that an understanding of the band directors’ experiences and the unique contrasting marching ensembles has been provided, we can

now dive deeper into the factors influencing how directors define musical achievement as well as how they can accomplish it with their ensemble.

Booster Programs and Support

Money talks. Yes, it is a common saying in the business world, but it also holds its weight in the music education field as well. Unfortunately, a vital facet of the success of many music ensembles in public and private education is the issue of funding. As a result of funding issues for music education within many districts, a large group of schools across the nation have started non-profit band boosters to assist their ensemble in raising funds for important items such as uniforms, instruments, props, and even staffing fees. Another unfortunate issue in this area of financial difficulty for marching ensembles is that most band directors do not have a strong knowledge of budgeting. One study found that “budgeting skills were viewed as the least effectively covered in preservice training” for band directors (Blackwell, 2018). However, if you have a healthy and productive band booster program, it can be majorly beneficial for your band and the families involved. In 2015, a study found via Internal Revenue Service data that a total of 5,575 band booster groups in the United States had raised well over \$215 million for their respective band programs (Elpus & Gris , 2019). Because of band boosters, some bands are more readily available to invest more funds into their seasons while some bands lack that advantage when they are on the path to musical achievement. In the interview process, one of our two directors revealed that their band had a band booster group. Band Director A stated, “We have a very active organization that meets once a month.” He went on to explain that in his band program, the band boosters are mostly involved in raising money for whatever the band needed. The band boosters were also responsible for

helping with several other tasks including whatever the band needed at the time such as prop-building, uniform fitting, and more. As most would be able to see, having a band booster organization holds several distinct advantages in comparison to programs that lack such an organization. In our interview, Band Director B shared, “We currently do not have an established band booster organization and I have been tasked with the responsibility of finding a parent that can assist me in starting one.” As a result, this impacts how the band uses the funding that the district designates for the program and in turn affects the students’ band participation fees.

The band booster organization has a direct fiscal impact on every program due to either its existence or absence. How much funding from both the district and the boosters—because of different fundraising initiatives—defines what students will pay to participate in the marching ensemble. Both Bands A and B require said participation fees, but the amount varies for both due to several factors including the presence of a band booster organization. In Band A, students are required to pay a yearly band fee of \$300 to account for several things. Band Director A stated, “It also helped to supplement the district budget that they gave us, which was probably higher than most, but not as high as some and probably not as high as it needed to be ". Due to the amount of funding and fees, as stated earlier, the band would supplement these amounts further with fundraising initiatives led by the band boosters. If you were a student who also participated in the winter color guard and or winter percussion groups, you were responsible for an additional set of fees that cover show design, uniforms, equipment, and much more. As far as fall marching band goes, a decent amount of the band fees from their most recent season helped purchase a separate outfit for their halftime show that was purchased to

accompany the theme of the show. Band B had a significantly different scale of fees to pay which covered a unique array of costs. Director B shared in the interview that, “Each year, we ask the students to pay a band fee to cover member sets (uniforms), t-shirts, spats for their marching boots, gloves, a wind suit, and two masks as well while the dancers and color guard each have their own sets of fees that are separate but not in addition to the band fee”. In that comprehensive list supplied by Band Director B, the band participation fee that year totaled \$100. In some cases, in marching bands across the nation, marching band participation fees can influence some students to drop out (Mulcahy, 2017). Fortunately for Band B, \$100 is much more attainable than \$300 to participate. Band B in comparison spent most of their funding on uniforms and apparel whereas Band A used their funding in a wide capacity including show design, staff fees, uniforms, and competition costs among other things. With more funding and higher fees, it appears as if Band A has many more opportunities to facilitate their spending amongst many varied factors that influence their band’s level of achievement while Band B has much less financial support for their seasons.

One can see that a large facet of participation fees covers each band program’s uniforms; however, what are these uniforms and what is their importance? A marching band’s uniform can display an extensive list of information without even saying a word. Uniforms can display tradition, style, school colors, pride in their school, reputation of the band, and even deeper categories such as funding and a district’s attention and care for the program. Looking good and feeling good can play a major part in students’ willingness to participate in a program and a students’ motivation to perform at a higher level. Band Director A discussed that uniforms are currently in a rapidly changing state in

modern marching bands explaining, “I think a lot of marching bands are in a transition period now where a lot are moving away from a traditional marching uniform look for some productions.” This is important because some programs are only able to afford one uniform which makes the marching band culture shift non-conducive to bands with lower funding or less funds available. As stated briefly earlier, Band A used two uniforms in their last year where they had a competition uniform top to be worn with their same band pants to fit the competition performance theme while at football games and parades, the band continued to wear the traditional marching uniform to appease the community. Band B chooses the option to perform in one traditional, show-style uniform for all their needs due to their traditions and one more casual “member set” for summer performances due to heat. Director B stated that his band wears their member sets during band camp and summer performances which is a white t-shirt with black shorts and all-black tennis shoes. During football season, they wear their full band uniforms for parades and football games. When it starts to get cooler outside, they start wearing the wind suits for parade season during December through March. This usage of their marching uniform and member set allows the band to represent themselves in a way that they find most fit for their musical goals in marching band while Band A uses their uniforms in their own ways for their own unique goals.

