STRATEGIES USED BY WOMEN HIGH SCHOOL BAND DIRECTORS TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF BALANCING CAREER AND FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

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The lack of women band directors, especially at the high school and collegiate levels, is an area of concern for music educators. Previous research has identified balancing career and family responsibilities as a challenge for professional women, and a possible factor in the inequality of men and women in the band directing profession.

The purpose of the study was to investigate strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family. College band directors in Michigan and Ohio nominated women high school band directors based on the following criteria, (a) female, (b) current or former high school band director in Michigan or Ohio, (c) married or divorced, and/or caregiver of a child during the period of employment as a high school band director. Semi-structured, open-ended live interviews were conducted with four women exhibiting a range of experiences with balancing a career as a high school band director and family responsibilities. Interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The analysis initially focused on issues presented in previous research, such as spousal support, childcare methods, time management, and family and career planning and was further guided by the interview of each subject allowing the researcher to identify challenges and strategies related to balancing a career as a band director and family responsibilities.

Analysis and coding of data within and across cases revealed challenges and strategies commonly related to a theme of time. Participants reported challenges and strategies related to the time requirements of the high school band director position and parenting. Numerous after-school and weekend commitments contributed to participants’ emotional distress and guilt from being separated from their children, maintaining personal relationships, and difficulty staying
healthy. Strategies used by participants to cope with their time commitments included: relying on their spouses for support; depending on family, friends, and daycare providers for quality childcare; setting priorities; scheduling meticulously; and living near their families and schools.

Identifying strategies used to meet the challenge of balancing a career as a band director and family responsibilities may benefit women who desire to achieve their professional goal of becoming a successful high school band director and personal goal of having a family.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The lack of women band directors is an area of concern for music educators. In the 1970s and 1980s, women represented less than 10% of the population of college band directors in the United States (Gould, 1996). According to the National Education Association, in 1992, women were underrepresented as high school band directors, with only 11% in large secondary schools and 23% in small secondary schools (as cited in Hartley, 1995). A decade later, in 2001, women comprised 25% of high school band directors, and 17% of college and university band directors, (“Gender trends,” 2001, p. 52-53). Previous research has identified balancing career and family responsibilities as a challenge for women conductors, possibly contributing to the gender inequality among band directors (Brenneman, 2007; Fiske, 1997; Hinely, 1984; Howe, 2009; Lawson, 1984; McElroy, 1996; Richardson, 1992).

Family planning has been labeled a concern for women aspiring to become conductors (Lawson, 1984). Family responsibilities such as marriage and parenting have been identified as the principal reason for the shortage of female high school and college band directors, (Hinely, 1984; Richardson, 1992). It is possible that the high demands of a career as a band director conflict with marital responsibilities. Hartley (1995) found that slightly more than half of the women college band directors she surveyed reported that they were married, suggesting that the responsibilities and time required of a college band director may influence women to abstain from marriage or choose not to pursue the position in order to maintain family responsibilities (p. 5). Women college band directors reported that it is possible to be happily married and a college band director at the same time, depending on the people involved in the marriage (Jackson, 1996). Greaves-Spurgeon (1998) investigated women high school band directors in Georgia,
finding that 12 of 28 women band directors who were surveyed reported that they were married, 13 indicated that they were single, and 3 stated that they were divorced, suggesting that marriage presents a slight conflict for high school band directors. Furthermore, 20 of the 28 subjects reported that they were childless, implying a possible interference between motherhood and band directing. Family responsibilities and the ability to balance family and career were labeled as challenges affecting career growth in Fiske’s (1997) study to determine a profile of women music educators in higher education. According to Fiske, “Difficult and irreversible choices must be made by women concerning career and family issues” (p. 167). Richardson (1992) surveyed 18 female public school and college level music educators on several topics including career moves, detours along the career path, influences, mentoring others, setting and accomplishing goals, defining success, and bits of wisdom (p. 35). In sharing her wisdom, one respondent stated,

There are so many challenges unique to women in our profession, such as (1) the difficulty of obtaining the respect of university and professional ensembles; (2) the need to obtain the support of one’s spouse for the horrendous hours required of musicians and the lengthy time commitments; (3) the difficulty of working out a schedule that allows for parenting (Have you ever heard of job sharing in our line of work?); (4) the lack of women in high school and college positions, especially married women with children; and (5) the ridiculous dress code for performance (p. 38).

Addressing professional influences, another respondent declared, “I wish I had a role model of someone who managed to raise children, have a happy home life, and have a successful career. Most of the people I know have the career without the home” (p. 36).
Although women music educators are affected by the demands of balancing career and family, success may be attainable through effective time management (Fiske, 1997). An optimistic respondent to McElroy’s (1996) survey of women college orchestra and band conductors listed priorities as her greatest challenge in her pursuit of a conducting career, declaring, “Priorities—always difficult to balance conducting, teaching, family life, education, etc. But it can be done—we don’t have to give up a family life to create a professional career” (p. 163).

Need for the Study

Research in music education concerned with women band directors is limited. The majority of research in the area focuses on women college band directors, rather than high school band directors. Women band directors teaching at the high school level may benefit from research that is relevant to their area of experience. Previous research concerning women band directors only sparsely addresses the conflict between career and family responsibilities, creating a need for an in-depth study of women band directors and their experiences with balancing career and family. Teaching high school involves numerous teaching responsibilities and after school commitments, making it possibly the most demanding of all band director positions from elementary through college. The time and energy required to be a successful high school band director may pose challenges for women in balancing family and work life. A study of women high school band directors with families may reveal strategies useful in balancing career and family and further promote the success of current and future women high school band directors.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to conduct a multiple case study to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gender Issues in Music Education

Gender issues may contribute to the shortage of women band directors. Early research in gender stereotypes and music education is focused on musical instrument gender associations. Abeles and Porter (1978) examined musical instrument gender associations on the foundation that assigning sexual stereotypes to musical instruments limits the range of musical experiences for both genders. The first of their four-fold study is a 1975 survey that investigated the instrument preferences of parents for their children, finding a significant relationship between the child’s gender and the parent’s instrument preference for the child. Parents chose traditionally feminine instruments such as flute, clarinet, and violin for their daughters and traditionally masculine instruments such as trumpet, trombone, and percussion for their sons. The results of this first study suggest that parents have an influence on their child’s instrument preference based on gender. The second study examined music majors and non-music majors’ instrumental preferences and results aligned with those from the first study as both groups held masculine and feminine instrument stereotypes, further indicating that musical training may not be a factor in the sex-stereotyping of musical instruments. In their third study, Abeles and Porter (1978) measured the instrument preferences of children from kindergarten through fifth grade to determine the age at which children begin sex-stereotyping musical instruments. The results of this study showed that boys and girls were most likely to differ in their instrument preferences at around the third and fourth grades. The fourth part of the study examined three methods of presenting instruments to children, the first of which was a kit that was commonly used for introducing children to orchestral instruments, the second method presented instruments as they are typically associated to gender, and the third method attempted to eliminate gender bias from
the introductions. The presentation methods generally did not have an effect on girls’ instrument preferences, but boys reacted differently to the unbiased presentation than in the commonly used and biased presentations. The combined results of Abeles and Porter’s study indicate that musical instrument gender associations are present in all age groups, are not affected by musical training, and may be the dominant factor in instrument selection, implying that special precautions should be taken to eliminate gender bias in instrument presentation. Furthermore, musical instrument gender associations may influence individuals’ preferences of musical professions.

A study by Griswold and Chroback (1981) focused on sex-role associations of music instruments and occupations by gender and major. Their study produced results that are consistent with the findings of Abeles and Porter (1978), in that undergraduates, regardless of their gender, assigned gender stereotypes to certain music instruments and occupations. However, unlike Abeles and Porter (1978), Griswold and Chroback’s (1981) study showed a significant effect of major (music vs. non-music) on musical instrument gender associations in that music majors were more likely to assign masculine associations to instruments such as the clarinet, which non-music majors classified as feminine. Considering occupations, the subjects, regardless of gender or major, classified the choral conductor as feminine and the instrumental conductor as masculine. Delzell and Leppala (1992) expanded the research on gender associations of musical instruments by focusing specifically on fourth-grade students. Although the results of the study show a decreased magnitude of gender associations since Abeles and Porter (1978), they suggest that music instrument and occupational preference continue to be related to gender.
Delzell (1994) investigated how the historical perspective of the American band, instrument gender associations, and hiring practices affect the gender-role stereotyping of high school band teaching positions. Regarding hiring practices, Delzell (1994) suggested that the “common gender-biased belief that female applicants are hindered by time constraints due to family responsibilities could influence some principals” (p. 82).

In examining issues affecting the imbalance of numbers of women and men college band conductors, Jackson (1996) found six contributing factors. The subjects identified three reasons for the gender imbalance, including, “the unwillingness to acquire a terminal degree, the lack of marching band experience, and the unwillingness to relocate,” (p. 103) which Jackson classified as controllable aspects. Jackson classified the following three reasons as uncontrollable aspects, “the creation of positions through the retirement of tenured professors, the military tradition of the college band program, and discrimination” (p. 103). Gender issues were identified as the greatest challenge in the pursuit of a conducting career in an investigation of women orchestra and band conductors in North American colleges and universities from 1984-1996 (McElroy, 1996). Examples of gender issues reported include sexism, lack of role models, and acceptance within the profession (McElroy, 1996).

The segregation of occupations in the music profession is likely related to gender-specific occupational role models (Gould 1992, 1996; Grant, 2000). Gould (1992) compared two groups of gender-difference theories—sex-role and legitimation—to explain the implications of gender-specific occupational role models for music educators. According to Walker and Fennell (1986), sex-role theories suggest, “gender-appropriate behaviors are acquired through social learning” (as cited in Gould, 1992). In application of the sex-role theory, Gould (1992) states, “In music education, women become elementary music teachers because their elementary teachers were
women, and men become band directors because their band directors were men” (p. 9). Legitimation theories suggest that people act according to expected or legitimate masculine and feminine traits (p. 9-10). Gould (1992) explains, “In music education, women choose a traditionally female occupation such as elementary music teaching because it allows them to assume an expressive role, and men choose a traditionally male occupation such as band directing because it allows them to assume an implemental role” (p. 10).

Although gender-specific role models influence musical occupation preferences, it has not been shown that they determine students’ motivation to play in a band. Miyamoto (1997) examined Japanese high school students’ motivation in band as it relates to the gender of the band director and the student. The results of the study indicate that female and male band directors equally motivated students to play in a band.

Women in American Bands

The foundations and traditions of the American wind band may have created gender stereotypes that favor masculinity in the role of bandmaster. According to Howe (2001), “Bands developed from a male military music tradition” (p. 154). More specifically, President John Adams established the United States Marine Band in 1798—a catalyst for the development of bands in America (Battisti, 2002, p. 6). The male military music tradition continued well into the 20th century, as most community and professional bands were comprised of men, and the majority of high school and college marching bands excluded women, requiring them to form their own bands (Gould, 2003; Howe, 2001). Gould (2003) stated, “Reasons given for excluding women from marching bands included the military association and appearance of the band, purported discipline problems with mixed-sex ensembles, and the theory that women’s smaller stature caused uniformity problems in marching” (College Bands section, para. 3). In order to
accommodate the decline in college band enrollment caused by World War II, women were either admitted and allowed to march alongside men, or they had to form their own bands, which participated in combined performances of separate women and men’s bands (Gould, 2003, College Bands section, para. 2). In addition to college bands, women were recruited for military bands during World War II, the most prestigious of which was the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve Band, which existed from 1943 to 1945 (Sullivan, 2006). When the war was over, however, women were once again excluded from college bands and relieved of their duty in military bands (Gould, 2003; Sullivan, 2006).

The exclusion of women in school bands had detrimental effects on women aspiring to be band directors (Gould, 2003; Howe, 2001). Howe (2001) explained, “When women were denied membership in marching bands, they did not gain the skills needed to succeed in teaching high school instrumental music” (p. 154). Fortunately, a turning point for future women band directors occurred with the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibited sex discrimination in federally funded educational programs. Similarly, after the disbanding of the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve Band in 1945, it was not until 1973 that the “President’s Own” United States Marine Band accepted its first woman band member (Sullivan, 2006, p. 26). Twenty-five years later, the “President’s Own” appointed Captain Michelle A. Rakers as the first female to the podium as Assistant Director in 1998, 25 years after the first woman band member was accepted (Texas Bandmasters Association).

Women band directors have earned national recognition and have made notable contributions to instrumental music education as they gained acceptance into the profession. Anderson (2010) examined Barbara Buehlman’s contributions to music education. According to Anderson (2010), Buehlman’s grade school and middle school received national acclaim for
their performances at music education conferences. Buehlman was also influential in her long tenure as an administrator of the Illinois Grade School Band Association and the Midwest Clinic, which is an international band and orchestra clinic. Additional contributions to music education include educational materials such as band arrangements, method books, and journal articles. Anderson stated,

The importance of Buehlman’s work as a music educator is not restricted to one specific area. Rather, it is the national acclaim she received in these different areas of conductor, administrator, and arranger that makes her career unique and significant. Even more important, though, was Buehlman’s status as a female in a profession that was largely male-dominated (p. 5).

Throughout her career as a high school band director, Gladys Stone Wright received numerous honors and awards. A leader of women in the profession, Wright was the first female to be inducted in the National Band Association Hall of Fame, the first woman to be elected to the American Bandmasters Association and the founding President of the Women Band Directors National Association (Women Band Directors International).

Paula Crider, Professor Emeritus of the University of Texas, is distinguished for her achievements as a public school and college band director. A pioneer in the profession, Crider was the first female in the state of Texas to serve as director of bands of a class 5A high school, which is the largest classification in the state. She is the third woman to be included in the American Bandmasters Association (ABA) and was elected as President of the ABA in 2010 (American Bandmasters Association).

Mallory Thompson is a prominent woman band director who followed Glenn Cliffe Bainum and John Paynter as Director of Bands at Northwestern University in 1996. Thompson
is also the artistic director of the Northshore Concert Band in Illinois. In addition, Thompson is active throughout North America as a guest conductor and clinician (Northshore Concert Band).

While limited in number, women band directors have made important contributions to music education.

Career and Family

According to Snyder (1994), despite the advances that women have made toward equality in the labor market, they continue to be primarily responsible for child rearing. Because of the expectation for women to be primarily responsible for parenting, an issue for employed mothers is arranging childcare (p. 158). Snyder examined how childcare impacts the career decisions of working mothers. Her survey of 193 working mothers included two open-ended questions, the first of which addressed the mother’s perception of the impact of childcare on her career. Respondents indicated that simply having children limited career productivity, but expressed no regret, exclaiming that time with their children is more important than their careers. In addition, adequate childcare services were the critical factor in some respondents’ decisions to have a career. Desirable qualities of childcare indicated by respondents include quality of staff, flexibility of hours, variety of activities, educational content, and cost (pp. 163-164).

A portion of research in women’s studies is focused on the mentorship of women professionals balancing career and relationships. A multiple case study by Ponton (1997) examined the lives of three women, providing insight into the personal problems and solutions of working mothers. Careful family planning and career location changes were identified as two strategies used to avoid having limited contact with children as the result of demanding professions. A high level of education was identified as a positive factor in two of the subjects’ abilities to balance work with their home lives.
The dual-career marriage is another variable in the work-family conflict. A study by Carlisle (1994) investigated the advantages and disadvantages of dual-career relationships, finding that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages, resulting in a mostly positive perception of dual-career relationships. Advantages of dual-career marriages identified by respondents include larger income, greater partner respect, relational cohesion, balance of power, and increased autonomy (p. 141). Participants in Carlisle’s study labeled overload and little time for relationships as disadvantages of dual-career marriages (p. 143). Carlisle noted that women viewed little time for relationships as a greater disadvantage than slowed or stagnant careers (p. 143). Carlisle asked participants to identify coping strategies, revealing that most respondents suggested encouraging partners to share the workload, followed by improvement of time management skills, and hiring household help (p. 144). Respondents also suggested placing importance on leisure activities and exercise as coping strategies (p. 145). Carlisle also investigated participants’ perception of partner contribution, finding that more than 25% of respondents’ partners equally shared and 56% significantly shared household responsibilities, with only 13% providing little or no support (p. 146). Interestingly, Carlisle noted that a difference between “helping” and “sharing” was not defined for the participants, meaning that there is a possibility that husbands were “helping,” rather than “sharing,” implying the perception that household responsibilities belong to the woman, which is consistent with the views expressed by Snyder (1994). To examine another factor of the dual-career marriage, Carlisle asked respondents how career interruption for child rearing affected their careers, finding that most women perceived it as a positive change and a career advantage (p. 149).
Women Music Educators and Family

In an historical account of women in music education careers, Howe (2009) highlighted the accomplishments of many women in the early twentieth century, such as Frances Elliott Clark, who established the Music Supervisors National Conference in 1907, currently known as the Music Educators National Conference: The National Association for Music Education, and Elsie M. Shawe, who held an active career as the supervisor of music in St. Paul Minnesota from 1898 to 1933 (p. 166-167). Howe commented that although influential women music educators such as Clarke and Shawe were successful, financially secure, and independent, they sacrificed marriage and children for their careers (Howe, 2009, p. 168).

In examining the trends among MENC educators, Howe (2009) found that men outnumber women in band, administration, and jazz, in addition to positions at the college and university levels (p. 177). Howe speculated that the reason why women are so confined to the areas of general music, choral, private studio, and keyboard studies, is that “they may avoid the extra responsibilities needed to move ahead in a competitive world because of the problems of balancing career and family, issues that have not been solved by society” (p. 177).

Stremikis (1997) conducted interviews with 12 women professional musicians as part of a study of the characteristics of successful American and European women in music. When questioned about their method of fitting their careers into their daily lives, Stremikis stated “All of the participants expressed difficulty in juggling work demands with family and personal life. The consensus here is that career and personal life are experienced as one in the same” (p. 85).

Brenneman (2007) documented the personal experiences of three exemplary women choral conductors, giving specific attention to emergent gender issues. Two of the issues addressed include spousal support and balancing career and parental responsibilities. During her
interview, one subject named Susanne expressed that she would be unsure of her ability to negotiate the demands of her career without spousal support (p. 136). Brenneman commented that Susanne’s husband’s support is perceived by society as noteworthy because of the reversal of traditionally gendered roles (p. 137). The researcher became a participant in her own study by telling her personal story of influences, issues, and experiences as a choral conductor. She described her process of negotiating the guilt of professional career and parental responsibilities, saying, “The duality of responsibility that I feel as a mother and as a professional academic and choral conductor creates a tension that I struggle to resolve” (Brenneman, 2007, p. 8). Like Susanne, Brenneman received spousal support at home, but experienced feelings that suggested she should be able to balance her career and parental responsibilities independently. In addition, Brenneman disclosed her feelings of guilt toward the sacrifices she made for her career, as she struggled to fulfill her children’s physical and emotional needs (p. 8).

Fiske (1997) surveyed women music educators in higher education. A question addressing the most challenging factors affecting career growth produced geographic location and job responsibilities as the two most challenging factors, followed by family responsibilities and the ability to balance family and career (p. 172). Career and family planning was a common issue among the majority of participants. Specifically, some respondents indicated that their pursuit of a doctoral degree was delayed or unfulfilled due to the challenges of balancing parenting and education (p. 172). Furthermore, because 81% of respondents had between one and two children of preschool or elementary age, Fiske estimated that the respondents might have chosen to limit the amount of young children to care for during their doctoral study (p. 167). However, an encouraging result was the identification of spousal support as a contributing factor to respondents’ success, with 94% of respondents indicating that their husbands
understood their needs as a working mother (p. 164).

Jackson (1996) examined self and family concerns as personal issues affecting the career experiences of women college band conductors. Considering the possibility of simultaneously having a happy marriage and a successful career as a college band director, interview participants advised that it depends on the spouse’s support and ability to handle stress (Jackson, 1996, p. 84).

A study by Grant (2000) examined the relationship between gender-specific role models and women college band directors. As part of the interview, women were asked about perceptions and gender stereotypes. Each of the nine women discussed the problem of balancing career and family. Of the nine women interviewed, only one felt that she led a balanced life, advising, “In our profession you could guest conduct every weekend. There is no limit to what people need from you. You have to choose how far your parameters go and prioritize” (p. 103). One woman responded, “I think it is easier for a man to pursue his career and not spend so much time with his family than it is for a woman” (p 102). Grant explained that the band directing profession holds the perception that women sacrifice having families in order to achieve success in their careers.

Greaves-Spurgeon (1998) surveyed women high school band directors in Georgia, investigating role models, mentors, networking, and gender-related behaviors. A portion of the questionnaire centered on professional and personal goals. The most common professional goals included continuing higher education or to improve or maintain their current programs. The top three personal goals were to have children, get married, and have more family time, which corresponds to the large percentage of women who reported that they were unmarried, divorced, or childless. Greaves-Spurgeon discussed the relationship between personal goals and time, “All
of these goals require more time and this is something that is difficult to find while employed as a high school band director involved with football, extra rehearsals for festival, and band trips” (p. 61). She continued to discuss how an administrator might perceive more personal time as an interruption to the flow of a successful high school band program.

Previous research shows concern for the wide disparity in the number of women and men directing high school and college bands, which may be related to the challenges women encounter while balancing career and family responsibilities. The purpose of the present study was to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family.
CHAPTER III: METHOD

Selection of Participants

As required by federal regulations, research involving human participants requires approval from the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) and was obtained from the Bowling Green State University HSRB prior to beginning the participant selection process (see Appendix A).

Band directors from eight large universities in Michigan and Ohio were contacted by letter and asked to nominate possible participants for the study based on the following criteria, (a) female, (b) current or former high school band director in Michigan or Ohio, (c) married or divorced, and/or caregiver of a child during the period of employment as a high school band director (see Appendix B). A follow-up email request was sent to each college band director who had not responded after one week in the event that a hard copy was not received.

Upon the receipt of nominations, the researcher mailed an initial contact letter and selection survey to each nominee (see Appendix C). If nominees did not respond after one week, the researcher sent a follow-up email to them in case they did not receive a hard copy. The selection survey requested detailed information including willingness to participate, years of experience teaching high school, high school teaching responsibilities, marital status, and number and ages of children at the time of employment as a high school band director. After receiving detailed information from possible subjects, the researcher purposefully selected four participants who indicated their willingness to participate and fulfilled a varied range of years of teaching experience, and marital and parental experience.

The researcher mailed a formal invitation and an informed consent form to each selected participant, requesting participation in a live, semi-structured, open-ended interview, which
would last approximately one hour and be scheduled at the participant’s convenience (see Appendix D). All four participants responded positively to the request for participation.