Perspectives on Staffing

Moving forward on the financial frame of marching band, staffing for marching band is also a major financial issue for any marching ensembles regardless of their goals. Every staff member in most cases means more knowledge, assistance, and inspiration for their corresponding ensemble yet it also means more money to be spent on hiring and

salaries for each staff member. In Band A, director A revealed, “There were a total of five directors on staff. One director was assigned to the middle school as their primary campus while also working at the high school. As far as technicians go, we had a couple come teach lessons at the middle and high school. Some of these technicians were students at a local university and some were community members that came in to help with the percussion and color guard sections.” In this case, both bands had a large group of staff members to assist in helping accomplish musical achievement with their ensembles. Band Director B shared in the interview, “There are seven total staff members: the director of bands, three assistant band directors, one percussion instructor, one color guard instructor, and one dance instructor. Between us seven, we get everything done that needs to be done. We all have many talents and trades, so we’ve learned how to make it work.” In both marching ensembles discussed, they have enough staff to make it work for their seasons however, it does come with a cost. The cost of staff can influence the band participation fees, need for fundraising, or how much funding is allocated to other issues such as instruments or uniforms. Now on to another potentially financially heavy topic which is the use of technology in marching ensembles.

Technology

For both ensembles in this research study, technology was not an incredibly definitive area of their potential achievement or success and therefore the technology was not extraordinarily expensive due to its lesser use in the bands. In Band A, they would use the basics of the band world including metronomes and the tonal energy app which serves to assist the band in tuning for performance and rehearsal. The only more intensive technology employed in their seasons was the technology in the front ensemble that

engaged in creating and playing the many computer samples that would supplement the show's intrigue, general effect, and design. Not all bands have access to this technology nor do all bands use it, but Band Director A stated, "Our show probably would not be as interesting had it not been for all the electronics and different things we were using in that regard." Continuing the popular trends in competitive marching bands such as using these electronics more intensively potentially gives bands like Band A more of an advantage in competition (Stern, 2021). Band B used far less technology with only the discussion of using metronomes and tuners like the tonal energy app used in Band A. Director B went on to discuss, "We do not have any special technology that we use. Besides, the fact that we are rebuilding the program, we just do not have a need for any major technology yet." Due to the arduous process of rebuilding within Band B, their funding and major money decisions are strictly within other designations such as uniforms and staffing for the ensemble rather than large investments in major technology. This could potentially impact how Band B strives for musical achievement, or it could not be a factor since they have experience with marching seasons that do not use such technology.

Perspectives on Instrument Access and Money

Continuing a discussion upon the monetary impact on each marching bands' quest for musical achievement, what could any band achieve without their most vital tool to accomplish anything? Instrument access, quality, and availability is of the utmost importance for any marching band ensemble. The concept of more "universal and equitable" access to instruments and music education itself has consistently been an issue in the American public school system (Salvador & Allegood, 2014). Each factor discussed in this financially impactful section of the research study has a ripple effect on

how funding is utilized in each ensemble especially regarding instrument access. In both marching ensembles within this study, they both require students to purchase their own instrument if students play either flute, clarinet, saxophone, French horn, trumpet, trombone. This cuts costs immensely for the program even if each instrument the students purchase is more affordable than the instruments regularly owned and maintained by each program. Fortunately, for the benefit of the students, each band program also is keen on giving students several options and potential ideas for locations or contacts where they can purchase their personal instruments. Band Director B also included that in Band B, “most of those places have an option to rent instruments” which can allow many more students to participate due to the lower cost of renting said instruments. For larger instruments in each program such as low brass, lower-range saxophones, and percussion equipment, each band provides loan contracts from the school to the students, and they must return instruments to the program at the end of the year. With funding largely impacting instrument access in these programs, Band Director A shared a great deal of how financial reasons affect his band. Director A shared, “Less than ten percent of the budget every year would go towards the purchase of new instruments. Occasionally, we would approach the school board when in need and they would in addition to the budget, typically do those kinds of purchases for the band. The year before I got to this program, they had just completed a large lease purchase to acquire some brass instruments and other musical equipment they needed. So, not really a whole lot of budgeting in the district for new purchases, mostly maintaining what we already had.” This information provided by director A displays that funding is incredibly vital in instrument access. It is crucial for Band A to take adequate care of their instruments because although their

district is generally kinder to the band program, it is still an arduous process to acquire new instruments for the band.

Band B has experienced some of the same financial issues when strengthening their instrument access in their program. Often in recent history, Band B has been working fervently to improve and maintain their instruments for the program because they receive minimal district support financially. Fortunately, Band B recently was gifted four brand new sousaphones by their high school alumni group. This is major for the program due to limited funding and budgeting for new instruments to be acquired. Recently, the director of bands has also traded some older instruments for new ones in recent years to improve their instrument arsenal. These two incidents of instrument improvement are unfortunately rare due to the band generally needing to approach the school to receive money for newer instruments. Band Director B shared in the interview, “Unfortunately, our district is not very generous with money when it comes to the band program.” Similarly, to Band A, director B also explained regarding instrument access, “Most of our school owned instruments are quite old, but we keep them in good condition.” Like Band A, Band B also has limited options regarding acquiring new instruments so as a result, they must cautiously and carefully look after the instruments they already have in their supply. Director B proceeded to explain in detail, “I suppose instruments would be a major part of the annual budget if we were allotted the money to purchase them but besides purchasing new instruments, instrument repairs are certainly a major part of the budget. Most are kept in great condition, but there are always minor repairs to be made at the end of each year.” As one may see, funding and financial stability is incredibly influential to band programs in their pursuit of musical

achievement. If you do not have funding to actively repair, maintain, or to purchase new instruments, you will fall into struggles due to a lack of usable equipment. When a district prioritizes a band's instrumental needs and a Band also has the assistance of a band booster organization such as Band A does, instrument access will be much less of an issue. Unfortunately, it appears as if Band B must "make ends meet" much more often than Band A when attempting to achieve their goals as an ensemble.