Qualitative Data

A list of guide questions was sent to each participant one week prior to the scheduled interview (see Appendix E). The interview addressed the following research questions, (a) demographics, (b) educational and professional background, (c) career choices and responsibilities, (d) family choices and responsibilities, (e) issues concerning balancing family and career responsibilities, (f) positive experiences and rewards of career and family, and (g) advice for women band directors.

The researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended live interviews with four women who were current or former high school band directors from Michigan and Ohio with spouses and children. Interviews were scheduled at the participants’ convenience and took place in their personal school offices. Each interview was completed in an average of 38 minutes. The interviews were recorded on a Sony digital voice recorder, model ICD-UX70, and subsequently transcribed using digital pitch control at half speed to ensure accuracy (complete interview transcripts are available in Appendix F). All participants’ identities and information obtained were protected and remain confidential.

Data Analysis

The information provided by the participants was analyzed through cross-case synthesis, meaning that each individual case study was treated as a separate study, and the researcher collected findings across the individual studies (Yin, 2003, p. 134). The analysis initially focused on issues presented in previous research, such as spousal support, childcare methods, time management, and family and career planning (Brenneman, 2007; Carlisle, 1994; Fiske,
1997; Jackson, 1996; Ponton, 1997; Snyder, 1994) and was further guided by the interview of each participant allowing the researcher to identify challenges and strategies related to balancing a career as a band director and family responsibilities. Triangulation of data within and across cases was used as a method of establishing validity, as Stake (2006) explains, “Each important finding needs to have at least three (often more) confirmations and assurances that key meanings are not being overlooked. Each important interpretation needs assurance that it is supported by the data gathered and not easily misinterpreted by the readers of the report” (p. 33).

Additionally, to improve the validity of the study, the researcher conducted a member check in which all participants were asked to verify the accuracy of their interview transcripts and comment on the adequacy of the interpretations of the data (Orcher, 2005).
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Respondents

The researcher asked 21 college band directors in Michigan and Ohio to nominate participants for the study. Twelve college band directors returned nomination forms, including three who were unable to provide any nominees. A total of 25 current or former women high school band directors were nominated for the study, with 15 representing Michigan and 10 representing the Ohio. Of the 25 total nominees, 11 (44%) responded to the initial contact letter and selection survey and were considered in the selection process. The researcher received four responses post participant selection and included their responses solely for demographic information.

Table 1

Selection Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Current Employment</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Years of High School Experience</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Age of Children</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33, 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27, 24, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>MS/HS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5, 3, 10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3 step-children</td>
<td>3, 6, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>MS/HS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. – = data were not reported.
As shown in Table 1, the majority of the respondents are married, have children, and represent a vast range of years of teaching experience. The researcher purposely selected four participants with differing levels of experience with career and family.

Participants

In order to maintain confidentiality, each participant will be identified throughout the study using a pseudonym: Participant A (Julie), Participant I (Ellen), Participant J (Elizabeth), and Participant O (Rebecca). To further ensure confidentiality, names and locations mentioned during the interviews have been changed.

Julie

Julie is currently a college band director with a master’s degree in music education and a doctor of musical arts in conducting. She has 38 years of teaching experience—21 of which were at the high school level. She and her husband, Sam, have been married for 39 years and have two children, Emily, 33, and Mark, 30. During the time when they were raising their children, both Julie and her husband were income providers. Sam was also a music educator and at one time, co-director of Julie’s high school bands. While her children were growing up, Julie was the director of the concert bands and marching band at a large suburban high school where the marching band program had a strong reputation. Julie was purposefully selected because she completed her career as a high school band director, is now a college band director, and her children are grown.

Ellen

Ellen is currently a high school band director with a master’s degree in music. She has 20 years of teaching experience, all of which were at the high school level. She has been married to her husband, Bill, for 17 years and has two children, Natalie and Daniel, ages 12 and 7. Ellen
and Bill are in a dual-career marriage. Bill is a musician as well, but his career is in telecommunications. Ellen’s teaching responsibilities include directing three high school concert bands, marching band, and orchestra, as well as team teaching middle school band in a suburban public school district. Ellen was purposefully selected because she is in the middle of her career as a high school band director and has one young child and one pre-adolescent child.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is currently a college band director who has been teaching for 16 years, 3 of which were at the high school level. She has a master of music degree in wind conducting and a doctor of musical arts in conducting. Elizabeth and her husband, John, have two children, Andrew, 7, and Michelle, 3. Both Elizabeth and John are responsible for providing household income. John was once a band director, but due to budget cuts at his school, he lost his job and now works as a car salesperson. Elizabeth began her doctoral study while she was pregnant with her first child and continued building her family after she became director of bands at a small university. Elizabeth’s career responsibilities include directing the wind ensemble, teaching courses in music education and conducting, observing student teachers, and overseeing instrumental area of the school of music. Elizabeth was purposefully selected because she has high school experience and is currently a college band director with young children, which is rare among women college band directors.

Rebecca

Rebecca is currently a high school band director with a master’s degree in music performance. She has 3 years of teaching experience, with 2 years at the high school level. She has been married for two and a half years and has a 9-month-old daughter. Rebecca is in a dual-income marriage and her husband’s job is seasonal. Rebecca teaches 6th grade though 12th grade
band, marching band, and jazz band in a rural public school district. Rebecca was purposefully selected because she is in the beginning stage of her career and recently became a mother.

Concept of Time

As shown in Figure 1, analysis and coding of data within and across cases revealed themes of challenges and strategies commonly related to the concept of time. Challenges and strategies reported by participants related to the time requirements of the high school band director position and parenting are discussed in the following section.

Figure 1

Relationship of Themes
Challenges

The participants reported challenges that relate to the large amount of time required of the high school band director. Ellen shared her thoughts on time commitments, “Our difference is the performance element is at night, and in weekend commitments, and if you choose to be involved in some of those professional organizations . . . you know, I said, my next free Saturday is May.” Elizabeth, although she is a college band director, experienced time commitments similar to Ellen’s. She explained, “There are a lot of Saturday commitments, with festivals and workshops. The workshops on Saturdays are really difficult.” Rebecca expressed frustration with her extra requirements,

There are teachers that don’t do a fraction of what I do in this building that spend so much time and complain to me all the time how they never see their family. I just kind of want to say, “Don’t talk to me because you have no idea of my demands—what I have to do to between organizing pep band and having band booster meetings,” and you name it, there’s all kinds of—we’re planning a trip right now so I have to have these trip meetings with band booster parents—extra things, you know?

Numerous after-school and weekend commitments contributed to participants’ emotional distress and guilt from being separated from their children, maintaining personal relationships, and difficulty staying healthy.

Separation from Children

Time away from their children can cause mothers to experience anxiety and stress. The strong emotional connection between a mother and child caused emotional distress for the participants when they had to return to work after maternity leave, as illustrated by Julie in the following statement:
Emily was born at the beginning of the 4th year, in September, and I took only 6 weeks off and went right back to work, and discovered very quickly that that was probably not a good idea. The emotional ties to when you first have a child—I knew it would be strong—but it was even more difficult than I expected.

Ellen experienced similar emotions when parting with her daughter each morning before work, as she tearfully explained,

I used to cry every day that I dropped my daughter off. I would put my make-up on in the parking lot after I wiped my face, and I would come into work. I did that for 4 years—I couldn’t handle it. I did, but it was exhausting, and when we decided to have number two, I said [to my husband], “I can’t do the drop off again. You’re going to have to abandon your own child, I can’t do it.” Because that’s what it feels like as a parent, “Here, this is the most precious thing in the world, I’m going to go leave it with you. Goodbye!” Yeah, really hard.

Participants also reported feelings of guilt from being away from their children while working and fulfilling their numerous after-school responsibilities as band directors. Rebecca addressed how her daily schedule causes her to miss opportunities to spend time with, or take care of her child, saying,

As far as the fact that I’m not home with her during the day, that’s the hardest part for me, being a mother, is knowing that she needs me to take her to an appointment, like if I wanted to take her Christmas shopping or something, I can’t really do that.
In reflection, Julie said,

I guess when they were younger before they were in our bands, I have felt some guilt about being away so much, about having so many outside of school rehearsals when the kids were home with their dad or with our friend across the street.

Ellen warned of the consequence of evening commitments,

Any time you plan that night piece you run the risk of not seeing your own children. I saw him sleeping—he’s adorable—mouth hanging open, arms flopped over the covers, I cried. It’s the way it is—there’s my kid and I can’t be with him.

*Personal Relationships*

Participants found that maintaining personal relationships can be difficult because of their career time commitment. Ellen and Elizabeth expressed their feelings about the lack of time available to spend with their spouses and children. Ellen described,

My husband is the big piece, and there were definitely times where he and I had little arguments because we just can’t get it done. We just can’t get it done. We’ve made our priorities, the kids are first for both of us, but that takes a toll on your own personal relationship because you don’t have the opportunity to just spontaneously, “Oh, let’s go see a movie,” because you don’t have any free time.

Elizabeth also experienced difficulties finding time to plan family activities, “Yesterday was the first, with the snow day and my husband doesn’t work on Wednesdays—that was the first family fun day we’d had in over a year.” Elizabeth’s husband has a demanding job as well, so he is seldom able to participate in the rare occurrence of family excursions. She stated,

I did take my children to Washington D.C. this past summer, my father used to live there and he still has a house there so he was there, so we went and visited him and toured the
city, but it was just the three of us—my husband couldn’t go. So, that becomes the issue is that it’s my responsibility to provide anything extra—taking them to the zoo, taking them to any travel, because he just can’t do it, he’s got to work.

Health

With the majority of their time spent managing band programs and raising families, the participants found it was difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They also discussed the difficulties of working and nursing infant children.

Ellen and Elizabeth shared their problems with gaining weight. Before Ellen’s husband became a professor, he was a television news cameraman with a busy schedule and she was primarily responsible for her children. She stated, “I had both kids before my husband’s job changed—I put on over 50 pounds because I did not have any free time to exercise, work out, none of the above.” Ellen further explained, “I would just grab a drive-thru on the way home because I knew I would have to go home and go into mom mode.” Because health is a top priority for Ellen, she met the challenge of exercising and maintaining a healthy diet, as she stated,

I bring a lunch every day—I stopped eating school lunch, which was huge. My kids don’t eat school lunch, they get a lunch packed and they always have. Dinners get interesting because of their activities. Natalie will probably eat at 4 o’clock, Daniel will take a snack with us in the car tonight, and if we’re lucky, we’ll stop at some place that has a healthy alternative, a Panera Bread or something, and get soup to go, just because we have to eat in the car. Every day is different. So I’ve learned to say, “No.” I’ve learned that I do need to get back on it—because I always was healthy, I always worked
out. I was a swimmer, I was a golfer—I did as much as I could. I just didn’t with Natalie. Once I had Daniel, I started going back to the gym.

Elizabeth spoke about her children’s influence on her lifestyle,

Health is a major issue for me because I don’t have time to exercise. I try to eat healthily, but I don’t think I would do that if I didn’t have kids because I know myself, I want them to eat well, and I know that I need to teach them how to eat well, so I make sure that those dinners and lunches are balanced, etcetera.

Tending to the needs of their infant children while managing a busy schedule also seemed to pose a problem for participants. Breastfeeding is beneficial to the health of both mother and child (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1997). Participants’ ability to nurse their children naturally was affected by their work schedules. In order to continue experiencing the health benefits of nursing their children after returning to work, participants used a breast pump, which also requires scheduled time and special care to ensure cleanliness (The National Women’s Health Information Center). Elizabeth explained how she was able to nurse her first child, “Andrew came to school with me when he was an infant, and I had care for him by a student who watched him at the school and then in between classes, I’d have him so I could nurse him, etcetera.” However, Elizabeth’s situation changed when she had her second child,

When I started to feel it all was after my daughter was born—being able to nurse her and the things that I wanted to do as a mother, were very difficult . . . If you’re going to nurse, you have to pump. That was difficult to find that time when my body’s telling me that I have to do it, but I have to be in a meeting, or something else. So, that was very difficult.
Rebecca shared her method of nursing as well,

You have to pump, you have to own a breast pump, you just have to do it, there’s no other way around it. I found that because I started depending so much on that breast pump, I don’t know what it’s like to just solely nurse.

Ellen, by the grace of an understanding administrator, was able to nurse her daughter naturally during the workday, as well as use a pump. She explained,

[Natalie] was 12 minutes from the school, and prep and lunch for me when Natalie was little backed up, so I was still able to nurse. I just talked to my principal, and we didn’t tell the Union, and I just left the building everyday and nursed. There was a half-hour break everyday in the morning where the kids watched Channel One and then I would go into the girl’s bathroom in the back of the school and lock the door and sit on a little chair with a breast pump and take care of that.

Strategies

Each strategy presented by the participants is related to coping with the demanding time requirements of the high school band director and parental responsibilities. Participants described strategies used and factors contributing to their ability to manage the shortage of time and surplus of career and family responsibilities.

Spousal Support

The support that participants received from their spouses contributed to their ability to manage career and family responsibilities, as illustrated by the following testimonies. Julie explained how she and her husband shared responsibilities, she said, “He was a very involved father and very involved in all the day-to-day responsibilities.” Julie also mentioned, “He was only teaching part-time when Emily was born, so I went back to full-time and he was gigging a
lot in the nights, so we had our shifts—I had the night shift and he had the day shift.” Ellen’s husband is also very involved in their children’s lives, as she described, “He’s the ‘Room Mom’ for his son’s classroom because he’s the only dad that’s free, he’s the room mom, he’s it—he’s the guy.” In fact, he spends more time with their children than she does, so he thoughtfully shares experiences with her throughout the day to make sure that she can still be involved with her children. Ellen explained:

He does a photo on his iPhone everyday of the kids eating breakfast and sends me the update of what they look like, so I get my morning photo because I don’t get to see them eat breakfast every day. Sometimes he’ll have the kids call and leave a message on my voicemail because he gets to spend more time with them than I do.

Elizabeth spoke affectionately about her husband, saying,

I love my—oh, my husband’s the best, he really is. He works hard and I’m grateful for everything he does and how supportive he is. He’s fantastic, I couldn’t ask for a better husband and he’s a terrific dad. It’s all really good. I love my life.

Showing reciprocity in support and understanding, Elizabeth explained the sharing of responsibilities, “He does whatever he can. He does as much as he possibly can, but he’s working about 60 hours a week.” Possibly the most exceptional situation is Rebecca’s. She developed epilepsy during her pregnancy; therefore she relies on her husband for transportation when she is unable to drive until 6 months after a seizure. She stated,

He is, I think, abnormal in the way that he supports me. He knows that I’m doing what I love to do and he loves to show—his love is through support. That’s how he shows that he can help me out. He is here, like I said before, for almost every pep band game that he can come to, and this is regardless of whether or not he has to take me because I can’t
drive between my seizures sometimes. Or, like marching band things, he pulls our little trailer out with the lawn tractor—he pulls it out for every game. He goes on all the competitions—he’s a registered chaperone for everything. He loves to be that.

She continued,

There are so many extra little things that he takes care of—I don’t have to worry about maintenance on anything because he’s like the maintenance man, so if anything breaks down, he’s there and he can help fix it, so there are things like that that make my load so much lighter being able to teach high school and middle school.

Rebecca’s husband’s seasonal job allows him to share parenting responsibilities as well as career responsibilities. She explained,

My husband actually has a seasonal job. He’s a landscaper and then he does snow removal in the winter. I get to spend summer with [my daughter] and he gets to spend winter with her because he’s not snow plowing that much . . . It works out that he’s with her half of the year at home and I’m with her the other half and the gaps are filled in with family.

Julie, Ellen, and Elizabeth’s husbands were either instrumentalists or band directors, possibly contributing to their understanding of their spouses’ career requirements and their willingness to support their wives. Rebecca is the only participant whose husband is not a trained musician, meaning he might be unfamiliar with and less likely to understand the requirements of a band director. However, Rebecca explained, “He knew the demands—I thoroughly explained everything before we got married.”
Childcare

Ensuring that their children have quality care is a concern for professional women. While participants were teaching and attending to afterschool and weekend commitments, family and friends cared for their children in an in-home setting, or they took their children to an in-home daycare provider, as illustrated by the following participant responses. Julie explained,

When they were older, [band camp] was a bit much for them and they would stay with their grandparents when we went away to band camp and their grandparents would plan all kinds of cool things to do with them while we were at camp.

A friend cared for Julie’s children during the day. Ellen’s children were cared for at an in-home daycare provider during the day, but during long commitments, Ellen’s parents offered their support, as she stated,

My mother comes up quite a bit, she’s only an hour and a half away, and she’s just in her mid sixties, so long weekends—convention weekends, solo and ensemble, festival weekends, times where I have to be at school 14 to 16 hours—she comes up, just brings her suitcase and stays a couple of days, and that’s the only way it works. There are times that I’ve taken my kids to stay with grandma and grandpa overnight for a couple of days because I just can’t be there to feed them, clothe them, bathe them.

Rebecca also reported receiving support from family members who live near to her, “We have, between my mother-in-law and sister-in-law, that live in the general vicinity, within about a half hour’s drive either way, and she stays with them.” She continued, “I’ve always got family that I can depend on.” Unlike the other three participants, Elizabeth’s family is located far from her, therefore she depends mostly on a daycare center and neighborhood friends for help with childcare.
Participants also commented on bringing their children to school, events, and trips, minimizing the amount of time spent separated from their children. When Julie’s children grew older, she said,

That’s when they started going with us to everything! . . . They came to concerts, they went to the band contests with us, Mark loved hanging out with the pit crew and would ride in the truck to all the band contests.

Ellen also spoke about taking her children along, as she explained,

The kids are just so great with everything and they come to school with me. I’ve got the whole collage of kids on my desk—they’re with me all the time. And the high school students know who my kids are. At football games they are with us, they go on trips with us. I include them when it’s responsible and feasible.

As mentioned above, Elizabeth brought her son to school with her and she was able to nurse him between classes. Rebecca’s husband brings her daughter to events, as she described,

My husband allows me to be able to be a mother to my child when I’m here because he brings her here sometimes, so when there’s pep band games, when there’s marching band rehearsal, he will come up here with the stroller and he’ll just push her around and she’ll get to see me here and so she can hear my voice—there’s things that at that age, she can still have me be part of her life.

**Priorities**

Prioritizing their families above their careers influenced participants’ family and career decisions and career paths, possibly affecting their professional goals and success. In Julie’s situation, she made adjustments to accommodate her family, such as,
We postponed a lot of things. I wanted to go back to school long before I did, but I kept saying, “These days with the children are not going to last forever, [graduate] school is always going to be there.”

For Ellen and her husband, their children come before their careers, as she explained career adjustments for her family, “I never questioned whether or not I would have a family. I never really said, ‘I’m going to abandon my career for my kids,’ I just thought of a different, maybe potential, career path.” Ellen further explained her reasoning,

I just turned down a state vice presidency because of my kids. They’re at the age where I need to be with them, so it’s one of those decisions that had to be made and it took me a while to make it.

According to Rebecca, an equal balance between family and career is a choice, she declared, “It’s a conscious choice to balance. I’m very, very emphatic on that. If people let band directing take over their life, it’s a choice—I’m a firm believer.” In post-interview commentary, Ellen composed a list of priorities, which read, “Diet, exercise #1, sleep #2, family #3, work #4. You’re no good to anyone without your own health.” In agreement, Rebecca advised, “You need to think of yourself first, and really, honestly, the bottom line is that if you can’t take care of yourself and if you can’t make yourself happy, you’re no good for the kids.” Making her children’s development a top priority, Elizabeth explained,

You still want to have the time to be able to—I mean, I do as a parent, I’m not willing to sacrifice this—Andrew . . . does Suzuki violin . . . and then Michelle takes ballet, and she loves it, and these are things that I think are very important for their development.

Ellen made career sacrifices in her children’s best interest, as she stated,
I want my Ph.D., I always have. I was going to take this job and work here 5 or 6 years and then go to Indiana University and get my master’s and doctorate back-to-back—that was my whole vision. And I kind of fell in love with the kids and the community, and next thing you know, here I am 20 years later. Now that I have children of my own, I don’t have those kinds of choices available. I can’t simply take the assistantship, I have to worry about their health care, and their college tuition, and their lessons.

Continuing on, Ellen said,

The other sacrifice is, I used to do private lessons at night. I would bring teachers in and I would sit here at my desk and call if students missed their lesson, and I would file and I would write out parts by hand—this is before Finale and Encore—all those things that I could do to prep for the next day, and that vanished once I had kids because I wasn’t willing to give up the nights.

Concerning family planning, Rebecca stated,

If it doesn’t work out and I can’t plan, and sometimes life just doesn’t go as planned, and if I can’t plan just to have babies in the beginning of the summer or whatever, it’s not going to stop me from having a family, if that means having a baby around festival time, that’s what that means.

Rebecca also discussed how her priorities affect her future career decisions,

I would be looking for a job as just a middle school band director because of the severe, severe, dramatic change of time commitments. Because, I mean, marching band’s the worst. I love upper-level music . . . but for me to conduct Ticheli is not worth the sacrifice that I make teaching high school through the marching band rehearsals I have
...once or twice a week, all of the extras, like pep band, parades, you name it—it all happens at high school, really, and post middle school, at least in this area. I just see myself when I’m getting older—I don’t want to do that because my kid is going to be in school and have performances and concerts that I will want to go to.

**Scheduling**

Participants described strategies they used to attend to their numerous career and family responsibilities, such as planning events in advance, involving children in their own band programs, scheduling transportation, and cooperating with their spouses.

In order to be able to attend her children’s functions, Ellen stated, “I sit down with our auditorium manager in early May and make the schedule happen. I usually have a lot of her information at that point too, so I can kid of tweak the schedule as long as it doesn’t conflict with the curriculum and my goals for the kids, to work that family piece as well.” Similarly, Elizabeth said, “We have set performance times, so I can usually avoid scheduling things with that, or just say look, I can’t be there because of this,” reinforcing that her first priority is her family. Because Julie’s children were in her band program,

[Their events] didn’t conflict because they were in the band. They had to do things that didn’t conflict with band. They were both heavily involved in musical theater, as was I, so I was there for all those things, but then they were also in plays and things that I wasn’t involved in and we got to just about everything they did.

Transporting their children to and from school and activities requires meticulous planning, as illustrated by Ellen’s description of her daily transportation schedule,

Today, if I don’t leave by 3:16 and 30 seconds, I won’t make the bus in time to pick up Daniel and get Natalie to dance on time, and that’s if the roads are good. We time it
down to, “I’m pulling up and the red flashers are on the school bus at the same time, I got it!”