Perspectives on Competition and Finances

Another financially impactful factor influencing each program's quest for musical achievement is competition. Studies have found that in most cases, smaller bands or struggling bands which are not synonymous, typically do not compete (Speer, 2012). In marching band, programs pay to compete at local and/or state competitions for trophies and student experiences among many other reasons. The aspect of competition is a starkly contrasting topic for the two marching ensembles in this research study due to only one of two participating in said competitions. Band A is a competitive style marching band, and this is one of the defining factors in the program's journey to musical achievement whereas Band B is a show-style program who currently is not involved in competitions at any level. Director A stated in his interview, "I knew that the expectation was that we wanted to continue to participate in state marching championships; it was a large part of the program, and we had the means and support to do so." At Director A's prior director position, he explained having an "outstanding program" and played a challenging, competitive concert band literature. At that previous program he admitted that the program spent maybe \$18,000 on the competitive season whereas at his most recent position at Band A, they spent "ungodly amounts of money" on their season. Due

to the immense level of funding and support, director A explained that “The community expectation was you go to state marching championships.” In a way, this quote presents that the community has a majorly influential role in defining Band A’s definition of musical achievement, that it is not only what the director and students want to achieve. Lastly, director A emphasized, “Had we been in a position to where I do not think that we could have sustained that level of success or interest, things might have changed” in reference to what the ensemble would then turn to in defining a new concept of musical achievement. In this description by Band Director A, one can see that this band sees competing as a privilege and a necessity in their quest for musical achievement in their current format barring any change. Like previously mentioned, Band B does not currently perform at any local contests or state evaluations. Director B shared, “We are still rebuilding the program and are trying to get to the place where we need to be for contest.” It appears that competitions are potentially in the future for Band B but where they currently stand, they have other immediate goals that are being worked towards in the meantime which prevent them from competition. After covering most of the utmost important financial factors impacting these marching bands, now there will be an intensive focus on genuinely defining what musical achievement looks to both marching ensembles as described by their band directors.

Perspectives on Achievement and Success

In this section, one will see musical achievement or musical success (used interchangeably by both directors) in a broader definition then it will continue to be broken down into the internal factors and external factors that influence how it is accomplished. Each band director received their turns to these questions and produced

incredibly detailed and fruitful responses that will be vital to understanding not only their own band programs, but marching ensembles across the Deep South. Now we begin with Band Director A's view on musical achievement. To not risk the misunderstanding or loss of meaning in this definition of musical achievement, larger quotes will be used. Band Director A began by saying, "I feel like you determine largely what is viewed as success and the way you approach things will determine what your parents and your students and everybody else views as a successful season. Obviously, you want to do the best job that you can and put forth the best product that you can and that is at the forefront of every day and working hard and doing those kinds of things". As previously hinted, yes, the band director is the leader of the ensemble and oversees almost all operations related to the marching band season; however, what defines musical achievement is not set exclusively by the director or band staff. As a director you have personal input and often make the final decision on any prospective goals or issues but, the director carries the responsibility of serving as a representative or liaison for what students, parents, administration, and the community want out of your program. Director A continued to state, "I do not necessarily think that success means you get first place every year or win the largest trophy; I think that a lot of programs can do those things, but you might have students that do not want to participate in band or music at all after high school." Although Band A is a reputedly competitive program, this seems to be one sector of the complicated pie graph where the director wants to succeed, among others. Next, director A revealed, "I wanted every senior to go do marching band or be in the band program at whatever school they decided to attend after it was over." What director A is describing is a network of alumni who made a choice to further their participation

and enjoyment in the field of music wherever they end up following graduation from his high school program. He is not hoping that every student goes on to become band directors or world-class performers, he wishes that the students maintain a love of music for years to come upon completion of their high school band career. Director A then went on to state his beliefs about success including, “Successes are kind of in the way that you perceive things as a director, and you also have a lot of outside factors that might steer you thinking that you are successful or not. But a lot of outside factors might steer you thinking that you are successful or not.” Later in the interview, we discussed said outside factors related to musical achievement which will be reviewed later. Those outside factors can be more influential than some may realize and because they are there, directors are naturally governed by some of these when working out their goals with their marching ensembles. The most vital and defining quotes by director A regarding this interview question were by far, “The student experiences are the most important thing to me; I want them to value what they have done and to value the time that they have had in band.” In this quote one can examine and find that when defining musical achievement regarding marching band, the student experience is above all other factors during the season.

Band Director B shared a similar viewpoint on this interview question. Director B went on to say, “A successful marching season would be one where I know that regardless of how we may have done, the students were able to have a valuable musical experience throughout the season.” This again emphasizes that these are by definition, “student-first” directors. Oftentimes it is not uncommon to find band directors who compete and work their hardest for their own ego and goals of musical achievement

rather than seeking to find what works best for their students or what helps them enjoy the experience to the utmost while learning as much as possible. With this student-first attitude that both directors have exhibited, students are able to have much more of a voice and influence in setting their goals for musical achievement. Director B then proceeded to say, “I was able to learn a lot from my students and they were able to learn a lot from me which is definitely a successful marching season.” Rather than directors having all the control as one may assume at first glance, the process of setting goals for musical achievement is much more collaborative in context where students’ voices are heard. Band B as stated previously, is a show-style marching band who does not participate in local or state contests but, director B looks to change that in the future which could potentially influence how students view musical achievement as well. Director B proclaimed, “We do not have competitions to look forward to quite yet but as long as I know my students enjoyed themselves making music, then I know we have had a successful year.” This view best displays the notion that no matter what style of band you participate in or direct, the goal always is to move students to enjoy making music during the marching season. In this perspective, no placements or crowd reactions are the primary influencers, it is the concept that students are enjoying themselves. Based on this logic on the topic of musical achievement, director B has strong opinions on how it impacts the band’s future and goals as stated in this quote, “I feel like we are successful in these ways, but I definitely feel like the students would enjoy what we are doing even more if we can get our numbers up and increase retention.” The more the merrier applies to musical achievement because the more input students have, the more the director can learn and the more the students in turn are able to experience as well.

Internal Factors

Now that a broader definition of musical achievement has been explored through the eyes of both band directors' perspectives, a magnifying lens is focused on the internal factors that continue to influence the decisions that pertain to directors' views and goals in this topic. Starting with Band Director A, he explained, "The rainbows and roses part of me says that as long as you have support from your administration and the community is supporting the band, that's a large factor in success. It is that financial support is probably, if you want to be a competitive marching band and you don't have the financial support, it is going to be very difficult for you to have all of the things in place that go into that." Competitive marching band is a hugely financially competitive art with average yearly costs typically amounting to \$7,110.77 (Lincoln, 2011). Yet, on an average, many bands spend much more and less, yet this data displays that the amount is a hefty fee. If your district does not see competitive marching bands as a viable place to invest their resources, then the fundraising is strictly up to the directors or band booster organizations. It depends on the program but some that wish to compete are unable due to a lack of financial support from the district (Bailey, pg.4). To exemplify the importance of funding in competitive marching band, director A went on to state, "We spent less than a lot of people on our show, design, and everything else, but when you start talking about 200 people, everybody having their own costume, then color guard has to have sets of flags...one set of flags for us costs \$2,000: just a lot of money". If one is comparing that cost of flags to the average annual marching band costs that is already twenty-eight percent of a typical band's funding. Among flags, marching bands have costs including band camp, marching band staff, uniforms, show design, music rights and arrangements,

competition fees, transport costs, food for band members, instruments, repair fees, and many more. Director A continued to say, “If you don’t have those financials in place, you might need to reevaluate and see. Just because you compete doesn’t mean you’re successful; there’s a lot of ways to find that.” Funding is not strictly a competitive band issue; it is an all-encompassing factor of all marching band genres.

Band Director B started immediately by stating that the financial aspect is hugely impactful for his marching band as well. Director B explained, “School funding is probably the biggest issue we have right now. We need money to do the things we need to do to create a successful program, but the district would be more willing to get us all of the funding we need if they see that we are building and growing, it’s just hard to do that without money.” It seems as if bands like Band B are stuck in a catch-22 where they need greater funding for greater musical achievement, yet the district will not provide such funding until musical achievement is greater. The fact that funding is an issue in both Band A and B demonstrates that this is potentially an issue for all ensembles regardless of musical achievement goals that are set. Yet, funding is not the only roadblock on the path to musical achievement for Band B. Scheduling has recently evolved into a pressing issue for the marching band. Director B discussed, “The high school wasn’t always on a block schedule and that recent change has caused scheduling issues with many of our students. Lots of upperclassmen now cannot have band as a class on their schedule. Even though those students are still allowed to be in band, it is hard to plan and gauge where we need to be when we never have the whole group together at once for practice.” Due to never having a full ensemble at rehearsal, Band Director B is often left guessing when assessing what his band needs to be more successful in rehearsal and performances due to

it being so unpredictable. If the administration collaborated with all teachers to discuss how the block schedule would impact certain classes, this issue could have been avoided; however, the band suffers as a result in the meantime. The last majorly impactful internal factor related to musical achievement is the topic of rehearsal space for the marching band. Director B emphatically stated, “We do *not* have adequate space for our program. The band hall is too small, we need new lockers to store instruments, and we do not have any sort of field on campus to have marching practice. We have marching practice at a city park about a half mile from our school.” All these issues stated previously drastically hurt the band’s chances at achieving their definition of musical achievement. For one, this could lower morale for students and in turn cause recruitment and retention to be minimal. Imagine being a high school student who either has to walk or ride the bus each day carrying a heavy instrument in its case, then after a long day of classes you then have to walk a half mile with said instrument, backpack, water jug just to rehearse for your school-sanctioned class only to walk another half mile after an exhausting rehearsal back to the band hall where you are picked up or then have to walk home. Not only does this sound immensely tiring, being in the Deep South temperatures can rise to well over one hundred degrees in the summer and fall not including the humidity that often reaches over ninety percent. What is more tiresome is that this is not one day a week; this is every single day they rehearse. It should not take long to realize how these factors may possibly decrease recruitment and retention.