Ellen animatedly elaborated on the daily schedule,

Today is one of those—I need to leave at 3:16:30, we’re going to pick up Daniel, I’m spitting Natalie out at dance at four, and then Daniel and I have to run to get the groceries and we have to do a return, and then we’re going to come back to pick up Natalie, but on the way we’re going to hit some kid of food, and Natalie—when I pick her up from dance—will have a bag of whatever food was there, and if Daniel and I are lucky, we’ll get a half an hour at the gym together and we’ll walk the track. And when we go home, my daughter is in seventh grade, so it’s going to be 2 hours of middle school homework for her because that’s about what they’ve been sending, and little guy will do his homework which is about a half an hour and then I’ll stick him in the tub and quiz Natalie on something and then we’re going to go to bed.

Addressing cooperating with her spouse, she continued,

And tomorrow, Daniel has Cub Scouts ‘til 5:30, but Dad’s off, so he’s going to pick up Cub Scouts and I’m going to stay late to work on the conducting symposium that happens Thursday and solo and ensemble kids. Then I’m going to leave here and swing by the house to get Natalie because Dad will be getting Daniel, take her to dance, I’m going to go to the gym and work out for an hour and then I’m going to pick her up from dance and go home.

Elizabeth described a similar situation,

And then the schedule because he works, we’ve managed to work his days off so that he can pick up our children because I have rehearsal from 4 to 6 on Mondays and
Wednesdays, well school is done [by then]. Andrew goes to school about a block from here, but he can’t walk here by himself yet. So, he has to be there to pick up Andrew. Then I have to make sure that I get home on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and Andrew’s dropped off at 4 o’clock. So, I can’t get to school before quarter of 9, well, actually, even before 9 o’clock, it’s difficult.

The participants showed positive regard for a teacher’s daily and yearly schedule, as illustrated by the following responses. In reference to her children, Julie stated,

I think they learned real quickly that our work was “seasonal” and that there were times of the year when they weren’t going to see Mom as much but there were other times, in the summer, when they were going to see us a lot.

Ellen spoke about the luxury of her schedule corresponding with her children’s,

If I have a snow day, the kids have a snow day, it’s beautiful, and usually when there’s a three-day weekend it’s also with mine. The kids’ school schedule and my schedule rarely conflict, and when they do, it’s “grandma to the rescue.” Having those summers off with my children . . . it’s not even summers off—it’s the freedom to have some flexibility with the time we get up in the morning. Because, as you know, to stay certified you have to have six credits every 5 years, so there’s usually 2 weeks out of every summer that I’m at school.

Regarding the daily schedule, Ellen commented,

And the daily schedule, depending on where your classes fall, has been helpful too. You know, when Daniel was in kindergarten, just 2 years ago, I had sixth hour planning. And, I was able to work out a deal where if I came in at 6 in the morning, I could leave at 1:30
in the afternoon on certain days, and go to Daniel’s Halloween parade or help out in the classroom, or volunteer, and because I’m a teacher, I could do that.

Rebecca also shared her positive thoughts,

I get to be with my baby, I get summers off other than band camp and things, and Christmas vacation. Being a teacher is awesome like that—I’m so glad that I’m a teacher when I get those 2 weeks and you get paid vacation days and holidays, it really is awesome, I mean, it really is.

Location

All participants lived within 20 minutes of their schools, which minimized time spent commuting and allowed them to accommodate their hectic schedules. Julie, Ellen, and Rebecca lived near their family members, allowing for more opportunities for support and childcare.

One participant chose to include her children in her own band program. Julie explained the benefits of having her children attend the school where she taught, “We got to just about everything they did. That was the reason we made that choice to live in the district, because I don’t think that would have been possible had they been in a different system than we were.” Julie also spoke of the negative aspects of having her children in her program,

For them I think in some ways it was a disadvantage because they would get accused of favoritism, and usually it was just the other way around, I tended to be tougher on my own kids than on the others. But I think in some ways it was good for them because they had to prove themselves—they had to do even better so that people would realize that they deserved the opportunities they were getting.

Considering whether or not to have her children participate in her own program, Ellen stated, “My kids—we talked about having them in my program, but [Natalie] has a lot of community
friends, neighborhood friends, and she would prefer to go to school with those kids right now.” Rebecca expressed her opinion about having her child attend school where she teaches,

I don’t think so, and it’s kind of yet to be determined and the reason is because I don’t want her to be that kid that’s the teacher’s kid. Because I see that with some of the other teachers’ kids in the district and how uncomfortable it makes them feel and I don’t want to add that extra element of things to it. In addition to that, there’s a very good school district and band program—I think of that because I’m a band director—that we live basically in.

Challenges Unrelated to Time

Participants mentioned experiencing gender discrimination and commented on the lack of gender-specific role models, which are challenges unrelated to time. Elizabeth experienced gender discrimination while teaching high school, she reflected,

When I got down around the big city and I taught there for two and a half years—that was very different. There was a big deal from the students that I was the first female director and some of it was positive, some of it was, they just didn’t want me and they told me because I was a woman and women can’t do band. I remember my [baritone saxophone] player telling me that.

Addressing gender discrimination, Julie recalled,

The problem came when I did decide that I wanted to be a band director because I went and told [my band director] that I wanted to be a band director, thinking that he would be thrilled. What he said to me was, “That’s nice.” I remember this conversation vividly because I was in high school by then, I didn’t tell him in the 8th grade. He said, “You’re very talented. I think you should go into music, but I don’t think you should be a band
director—girls don’t be band directors. Why don’t you think about teaching young children?”

Julie struggled to find a woman band director to serve as her role model, as she explained,

In our area I was only able to find one woman band director and it’s interesting that she was at a school, which later on in my career, I ended up teaching in too, and I eventually got to meet her.

While speaking about being thankful for her husband’s support of her career as a band director, Ellen also commented on the lack of women band directors, “At the time there were very few female band directors in the ‘90s.” Elizabeth spoke about her role models as well, and recalled important advice,

All of my role models that have been female are all single. So, that’s been difficult. One who has become a good friend, I called her when I found out I was pregnant, and she said you have to do this because if anybody can do it, you can go get your DMA. I might be misquoting her, but she said it’s been hard to get into the field and none of these people have families . . . you have to do this to set the path for the next generation.

Positive Experiences

Regardless of the time and energy spent on balancing career and family responsibilities, all participants felt satisfied with their lives, as illustrated by their testimonies. Julie stated,

Looking back over my career, I really had a lot of wonderful opportunities and there have been a lot of things that have been really hard. Band directing is a hard life and I don’t recommend it to everybody unless it’s really what you want to do, but overall, it’s been really rewarding.
Ellen shared her feelings about her children, “I’m thrilled with my children and their resilience and their behavior and their grades and their personalities.” Elizabeth expressed her satisfaction with her career and family,

I love what I do because of working with the students. I love making music with the students and making them think a little differently. I love the teaching aspect of it, the administrative side I don’t really care for, but it’s part of the job, and I do my best. And I love my kids. I love watching them grow . . . I’m a better teacher because of being a parent.

Rebecca thoroughly enjoys her life, as she expressed,

I just can’t emphasize enough that I love what I do, I don’t really see a reason why somebody can’t have a large family and have a happy life and a husband and whatever they want to do and be a band director. . . . I’m very satisfied with the state that things are in, you know, my home life, I don’t really wish for everything different—I do feel like I get my cake and I eat it, too.

Advice

Each participant shared encouraging words and advice for women aspiring to become band directors. Julie encouragingly stated,

I think women are afraid of marching band—they feel like they won’t have the control, or the time, or the desire, or it takes so much time they won’t be able to have children. I think there’s a fear there, of the high school band responsibilities for a female who wants to be a well-rounded woman and experience all of those aspects of life. The point I would like to get across to young women is that there’s no need for them to be afraid of it, if that’s what they really want to do. My mom always used to say, “You figure out
how to get done the things you really want to do.” You figure out how to find the time for things that are really important to you and if that’s what a young woman really wants to do, and still really wants to have a family, she can do it, she'll figure out how to do it, and each situation will be different, but she'll figure out what works for her in her situation. . . . That’s my advice: don’t be afraid, go for it!

Ellen cautioned,

If you’re going to plan to have the family, you have to know what your own teaching responsibilities are going to be at the school. . . . [A] woman band director who may be all by herself in a 6-12 program would have those responsibilities as well as the family responsibilities. . . . Especially if you’re really out in the [suburbs] and there are no private lesson opportunities or student teachers that can get to your building to help the kids prepare for solo festivals or do sectionals, that all ends up falling on your shoulders at work as well. . . . If you’re going to have a family, you better be in a teaching position where your evening responsibilities are minimal. Or steer a program to a healthy place that doesn’t necessarily need those to function, because quite frequently, those evening responsibilities don’t add to the program, they usually detract.

Elizabeth recalled advice from her mentor,

I remember him saying to me, “I don’t know anybody who has ever said that they wish that they had spent more time at work, that it’s always, ‘I wish I had spent more time with my family,’” and he was really the one who taught me that family does come first, that you can find that balance. If you want a family, I don’t think anyone should sacrifice having a family for a career.
Rebecca’s advice addressed priorities,

If you’re a woman that’s a band director, I still just think that it’s entirely possible to do what you want to do. If you want to have a family, I think it is smart to try and plan that family accordingly, but don’t let it dictate your life. . . . You need to think of yourself first, and really, honestly, the bottom line is that if you can’t take care of yourself and if you can’t make yourself happy, you’re no good for the kids.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family. Analysis of the demographic information provided by the initial selection survey indicated that slightly more than half of the responding women band directors had between one and two children, with three as the maximum number. Analysis and coding of data within and across cases revealed challenges and strategies commonly related to the theme of time, specifically, the time requirements of the high school band director position and parenting. Participants reported feelings of distress when separated from their children, difficulties maintaining a healthy lifestyle and nursing their infant children, and problems sustaining personal relationships with their spouses and children. Strategies used by participants to cope with their time commitments included: relying on their spouses for support; depending on family, friends, and daycare providers for quality childcare; setting priorities; scheduling meticulously; and living near their families and schools.

Creswell (2007) states, “Qualitative writing has been shaped by a need for researchers to be self-disclosing about their role in the writing, the impact of it on the participants and how the information conveyed is read by audiences” (p. 178). It is important for readers to consider the perspective from which I conducted this research. I am currently a music education graduate student, preparing for a career as a high school band director, and hoping to become a wife and mother someday. Learning of the common challenges and strategies among the four women band directors that I interviewed has provided great insight to my possible future as wife, mother, and band director. Additionally, readers should be aware of the participants’ view of this research. The women who participated in this study may have felt as though they were
giving me advice as well as providing guidance to future women band directors who wish to have families.

I purposefully selected participants who fulfilled a varied range of years of teaching experience, and marital and parental experience. It is important for readers to note that although Elizabeth was a college band director while she was raising her children, she was presented with similar challenges as Julie, Ellen, and Rebecca, implying a possible connection between the duties of band directors at both the high school and college levels.

Several of the identified strategies strongly correspond to those found in previous studies. Consistent with the findings of Fiske (1997), slightly more than half of the selection survey respondents reported having between one and two children. In reference to her survey of women music educators in higher education, Fiske suggests, “Respondents may have limited the number of children in the family in order to pursue their doctoral degree” (p. 167). Further study of the number of children and family planning of women high school band directors may reveal a purposeful limitation of children in the family due to time constraints. Certainly the subjects in this study provided an indication of this limitation. Women considering careers as band directors may have to think carefully about their career responsibilities and number of children they hope to have.