External Factors

These internal factors are not the only issues that interrupt the journey to musical achievement for both Band A and B. Externally, there are numerous topics that can easily

elevate or decompress your band's chances of musical achievement. One of the largest external factors mentioned by both directors in this study was the concept of community support. Director A explained in the interview, "The band could be four hundred people and win BOA (Bands of America national championship competitions) every year, but if the people in your community didn't understand that and didn't respond well to the band program, then what is that? What message does that send? Kids are like everybody else; they need validations." In this regard, director A is not seeing community support as an ego boost for himself as a leader of the band, he states that it is incredibly influential on how the students view what they do as well. A director can easily tell their band to not seek validation or approval from anyone but themselves, however, internally most children naturally search for that validation whether it be from family, friends, or their community. Even one research study in reviewing results found that significant majorities of students' perspectives of competitive marching band were swayed by their level of success in competition as determined by contest rankings (Antos, 2017). Director A went on in further detail, "As a band director, part of your job is to make sure that the community sees your ensemble as something that is giving back something valuable and needed in the community." Based upon how the community views their high school marching ensemble, this can dramatically impact district funding, support at competitions and/or halftime, volunteering to help the ensemble via the band booster organization, and community support even impacts student and staff mentalities as one can view from quotes. Lastly, regarding community support, director A gave the example, "Like if the football team came out and had nobody in the bleachers; that's not going to be very motivating even if you win the game." This shows that validation from the community

again displays that what you do as a marching band has purpose and meaning from an outsider/external perspective.

Band Director B had similar views regarding community support as an external factor impacting musical achievement. Director B stated, “The community plays a huge role in our success. Each time we step out for any sort of performance, people are watching, and they are going to talk. Alumni play the biggest role. If an alum decides to voice a complaint about something that the band is or is not doing, that word will make it to the high school principal and then quickly to the band directors.” Here, Band Director B describes community support not only being impactful as an entire group, but the director emphasizes that the high school alumni are the most influential fraction of that group. Alumni have an extraordinary amount of influence in most educational environments from universities all the way down to k-12 school systems. In the realm of community support, alumni have the most influence since they hold prior expectations of the marching band from when they were a part of the school system. Oftentimes, if the marching band is not matching those expectations that the alumni hold, administration can receive complaints resulting in difficult discussions between the directors and administrators which can cause added stress placed on the directors and students. Alumni also are not strictly negative external factors; they can positively impact the marching ensemble in many ways as well. As mentioned earlier, the alumni purchased several new sousaphones for the ensemble because they saw a pressing need for them within the ensemble. Along with purchases and donations, the alumni can also volunteer assistance with the marching band to help in any way the director sees fit. The alumni faction has the opportunity in either positive or negative fashions to not only vocalize change but

may also personally impact change as well. The other most impactful external factor for Band B is student employment. Student employment can impact students' mental health, physical conditions, and most notably according to director B, attendance at rehearsals. Director B discussed, "In our band program, we have many students that work. Some work for fun, but some are working to help provide for their families. For that reason, it is hard to get all students at a rehearsal." As stated previously, without all students at rehearsal, directors are put in a difficult place when trying to actively assess the ensemble's progress and musical growth. A director can give as much feedback as they can to attempt to work to further their band's musical achievement, but those comments are directly impacted by the percentage of the ensemble there. When certain section members are missing, that changes the ensemble sound. When specific students are absent, this also changes the appearance of the drill and choreography during rehearsal and in turn, during their performances. Director B continued, "Sometimes we have kids that get called in to work right before practice and of course we would never force them to stay. So, if their job will not work around our practice schedule, we just have to work with what we have." Attendance at rehearsal as described previously is extremely vital to musical achievement and it is even more vital of a factor when it is unpredictable. If a student tells you in advance what their work schedule is, the director can plan accordingly for that student being missing. If students are called in to work unexpectedly, the director's lesson plan is immediately impacted and now they must adjust what they wanted to teach which in turn lowers their preparation and potential for success in that specific rehearsal.

Obstacles to Success

Some of these internal and external factors are extremely impactful when attempting musical achievement but according to the band directors, these are not even the largest obstacles faced. This section details what each director views as their most challenging obstacles on the journey to achievement with their ensemble. Band Director A was challenged with this question but ultimately gave this introspective answer, “That’s a really hard question for me to answer because there are always factors that are different for everybody and the way I look at it is I try to deal with those things in stride and deal with them in the best way that is going to facilitate the student’s success”. Yet again, this student-first mentality is ever-present. One specific obstacle is not given yet; whatever challenges the ensemble on the road to achievement, is dealt with in a way that puts student experience and enjoyment first. Director A went on with an analogy, “If you had an unsupportive administrator or lack of parental support or things like that, you need all of those things to be successful, but you as a teacher are largely responsible for trying to foster those positive relationships. Even if it is a difficult relationship, you must be doing the best to be an advocate for your program.” This ultimately shows that the biggest obstacle is how you deal with obstacles because it is all on the director. As a director, each obstacle you face is your responsibility and that is arguably the largest challenge. Director A continued, “Yes, you need administrative support; you have to foster administrative support. Yes, you need parental support, but if at every turn you are negative and not listening to the parents, that is your fault, and you do the thing you have to do to make it work.” Upon hearing the observations from director A, the biggest

obstacle faced in relation to musical achievement is equal to the amount of responsibility on the director for any challenge on the pathway there.

Band Director B in contrast stated that among other issues facing his ensemble, the defining largest obstacle for his marching band is the concept of their identity. He stated, “I believe our band is going through a bit of an identity crisis. We have been stuck on this weird stage of rebuilding for about three years and the band is honestly trying to figure out who they are.” Culture and identity are incredibly important for any marching band, regardless of style. In Band B, they have faced recruitment and retention issues but the identity crisis they are facing could be a large proponent as to why they have experienced those issues. A marching band identity and culture is what makes the marching band experience familial, and it ideally provides a set of traditions and experiences that causes band students to latch on and enjoy. Without an identity, the band could possibly lack that familial and relatable culture for students to pursue which in result could cause students to not want to join or march more than a year or two. To continue describing this “identity crisis,” Band Director B described, “We are still trying to figure out our sound. We know what our marching style is, but we do not have any established traditions. We have yet to find out what our something special is.” This all contributes to the identity crisis and until these obstacles are officially overcome, it will continue to be an identity crisis for longer. As previously stated, retention continues to be a large obstacle for Band B as well. Not only has the block schedule, lack of rehearsal space, and identity crisis contributed to this issue but there are even more reasons that are a factor. Director B continued by stating, “We have students that come and go. Parents will remove their child for one reason or another, students have to quit sometimes

because their job won't work with our practice schedule at all, and sometimes we have students that just decide not to come back because they've "outgrown" the band or some crazy excuse." With an already smaller marching band like Band B, the loss and consequently the addition of students plays a crucial role in the band's journey to musical achievement. Unfortunately, there may be a larger problem at hand. If you compare the socioeconomic status of both Band A and Band B districts, the Band A average household income is \$60,830 versus Band B's average of \$39,531 (NCES, 2021). One study found that areas of lower income are severely underrepresented in the nation's band programs which may explain why Band A has about two hundred marching students and Band B has about fifty (Hoffman, 2013). Once a steady level of membership is maintained, the marching ensemble has the potential to grow more easily and have a simpler time succeeding in their seasons.

Perspectives on Bands' Strengths

To further evaluate musical achievement from every angle, each bands' struggles have been highlighted but what makes them successful when they are at their finest. In this section, each director highlighted what they viewed as their biggest strengths when they are actively succeeding in musical achievement. Band Director A explained about his band, "One thing I do think was terrific about our band is the perception that it is a strong program and that a lot of the kids there think it is the end all be all." As one can see from earlier, this perception and community approval is majorly impactful to the band mentality and presence at performances, but it can also influence funding from administration and alumni. Community support and that positive perception can be a driving force for a program looking to extend their level of musical achievement,

however, it can also come as a double-edged sword. Director A continued to say, “You also have to look at them (the students) and say yes, while it may feel like these things are lending to the success of the program, you want to be the best that you can be all the time, no matter what, and never look at yourself and say, there’s nowhere to get”. It is a fitting example of defining the now, immensely popular education concept of having a growth mindset over having a fixed mindset as in, “we can still improve so much” versus “we have nothing left to achieve.” At its simplest definition, a growth-mindset “teaches the belief that intellectual abilities can be developed” (Yeager et al, 2021). To continue describing the situation within his band, “One thing I tried to develop was to get the students to realize that there’s always room to be better. There’s always room to be a better human being and there’s all these things that can make an organization really, really special.” This is incredibly beneficial to the journey towards musical achievement for Band A, it is also an extremely valuable life lesson that could impact his students for years to come. Band B had a different biggest strength than Band A and it made a major difference on their journey to musical achievement.

Director B went on to state regarding its biggest strength, “Our biggest strength is our bond. As a band, we may struggle with playing or marching sometimes, but at the end of the day, we are one big family! Those that are faithful to the program are just that.” With struggles such as recruitment, rehearsal space, and scheduling, to have a strong bond as their primary strength is telling for this program. Despite the issues they face, they can rely on the fact that the students that stick with the program will have an enjoyable experience because of that strong family-like bond that is shared. This can also serve as an advantage in the future for the band for advancing their musical achievement.

Band B can grow and presence in the future because their identity will be present in their level of bonding within the ensemble which can result in attracting new members and positive attention in the community to support them in their next steps. Due to this bond, director B thought similarly about the future of the program, “Our students can lean on and depend on each other for almost anything and I can definitely see that only getting better as we grow. I know that it may get a little messy as we get bigger, but I’m sure we’ll have no problem adjusting.” When students in your program are so well connected and carry such strong relationships, any change such as the band growing will be a manageable task because of their strong bonds moving forward. These bonds can bring the band closer together through a more enjoyable experience, helping students find a second or first home within the marching band, and this can even help influence students by making them want to attend school more regularly now that they have further reason (Matthews, 2017).

Directors’ Final Reflections

To end the interviews with each director, I asked them to take a moment to look introspectively on their career as band directors with each of these unique programs. Upon reflecting on their years with their marching band, I asked them to discuss in detail what were the least and most satisfactory parts of their job. Learning about these high and low points of their career experiences can easily help more band directors understand what to do and what not to do to elevate their own ensembles’ musical achievement and overall experience. To put it plainly, Band Director A stated, “The least satisfactory was that the adult relationships I had were much worse than the relationships shared with the students and a lot of times the adult stuff got in the way. I found that students were

willing to work a little harder when things got difficult than the adults were.” This displays the concept that students should always come first. Whenever you have a goal of musical achievement in your ensemble, if adults think it is not possible or unrealistic, ask your students because they will be the last to give up in the process. Also, if you have unresponsive or unsupportive administration or band boosters, it can be exceedingly difficult to communicate whereas most of the time, students are incredibly invested in the process and will do whatever they are able to in helping the cause. Band Director B had an even simpler qualm about the band director position which was not related to music at all. To certify that no quote was misunderstood or misrepresented, *emphatic* points in quotes are italicized (Ma & Hall, 2018). Director B explained, “The least satisfactory part of this job for me includes all paperwork. Documentation is *super* important, but sometimes as a band teacher, I just want to teach music.” Throughout my firsthand experiences as a music educator and observer of many different marching programs, most directors thoroughly enjoy teaching their craft yet dislike the semantics of paperwork. Fortunately, enough, director B enjoys his band director position, but it is a minor qualm he must deal with each day in his career.