Reliance on spousal support was the most prominent strategy used to balance career and family, replicating previous research (Brenneman, 2007; Carlisle, 1994; Fiske, 1997; Jackson, 1996). All participants in the current study were in dual-career marriages and expressed difficulty maintaining personal relationships, supporting previous research by Carlisle (1994) in which participants identified overload and little time for relationships as disadvantages of dual-career marriages. All participants in the current study shared household and parenting
responsibilities with their spouses. This additionally corresponds with the findings of Carlisle (1994) in which participants identified the encouragement of partners to share the workload as a coping strategy within the dual-career marriage. While it seems obvious that sharing the workload is important to a successful marriage, it may be even more critical for the husband of a female band director to be informed about the various requirements of the high school band director including, but not limited to, sporting events, competitions, festivals, concerts, extra rehearsals, and musical theater productions.

In a multiple case study by Ponton (1997), three professional women with careers in psychotherapy, law, and business, reported changing their career locations to be close to or located in their homes as ways to avoid having limited contact with their children. The participants in the current study were all fortunate to live within 20 minutes of their schools and most had family members located nearby. Living near family members provided an option for quality childcare, which Snyder (1994) found to be the critical factor in some survey respondents’ decisions to have a career. Interestingly, participants reported bringing their children with them to events and trips, which was a strategy used to cope with the emotional distress from being separated from their children, as well as a method of childcare. Women band directors and their families that are not fortunate to be in a location close to family may have to be more creative in developing reliable childcare options.

Prioritizing during the process of making career decisions was a common strategy among participants. All participants reported that their families had priority over their careers; therefore they adjusted their career paths to accommodate the needs of their families. For example, Julie lengthened the amount of time she spent working on her master’s degree because she was chiefly concerned with raising her children. Similarly, Ellen decided to delay her quest for a Ph.D. until
her children graduate from high school because returning to school would be financially irresponsible, considering the needs of her children. This supports previous research, indicating that a strong presence of the attitude that family comes first exists, often causing women to delay pursuit of a higher degree (Fiske, 1997; Richardson, 1992). Although they altered their career paths, possibly affecting professional achievement, participants emphatically voiced their satisfaction with both career and family. Even though participants placed more importance upon their families than their careers, their advice concerning priorities stressed placing utmost importance upon health. Ellen offered the following suggestion, “Diet, exercise #1, sleep #2, family #3, work #4. You’re no good to anyone without your own health.” Rebecca concurred, “You need to think of yourself first, and really, honestly, the bottom line is that if you can’t take care of yourself and if you can’t make yourself happy, you’re no good for the kids.”

Previous research stressed the importance of gender-specific role models for women band directors, as well as the struggle to find them (Gould, 1996; Richardson, 1992). The inspiration for this study was sparked when I read the following statement, “I wish I had a role model of someone who managed to raise children, have a happy home life, and have a successful career. Most of the people I know have the career without the home” (Richardson, 1992, p. 36). Elizabeth echoed this concern when she said,

   All of my role models that have been female are all single. So, that’s been difficult. One who has become a good friend, I called her when I found out I was pregnant, and she said you have to do this because if anybody can do it, you can go get your DMA. I might be misquoting her, but she said it’s been hard to get into the field and none of these people have families . . . you have to do this to set the path for the next generation.
Personally, I have had the distinct pleasure of knowing several women band directors who have led successful careers and nurtured loving families, and I have also known women band directors who reluctantly chose to relinquish their personal goal of having a family in order to achieve professional success. Women who have plans to pursue a career as a band director and have a family may take Julie’s advice to heart. She said,

I think there’s a fear there, of the high school band responsibilities for a female who wants to be a well-rounded woman and experience all of those aspects of life. The point I would like to get across to young women is that there’s no need for them to be afraid of it, if that’s what they really want to do. My mom always used to say, “You figure out how to get done the things you really want to do.” You figure out how to find the time for things that are really important to you and if that’s what a young woman really wants to do, and still really wants to have a family, she can do it, she’ll figure out how to do it, and each situation will be different, but she’ll figure out what works for her in her situation. . . . That’s my advice: don’t be afraid, go for it!

Limitations and Strengths

Due to the limited sample of participants and limited scope of the research, generalization of results is not recommended with this study. However, the strong relationship of identified strategies to those found in previous research lends credibility to their reliability as recommended strategies in meeting the challenge of balancing career and family.

As the researcher, I did not attempt to define the concept of “successful band director,” therefore participants’ success as band directors was not measured. However, college band directors nominated the participants as female current or former high school band directors in Michigan or Ohio who were married or divorced and/or caregivers of a child during the period of
employment as high school band directors, and it is unlikely that a college band director would nominate an unsuccessful band director to share her strategies of balancing career and family.

Suggestions for Future Research

To improve generalizability, a large-scale study of women balancing careers as high school band directors and family responsibilities is highly recommended. Further study in this area would improve upon our knowledge of the experiences of women high school band directors with families. Due to the similarity in experiences between the college band director and high school band directors in this study, comparing the responsibilities of band directors at both the high school and college levels is suggested. Further study in the area of balancing career and family, using female high school orchestra and choral directors as subjects, would provide an opportunity to compare their experiences. In addition, examining the challenges encountered and coping strategies used by male band directors with families would certainly improve our views on gender inequality. Examination of the dual-band director marriage and families is an additional area for possible study.

Implications for Music Education

The inequality in numbers of women and men as high school and college band directors is disconcerting among music educators who strive to represent equal opportunities for male and female students. It is possible that the challenges presented by the profession of high school band director influence women to decide against teaching at the high school level in favor of having a family. Identifying strategies used to cope with the numerous time commitments of the high school band director and parenting may benefit women who desire to achieve their professional goal of becoming a successful high school band director and personal goal in raising
a family. In addition, the stories of these women who have accomplished both career and family may provide inspiration for future women considering this career.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A:

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER
November 16, 2010

TO: Jessica Lynne Terban
Music Education

FROM: Hillary Harms, Ph.D.
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H11T082GE7

TITLE: Strategies Used by Women High School Band Directors to Meet the Challenge of Balancing Career and Family

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of November 15, 2010, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on November 7, 2011. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me, in writing (or email: har@bgsu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/Modifications: Stamped consent form is coming to you via campus mail.

c: Elizabeth Menard

Research Category: EXPEDITED #7
APPENDIX B:

BAND DIRECTOR NOMINATION REQUEST AND FORM
Dear college band director,

My name is Jessica L. Terban. I am currently pursuing my Master’s degree in music education at Bowling Green State University. For my Master’s thesis, I will be conducting a multiple case study to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family. Dr. Elizabeth A. Menard, Professor of music education, is my thesis advisor.

I am writing to request your nomination of potential participants for the study based on the following criteria, (a) female, (b) current or former high school band director in the states of Michigan or Ohio, (c) married or divorced, and/or caregiver of a child during the period of employment as a high school band director. Your nominations will remain confidential.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Jessica L. Terban
Graduate Assistant, Band Activities
College of Musical Arts
Bowling Green State University
Nominations for Participation

1. Name:
   Institution (current or former):
   Criteria fulfilled:

2. Name:
   Institution (current or former):
   Criteria fulfilled:

3. Name:
   Institution (current or former):
   Criteria fulfilled:

4. Name:
   Institution:
   Criteria fulfilled:

(Please add extra pages for additional nominations.)
APPENDIX C:

INITIAL BAND DIRECTOR CONTACT AND SELECTION SURVEY
Dear current or former band director,

My name is Jessica L. Terban. I am currently pursuing my master’s degree in music education at Bowling Green State University. For my Master’s thesis, I will be conducting a multiple case study to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family. Dr. Elizabeth A. Menard, Professor of music education, is my thesis advisor. I received your name from a college band director in your respective state, who nominated you based on the following criteria, (a) female, (b) current or former band director in the states of Michigan or Ohio, (c) married or divorced, and/or caregiver of a child during the period of employment as a high school band director. Your contact information was obtained from the staff directory on your school district’s website or from your former school district office.

The purpose of the study will be to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family. The results from this study will benefit women who are aspiring to become high school band directors and have families at home. In addition, the strategies identified in the study will benefit women high school band directors who currently have families or are planning for families. There are no direct benefits to the participant of this study.

I will purposefully select four subjects to fulfill a range of years of experience, teaching responsibilities, marital statuses, and numbers and ages of children. If you are selected and agree to participate, a live interview will be scheduled at your convenience. One week prior to the interview, I will provide you with a list of guide questions addressing demographics, educational and professional background, career choices and responsibilities, family choices and responsibilities, issues with balancing career and family responsibilities, positive experiences and rewards of career and family, and advice for women band directors. The interview will be audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. Your identity and all information provided will remain confidential.

Please complete the attached survey and return it to me via mail or email, at jterban@bgsu.edu. If you indicate your unwillingness to participate in the study, the information you provide on the survey will be used for demographic purposes only and will remain confidential. If you indicate your willingness to participate in the study and are selected as one of four subjects, I will contact you via phone to schedule an interview at your convenience and send a letter of informed consent.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jessica Terban
College of Musical Arts
Bowling Green State University
SELECTION SURVEY

1. Please provide your name, contact information, and preferred method of contact.

2. When is the best time to contact you?

3. Are you interested in participating in this study of women high school band directors’ strategies of balancing career and family?

4. Are you currently employed as a high school band director? If not, please describe your current occupation.

5. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

6. How many years have you taught high school band?

7. What is your marital status or marital history?

8. Do you have children? If so, how many and what are their ages?
APPENDIX D:

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT
Dear participant,

My name is Jessica L. Terban. I am currently pursuing my master’s degree in music education at Bowling Green State University. For my Master’s thesis, I will be conducting a multiple case study to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family. Dr. Elizabeth A. Menard, Professor of music education, is my thesis advisor. I received your name from a college band director in your respective state, who nominated you based on the following criteria, (a) female, (b) current or former band director in the states of Michigan or Ohio, (c) married or divorced, and/or caregiver of a child during the period of employment as a high school band director. Your contact information was obtained from the staff directory on your school district’s website or from your former school district office.

The purpose of the study will be to identify strategies used by women high school band directors to meet the challenge of balancing career and family. The results from this study will benefit women who are aspiring to become high school band directors and have families at home. In addition, the strategies identified in the study will benefit women high school band directors who currently have families or are planning for families. There are no direct benefits to the participant of this study.

The study involves one in-person interview to be scheduled at your convenience. One week prior to the interview, I will provide you with a list of guide questions addressing demographics, educational and professional background, career choices and responsibilities, family choices and responsibilities, issues with balancing career and family responsibilities, positive experiences and rewards of career and family, and advice for women band directors. The interview will be audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. Your identity and all information provided will remain confidential.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University, your school, your job, or your affiliation with any professional organization.

There are minimal risks involved in this study. A risk of a breach of confidentiality may be encountered during the research process. To avoid a breach of confidentiality, the data collected during the interview will be stored on a password-protected computer and organized by code names. Only my thesis committee and myself will have access to the data. To further protect your identity, your consent form will be stored separately from the data. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon the...
completion of transcription. The consent forms will be destroyed upon the completion and approval of this research project.

If you have any questions regarding the research or your participation in the research, please do not hesitate to contact me at (586) 944-5826 or jterban@bgsu.edu, or my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth A. Menard, at (419) 372-2625 or emenard@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jessica L. Terban
Graduate Assistant, Band Activities
College of Musical Arts
Bowling Green State University

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all of my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

________________________________________  ______________
Participant Signature                       Date

Participant Name (please print)
APPENDIX E:

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS
The following are questions that the researcher will use as guiding questions during the interview process:

**Demographics**

To be determined by initial band director contact.