The most satisfactory part of a band director’s job can be their quest for musical achievement. What motivates and fulfills a band director can inspire the marching ensemble. Both band directors reflected upon and fondly discussed the highlights of their days or more formally, the most satisfactory portions of their positions. Director A reflected, “Looking back on my career, the thing that I’m most proud of is the kids that go through my program that can look back and say that was very meaningful to me, I have great memories from that time in my life, and it gave me some skills that I still

use today.” This displays that for one, the student experience is of the utmost importance regarding musical achievement and for two, students receive lifelong lessons that can be transferred to many other subjects in one’s life journey. Director A explained that this is his true purpose for doing this job and for pursuing his goals in the concept of musical achievement. Band Director B also had a non-musical related answer upon reflecting on his most satisfactory part of the job. Band Director B explained, “The most satisfactory part of this job for me is being able to watch someone that I worked with for years get a chance to walk across the stage at graduation and it gets even better to see them later in life as a successful, hardworking adult.” This is non-musical in totality and based upon how the student experience as well as musical achievement drives them to success later in their lives. Director B pursues musical achievement in a similar way to Band Director A in the concept that the experiences that students gain in their high school marching band career are paramount to elevating their chances of success later in life; musical achievement and its lessons in the journey to accomplishing it can have a lifelong impact which is why it is so crucial to these students and directors alike. Lastly, to further explain, Band Director B finished by stating, “When I see that, it makes me feel good because I know I had something to do with that. I was able to help someone accomplish their goals and reach their true potential. *That* is the most satisfactory part of my job.” This quote represents why Band Director B chose this as his career, and it further exhibits the ultimate purpose of musical achievement in his program and why musical achievement has such an influential role in high school marching band students’ and directors’ lives.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS

This qualitative research study sought to gain a deeper view of two high school band directors' perspectives of their bands' musical achievement, satisfaction, and success. From interviewing both people who direct high school marching ensembles in the American Deep South, one can better understand their definitions of musical achievement. More than anything else, they both define it by how their students view their experiences and gain fulfillment during and after the marching season. They also see marching music education and its lessons as potentially having a life-long impact on students' future careers. These interviews with the directors at almost all times displayed a "student-first" mentality. Although this study does not prove that other directors this region share this mentality, one can hope that they do. While it is possible that the findings of this study may be representative of other marching band programs in the American Deep South at large, this cannot be verified until more research is done to compare these results to future studies. High schools and their respective marching band programs like the modern education system and current society, are complex and ever-changing in their compositions, director leadership, and definitions of musical achievement so until further research is done, the journey to discover what drives marching bands to their goals of musical achievement will remain unverified as a whole; this study offers at least one group of perspectives.

Future directions for more research on this topic are many. Originally, this study was going to focus on the issues of how socioeconomic status and cultural compositions impact marching bands' definitions and levels of musical achievement; however, this topic remains with minimal research having been conducted. This research study briefly

touched on this realm of information but gaining further knowledge on how those factors influence musical achievement can be telling of larger trends in this Southern region of high school marching ensembles as well as the national level. The original plans for this study also included interviewing to hear students' perspectives on defining musical achievement and explaining the factors that influence this topic. After intensive planning, interviewing students of each program would have required extensive amounts of clearance via permission slips for parents, consent forms for students, and administrative approval from each respective high school to conduct the research. Due to a lack of time and resources, student perspectives were unable to be included in this research study. This allows for an opportunity of further research through the process of investigating the same topic described in this study but then explaining the topic from students' perspectives after gaining the required clearance and consent. Further points of research could also include more comprehensive studies of the differing types of marching ensembles as well as how and why they evolved into their current compositions with their unique definitions of musical achievement. Through understanding more of why and how these ensembles have grown, there could potentially be a stronger understanding of their musical achievement goals at-large because researchers would understand the backgrounds and history of each type of program on a deeper and more intensive level. The topic of musical achievement is immensely vital to the world of music education because it is the entire purpose of why each program chooses to participate in this area of American culture. Defining musical achievement further and on larger scales will help audiences and music educators gain more information on how to build successful

programs that are fulfilling on all levels for those impacted by its influence from administrators to directors, to students, to the whole community.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 7-24-2021

IRB #: IRB-21-219

Title: Marching Band Directors' and Students' Perceptions of Achievement and Satisfaction in the American Deep South: A Qualitative Analysis

Creation Date: 5-12-2021

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: John Klee

Review Board: Sacco (Exempt/Expedited Board)

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
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Key Study Contacts

Member	John Klee	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	john.klee@usm.edu
Member	Thomas O'Brien	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	thomas.obrien@usm.edu
Member	John Klee	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	john.klee@usm.edu

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date:

Dear Potential Participant,

I would like to ask you to consider participating in a study being conducted as a requirement of undergraduate research in the Honors College at the University of Southern Mississippi. The aim of this research is to identify and analyze factors relate to band directors' and band members' perceptions and feelings of musical achievement and satisfaction in their high school marching bands. The study focuses on marching bands at public high schools in the American Deep South.

Participating in this study will afford you with the opportunity to share your experiences, knowledge on the research topic, and the opportunity to share your opinions related to the topic at hand. The study has the potential to capture the feelings and experiences found in contrasting high school marching band programs. This study also has the potential to assist countless band directors to understand distinct types of marching bands more accurately in our field. Participation involves minimal anticipated risk. During the interviews, the participants and principal investigator will be discussing questions relating to topical items related feelings/perceptions of achievement and satisfaction.

This interview should take no more than 45-60 minutes. All data collected will be only monitored by me. I will be recording the Zoom interviews and then later when organizing data, names and locations will be replaced with pseudonyms for your safety. Any identifiable information obtained during this study will remain completely confidential and only available to me. Participation in this project is completely voluntary. Please feel free to decline participation or to discontinue participation at any point without concern over penalty, prejudice, or any other negative consequence.

Data will be collected, my final honors thesis project will be written, and then submitted for the fulfillment of Honors College requirements at the University of Southern Mississippi. The results may also be used for presentation at a professional conference and/or published in a scholarly journal. Upon completion of data compilation, all recordings will be destroyed a year after their initial recording. Databases will be deleted following the completion of the study.

If you have questions concerning this research, please contact John Klee at
John.Klee@usm.edu

This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Thomas O'Brien and also has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board under protocol number 21-219. By signing and returning the attached consent form, the respondent gives permission for this confidential data to be used for the purposes described above.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
John Klee

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



Institutional Review Board

STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES

The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. Use what is given in the research description and consent sections below when constructing research instrument online.

Last Edited February 24th, 2021

Today's date:		
Project Information		
Project Title: Two Marching Band Directors' Perceptions of Achievement and Satisfaction in the American Deep South: A Qualitative Analysis		
Principal Investigator: John Klee	Phone: 248-795-8639	Email: John.Klee@usm.edu
College: Arts and Sciences	School and Program: The University of Southern Mississippi Honors College	

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

Purpose:

The aim of this research is to identify and analyze factors relate to band directors' perceptions and feelings of musical achievement and satisfaction in high school marching bands in the American Deep South. The research will make use of qualitative research methods - primarily interviews - and will focus on two to four public high school marching bands in search of these factors. At the data collection stage, the researcher plans to interview up to four high school marching band directors and up to eight former high school band members.

Description of Study:

Participation involves minimal anticipated risk. Each interview covers several topical items related feelings/perceptions of achievement and satisfaction, Basic demographic information related to background will also be collected. The PI investigator will conduct and record interviews via Zoom. Each interview should take no more than 45-60 minutes. All data collected will be password protected, managed, and later examined by the principal investigator (PI). Later, when organizing data, names and locations will be replaced with pseudonyms to increase anonymity. Any identifiable information obtained during the course of this study will remain confidential and only available to the PI. Participation in the project is completely voluntary.

Benefits:

This study will afford participants the opportunity to share experiences and opinions related to the topic at hand. The study hopes to capture participants' feelings and perceptions associated with musical achievement and satisfaction as directors of their high school marching band programs. This study also has the potential to provide researchers and band directors with a deeper understanding of factors related to the priorities and mindsets of marching bands in our field.

Risks:

The risks of this study are minimal in nature. During interviews, the participants and PI will discuss topics relating to participants' feels of musical achievement and satisfaction.

Confidentiality:

The PI and thesis advisor will be the only individuals with access to recordings of the interviews and transcriptions. As mentioned above, participants will strictly be referred to with pseudonyms. Participants' real names, school names, and exact locations will not be used in any published research documents. Interview recordings will be kept until they will be destroyed a year after their initial recording.

Alternative Procedures:

If participants are unable to participate in Zoom interviews, participants may also qualify to write written responses to the interview questions and email a PDF of their answers back to the principal investigator.

Participant s Assurance:

This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue participation in the project.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

By clicking the box below, I give my consent to participate in this research project.

Check this box if you consent to this study, and then click **Continue**.
(Clicking **Continue** will not allow you to advance to the study, unless you have checked the box indicating your consent.)

If you do not wish to consent to this study, please close your browser window at this time.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Director Interview Questions

1. Please state your name/age-range (ex. mid 30s, 40s), and where you grew up.
2. Which marching band do/did you direct?
3. Can you describe a little about your background? (parents, siblings, home life, schools, church, jobs, vacations, holidays, etc.)
4. Which instruments do/did you play? Which is your primary?
5. Can you describe the college(s) or university where you attended? What factors led you to go to college? What degree(s) did you earn?
6. How long have you been teaching? How long have you been teaching at this school?
7. Why did you choose to become a band director?
8. Why did you come direct this program?
9. How would you describe your band program?
10. How would you describe your band's style of performance/marching?
11. Is marching band a class or an extracurricular activity at your school? Explain.
12. Do you have a band booster organization? If so, how do they assist the band and how active is it?
13. Do you have any additional support (assistant Band Director And/or technicians) to assist you with the band?
14. Do students pay any fees to participate in band? If so, what amount?
15. Do you make use of any technology with your band? If so, what do you use?

16. Instruments are an important feature of any band or orchestra. How does your band acquire instruments?
17. Are the instruments a major part of the annual budget? What is your estimate of the quality/condition of them?
18. Are instruments loaned to students, or do students own/rent their own instruments, or both?
19. What do your students wear at performances? Explain 20. Do you perform/compete at state championships and/or state evaluations? Explain why or why not?
21. What defines a successful marching season for you? Do you feel that your program is successful in those ways? Explain.
22. What internal factors (factors at the school level, district level school) are related to your bands' success? Explain.
23. What external factors (factors outside the district) are related to your band's success? Explain.
24. What are the biggest challenges/obstacles your program faces?
25. What would you say are the biggest strengths of your program? In what ways is your program continuing to develop?
26. What is the least satisfactory part of this job?
27. What is the most satisfactory part of this job?

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