**Educational and professional background**

1. Where did you attend college?
2. What degrees have you earned?
3. How many years did you spend completing your degree(s)?
4. Are/were you involved in any professional organizations? If so, describe your involvement.

**Career choices and responsibilities**

1. Why did you decide to become a band director?
2. Explain your experience with any role models and how they influenced your career choice.
3. Describe your teaching experience at the time you were the caretaker of your family.
4. What are/were your teaching responsibilities?
5. Describe your career satisfaction.
6. What are your plans for the future regarding educational and career moves?

**Family choices and responsibilities**

1. Describe your family relationships and responsibilities, i.e., marital status and children.
2. When and why did you decide to begin a family?
3. Did having a career as a band director ever discourage you from deciding to have a family? If so, why?
4. Describe your satisfaction with your family and home life.

**Issues with balancing career and family**

1. Describe the sacrifices you have made for your career and your band program.
2. Explain the challenges of being a wife and/or mother, and band director.
3. What time management skills did you learn to help balance your career and family life?
4. What methods have you used to care for your children when you are at work?
5. Describe your family support system. How do your spouse and other family members help you with your family responsibilities?
Positive experiences and rewards of career and family

1. Describe your positive experiences with your family.
2. Describe your positive experiences with your career.

Advice for women band directors

1. What advice do you have for women band directors in general, and for those planning to have a family?
APPENDIX F:

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
Julie

JT: First I would like to establish a profile of you, and I already have demographic information. I just want to know a little more about your educational and professional background. First, what type of school did you attend undergrad?

JULIE: My undergrad was a small liberal arts college in the Midwest. And I don’t know how big it was then, I would guess about 2,500 students, but the school of music was a conservatory type. And so, it was very separate from the rest of the university. And I finished in 4 years—back then you could still do that.

JT: What degrees have you earned since your undergrad (bachelor’s degree)?

JULIE: I have a master’s in music education and a doctorate in conducting—a DMA.

JT: How many years did you spend completing those degrees?

JULIE: That’s a funny question—The master’s degree got kind of interesting, because when I first started teaching, my husband was also teaching, and he taught for 3 years and then got a graduate assistantship to do his master’s. So he left and I was the sole support during that period of time, but I got envious and took some classes too, because I wanted to take some classes. So, I had about half of a master’s degree done early in my teaching career. But then we started having children and we moved, and so I didn’t do any more on it then for 15 years. I went back when my children were older and finished the master’s degree—the one class at a time while you’re running a band and raising children method. And so my advisor at my master’s always teased me about being on the 20 year plan because I did 2 years of it and then took 15 years off, and then finished it in another 3, so total it took about 20 years, but there were 15 years in the middle where no master’s work was being done.

JT: And then for your DMA?

JULIE: I had an associateship at a large university that is well known for its band program. It was a program where they only chose one doctoral conducting associate at a time, and so in the 2 years that I was there, I got really extensive hands-on experience because I was the only one. That’s why they did that, was so that those people would get enough podium time and enough attention.

JT: When you were teaching, were you involved in any professional organizations?

JULIE: I also did quite a bit of playing. I was a horn player and did a lot of freelance horn playing. Most of my professional organizations were education oriented like Ohio Music Educators Association. After several years of teaching, I was selected to be in ASBDA, which is an honorary for bandmasters and several years after that I was elected to Phi Beta Mu. I’ve always been real active in OMEA. I’ve been a district officer and served on a lot of committees and that all that kind of thing.
JT: Since you’ve become a college professor, what professional organizations have you taken on?

JULIE: I belong to College Band Directors National Association, MENC still and OMEA as always, Phi Beta Mu. For a while I was in Women Band Directors International, but I let my dues lap on that. So—

JT: Did you have any officer positions?

JULIE: I was a district officer and a contest chair in OMEA, and I was president of the MAC Band Directors Association for 4 years.

JT: Going back to the beginning of your career, why did you decide to become a band director?

JULIE: You expect me to remember that long? I’m going to have to dig way back. Why did I become a band director? Because there was just nothing else I wanted to do—that was the only thing I wanted to do. And it became my goal, I think I was in the 8th grade when I decided I wanted to do that. And I had some Momentary pulls in other directions, for a while I thought maybe journalism might be kind of fun, but it really was my focus from about then on, was that I wanted to be a band director.

JT: Were there any role models that helped you decide that?

JULIE: Yes, in kind of an unusual way. I think like most people, I was strongly influenced by my high school band director and I had the same person from 7th grade through the 12th grade—I did have somebody different in the 6th grade. But, he was very, very beloved in our community by a lot of people. But he was very controversial, he was one of these real strong personalities that people either really loved or really hated. And I was in the ‘really loved’ camp, I thought he was doing a wonderful job and I loved everything about band and being a part of his organizations. The problem came when I did decide that I wanted to be a band director because I went and told him that I wanted to be a band director, thinking that he would be thrilled, and what he said to me was, “That’s nice...” I remember this conversation vividly because I was in high school by then, I didn’t tell him in the 8th grade. And he said, “You’re very talented,” and he said, “I think you should go into music, but I don’t think you should be a band director—girls don’t be band directors. Why don’t you think about teaching young children?” So that was really kind of a turning point for me because I tend to be a bit bullheaded, and that became—that was the thing that made me really determine that it was going to happen. So I started looking for role models—I was in south central Ohio, and at that time we didn’t have internet and all of those things we do now, so it was hard to determine who was where, but in our area I was only able to find one woman band director and it’s interesting that she was at a school, which later on in my career, I ended up teaching in too, and I eventually got to meet her.
JT: Did you ever go back to that old band director and talk to him about what you’ve accomplished?

JULIE: I have not, but we have many mutual acquaintances that I always make sure I fill in and ask them, “Be sure you tell Mr. B what I’m doing—let him know.” And so, yeah, that’s something I should do. So he was both a really strong positive role model for me, and a strong role model in a negative way too.

JT: Let’s talk a little bit about your teaching career. Just walk me through from the beginning and then to your high school experience, and tell me all about those responsibilities.

JULIE: When I first graduated from college it was at a period of time when there were not very many jobs available, it’s kind of like now, and a huge surplus of people looking for jobs. And it was also at the height of the Vietnam War, so from a personal standpoint, I was engaged to be married and at that time in interviews they were allowed to ask you a lot of questions that they aren’t allowed to ask you now about your personal life. In interviews today they are not supposed to ask you personal questions, but back then they did, and one of the questions I always got in interviews was, “We understand you’ll be married, what is your husband planning to do?” And of course, at that time, the draft was hanging heavy over his head and we really didn’t know. And I think that was a problem in the job search, so I finally just said to my fiancé, “You’re going to have to find a job and then I’ll look for one where you are,” which is kind of how it ended up being. When I was in college, I had a very strong interest in vocal music as well as instrumental, so I had a minor in vocal music and I did my student teaching in both vocal music and instrumental music, feeling then that I would be more marketable even though I really wanted to get a band job. So, in the interview process, I was not able to get a band job, which I kind of expected, and my husband did get a band job. He was an assistant to a very influential band director in northeast Ohio, who simply at the end of my husband’s interview, (when he decided that he was going to hire my husband, who was my fiancé then), picked up the phone to some of his friends in neighboring school districts and said, “Do you have any jobs open in elementary general?” and he found one that had an elementary general job, I went up and interviewed, and that was my first job. My first job was elementary general music, four, five, six, and assisting in the choral program in the high school two mornings a week and it was through the influence—another role model, I suppose—of the choir director at that high school, I got very interested in teaching high school choir, which I had not been interested in doing before. And so I worked with him and in the second year—the third year—in that school district, I moved to the junior high and taught junior high choral and general music for a year. And then the next year I applied for and got a high school choral teaching job in a large city school system, which, I consider one of the best jobs of my entire career. I was in a large inner-city school, but it was a magnet school, so the students who came there, were there because they wanted to be there, and they knew if they didn’t tow the line, they got sent back to wherever it was they had come from. It was the same for the faculty—they were in that school because they had chosen to be in that school. It was a wonderful teaching experience with wonderful colleagues, and I think I learned more about music and expression, and how to get that across to the students through teaching vocal music than anything I have done. It was really a wonderful job. But it was at the end of that time that we decided to start our family, so my 4th year in this inner-city high school teaching choral—I call this my “choral period”—Emily was born at the beginning of the 4th year,
in September, and I took only 6 weeks off and went right back to work, and discovered very quickly that that was probably not a good idea. The emotional ties to when you first have a child—I knew it would be strong—but it was even more difficult than I expected. That was the time my husband was finishing up his master’s degree and was looking for a teaching job again. He was only teaching part-time when Emily was born, so I went back to full-time and he was doing a lot of the child care, he would basically have her during the day, and then he was gigging a lot in the nights, so we had our shifts—I had the night shift and he had the day shift. But at the end of that year, we decided that was all really difficult and that’s when he got a full-time teaching job and I left full-time teaching—for the next 3 years I only taught part-time. And that was during the time when our daughter was little and our son was born during that period of time. So, it was when our children were 5 and 2, that I took my first full-time band job. So I had actually been out of school for 10 years before I taught high school band. I was assisting and doing some part time, but it was 10 years.

JT: Would you consider that an interruption in your career, that you had to go to part time?

JULIE: Yes and no. An interruption? Maybe a postponement, but I wasn’t too concerned about that because I hadn’t established myself in a full time job yet. I wanted to teach part time and if I could have afforded not to teach at all for a while, while they were real little, I probably would have, but I really couldn’t afford that. Although, I’m not sure I would have been happy not being involved in bands in some way. As I explained, I hadn’t had a full time band job yet at that point and I very much had the feeling that there are certain times things need to be done and these other things will wait. So I wasn’t really concerned about getting—because I was already late getting started anyway because of the situation, it’s just the way it was with women getting band jobs then. So I think there was a period of time when I thought I might never get a band job just because of the way people looked at women doing that then. And I feel pretty sure that the only reason I got that first band job is because it was band and choir and they needed somebody who could do both. It was a very small school where one person did everything in the high school. So I feel pretty sure that’s the only reason I got that job.

JT: So, do you want to tell me a little bit about that first one?

JULIE: That was a very small high school around 4-500 students and I was the music department. I did the choir, and the show choir, and the band, and the marching band, and the pep bands, and all the ensembles and I was it. And it was a very good situation for me because nothing much had been going on there before, and so you knew you’d go in one of those situations where they think everything you’re doing is right, sometimes maybe it isn’t, but they think it is because it’s so much better than what they had. Everybody’s really supportive and the students are on board, so it’s a great way to start. It was also a great way to start because it had been so bad that I had to learn a lot of things real quick. I mean, I heard sounds coming out of instruments that I had never heard before, and I had to figure out what to do about that! So, building a program for a young director is a very good thing to have to do, you learn real fast. I was just in that school for 3 years. And then I moved to a middle-sized school that had been very successful, (whatever you base that on). They had done some good things and had some real good directors and this was the school where the only woman I had been able to find when I was a high school student, this is the school where she had been. And I was there for 4 years and that
was really where I started to develop as both a marching band director and a concert band director. That's the period of time when I really started getting interested in conducting and started going to a lot of workshops and trying to figure out what the psychology of conducting was. I really enjoyed that and was really fascinated by all that, and that was the period of time, I think, where all that started. And I suppose that was kind of a forerunner for things to come too, because I started going—we were real close to a major city with a major university which was where I eventually finished my master’s and did my doctorate, so that position probably had a lot to do with what came later. And then what did come later was after 4 years there, I moved to a large suburban high school. Through the 80s and 90s, that program had been a powerhouse in marching band. At the time I went there it had a real strong reputation in marching band, which we tried to build on and improve, and not so much in concert band, so that was kind of my focus—building that program there. I was there for 12 years, so, a lot of my children’s growing-up-time was during that period of time. Towards the end of that time, I just started to feel the need to do something different. I had never planned to—my goal had always been to be a high school band director. But by that time I had been teaching high school 21 years and then of course I had all the choral stuff before that, and I was just feeling the need to do something different. So that’s when I applied to get into the doctoral program at Ohio State and went back to school to do a doctorate, which is not the way most people do this. Most people do the doctorate, you know, in their thirties or forties, and I was fifty when I started on my doctorate, so that, I suppose, is a little different from what most people do. So that program was supposed to have been 3 years, but I got my current job at the beginning of the third year when I was ABD, so I left the associateship program to start on this job and then had to finish my recital and my dissertation on the job, which was another story—an interesting story—and that leads me to where I am now. I am an associate professor and I direct the marching band and conduct the concert band and teach quite a few classes, (conducting, marching band techniques) supervise the athletic bands, supervise student teachers, work with people on their graduate theses—they keep me pretty busy!

JT: So, let’s talk about how your career influenced your family choices, Emily was born when you were teaching choir, right?

JULIE: Correct.

JT: So, did having your career discourage you from planning to have a family, or, did it have any influence whatsoever?

JULIE: Knowing you were going to ask this, I’ve tried to figure this out, and I don’t know exactly the answer to that because when we were first married, I don’t think we were even thinking about what that could be. I really wasn’t even planning on having children—didn’t know if I even wanted children. We had been married 6 years before we decided that yeah, I think we do want to have children. At that point, I was not directing bands, so it didn’t occur to me that having a baby in September and then figuring out marching band was going to be difficult! Those kinds of things didn’t enter my head. We just kind of decided that the time is right and the biological clock is ticking and we’d like to start our family. And so we just went full speed ahead and I think, you know, it was always in the back of my mind that I eventually
wanted to be a band director, but I hadn’t yet when we first started a family, so I don’t think I really thought all that through. So we just kind of dealt with as it happened.

JT: How did you deal with that, because you said that they were 5 and 2 when you started your first high school job, and was that when Sam was . . .

JULIE: Well, that was when he left teaching for a while and when I went to full time teaching was when he was out of teaching, he was in the business world, he was a photographer then.

JT: So did he take care of them, did you have daycare, or did other family members take care of them?

JULIE: We had a friend who lived across the street and she had children about the same age as ours, so they were in school at the same time, of course, Mark wasn’t in school yet. They went over to stay with her during the day and our schedules were similar enough that she finished up at the same time I did and for the most part, that worked out pretty well. Mark was two and a half when I started, so it wasn’t very long until he was in preschool and then kindergarten, so eventually, then—the one good thing about a regular teacher’s schedule, is that it corresponds to your children’s schedule. It’s a little different, of course, for music teachers because we have so many outside of school responsibilities, so I was fortunate that this neighbor was qualified and willing. When I had outside of school things, the children were over there with her. I was in a small town—the opportunities for childcare were quite a bit different than if you’re in a suburban or metropolitan area.

JT: So when Mark and Emily got older?

JULIE: That’s when they started going with us to everything! We would drag them along and they seemed to enjoy it, they didn’t complain very much, and looking back—looking at them now—I don’t think they’re too badly scarred. But they came to concerts, they went to the band contests with us, Mark loved hanging out with the pit crew and would ride in the truck to all the band contests. Of course, what came of that is he became a percussionist, and I’m not sure that’s good. But, they went with us to everything, so they were very involved. When they were really little, I took them to band camp—Mark went to his first band camp when he was 3 months old. When they were older, that was a bit much for them and they would stay with their grandparents when we went away to band camp and their grandparents would plan all kinds of cool things to do with them while we were at camp. But just a lot of things, they just went with us, and so then when they were old enough to be in the band, was the same time we were moving to the final high school that I taught in, and so decisions had to be made about, did we want to live in the school district so the kids would be in our program or did we want to live in another district so that they wouldn’t have to deal with us at school. And of course, there are pros and cons to both ways of that. I know some directors do not want their children in their own program at all, and we did and I felt like it was the only way that I was going to really be able to be involved in what they did in high school was if they were in my high school. So, for them I think in some ways it was a disadvantage because they would get accused of favoritism, and usually it was just the other way around, I tended to be tougher on my own kids than on the others. But I think in some ways it was good for them because they had to prove themselves—they had to do even better so
that people would realize that they deserved the opportunities they were getting. Emily said we completely stunted her social life—she said “You know I’d have dated a lot more in high school if my mom and dad hadn’t been around,” you know because Sam was, through her high school career, he was there too. But I think she’s kidding, although, I’m not sure. And I think every individual has to look at that for themselves, so that was the big decision—do we move into the school district or not, and we did. And so they went through our program, both of them.

JT: How did you balance going to their functions they may have had outside of band and dealing with all of the stuff you had to do for your program?

JULIE: Well, they didn’t conflict because they were in the band. They had to do things that didn’t conflict with band. They were both heavily involved in musical theater, as was I, so I was there for all those things, but then they were also in plays and things that I wasn’t involved in and we got to just about everything they did. And that was the reason we made that choice to live in the district, because I don’t think that would have been possible had they been in a different system than we were. I’m sure they probably wish we weren’t around as much as we were!

JT: So you said that Sam was with you at the large suburban school—what were his responsibilities?

JULIE: He was the co-director of the band for the first 6 years we were there and then after that, he got tired of all the weekend and the marching band responsibilities primarily and went to the middle school after that. But for the first 6 years we were there, he was basically a co-director—he handled music theory, the jazz bands, and also worked with the concert and marching bands.

JT: What kind of sacrifices did you have to make for your career and your band program to be there for your children?

JULIE: I guess I never really thought of them as sacrifices. We postponed a lot of things. I mean, I wanted to go back to school long before I did, but I kept saying, “These days with the children are not going to last forever, school is always going to be there.” And I almost postponed it too long, but I guess I postponed a lot of things, but I don’t feel like I really gave up anything to have children. I wouldn’t change that in any way. I wouldn’t give up that experience for anything, so I guess I don’t really feel like I made sacrifices, I just shuffled things around that I might have wanted to do. There were times when I would say, “I can’t do this now because I’ve got kids in school—I’ll do it later.”

JT: Were there any things on the other end that you had to do, such as, to pay more attention to your children?

JULIE: Yeah, kind of, I think we approached the band experience a lot differently than a regular parent would. You know, when you see videos, for most band parents, they’re following their own student, and those kinds of things, and we maybe didn’t do as much of that because we kind of looked at all those kids as our kids. So, I think maybe they had to share us more than the other kids do. I don’t know—I just feel like we were so much more involved in their lives than we would have been otherwise that I don’t see it as a sacrifice. I guess when they were younger
before they were in our bands, I have felt some guilt about being away so much, about having so many outside of school rehearsals when the kids were home with their dad or with our friend across the street. I think I have some regrets about that and I think the kids learned real quick, which times of the years were more strenuous for us than others and knew that if they weren’t getting as much attention in the fall that they were going to make up for it in January. So I think they learned real quickly that our work was “seasonal” and that there were times of the year when they weren’t going to see mom as much but there were other times, in the summer, when they were going to see us a lot. Kids adapt to that kind of thing, I think it’s when they never see you, that it’s a problem. We were careful about that.

JT: Do you say that you and Sam shared things equally, such as raising your children and house responsibilities? Or would you say that you still had to do more housework as a mother?

JULIE: I think that in the early years we did not, I think I was doing more in the early years. He was an only child and had grown up pretty much having everything done for him, but he learned very quickly that that wasn’t going to work in our situation. (He’s a quick learner!). He was a very involved father and very involved in all the day-to-day responsibilities. It’s interesting, I think, even more so now, even though the kids aren’t at home, he’s learned to cook, which I never in a thousand years thought would happen! And just various things, and you know everybody changes as you go through the different periods of your life and the different things you have to step up to, so I think at first I was doing a lot more, but that didn’t last very long until he realized things are kind of different from when he had a mom all to himself.

JT: I think we’ve covered pretty much everything that I wanted to ask, except for advice that you have or any positive experiences you want to share with women band directors.

JULIE: Looking back—you have made me do a lot of reflecting, which is probably a good thing—but I think looking back over my career, I really had a lot of wonderful opportunities and there have been a lot of things that have been really hard. Band directing is a hard life and I don’t recommend it to everybody unless it’s really what you want to do, but overall, it’s been really rewarding and it worries me that the young women I see at the college level seem to be afraid of the band director life. I don’t know what happens when they come in as freshmen, (we have many more female students than we do male students in instrumental music)—somewhere during that period of time, they decide they want to be a generalist or stick with middle school, or whatever. And those are all good things and we need great people at those levels, but there seems to be a change—I need to do a study and figure out what’s happening during that time that’s making them afraid of taking on the high school band. I have a hunch, a lot of it’s marching band. I think women are afraid of marching band—they feel like they won’t have the control, or the time, or the desire, or it takes so much time they won’t be able to have children. I think there’s a fear there, of the high school band responsibilities for a female who wants to be a well-rounded woman and experience all of those aspects of life. And I guess the point I would like to get across to young women is, there’s no need for them to be afraid of it, if that’s what they really want to do. My mom always used to say, “You figure out how to get done the things you really want to do.” You figure out how to find the time for the things that are really important to you and if that’s what a young woman really wants to do, and still really wants to have a family, you can do it, you’ll figure out how to do it, and each situation will be different
for you, but you’ll figure out what works for you. So, I guess that’s kind of one of my missions here, is to encourage young women to go for it, because I think we need more women in the field, I think there needs to be a better balance, and we don’t have very many role models. That’s my advice: don’t be afraid, go for it!
Ellen

JT: I know you’re married and you have two kids, but I would like to know more about your educational and professional background before we get into family. So, let’s start with college, where did you attend college?

ELLEN: I have my bachelor’s and I did that in ‘87–’91 and then I got my master’s degree, and I completed that in 1999, but I did it summers only so I could continue to teach.

JT: How many summers?

ELLEN: Five summers because I got pregnant in ’97.

JT: Were you or are you involved in any professional organizations?

ELLEN: Yes, I was and I am. In college, I was really into Tau Beta Sigma as an undergrad, Golden Key National Honor Society a little bit, and then in grad school not so much because I wasn’t on campus and I was teaching here, but very involved in the state band and orchestra association, I’ve been an officer since my third year of teaching. So I’ve been secretary, I’ve been district vice president, in charge of hiring adjudicators, I’ve been district president, I’m now the state conducting symposium chair and I just turned down a state vice presidency because of my kids. They’re at the age where I need to be with them, so it’s one of those decisions that had to be made and it took me a while to make it. I also am a member of MASTA and I’m not very active in that organization just because there’s not a lot of time. I am a recent inductee into ASBDA, recent meaning the last 4 years. And I’m fairly involved in that group. I went to the National convention in Florida this summer because my daughter’s dance convention was in the same city. So, we went down for her dance convention and I commuted from the hotel to the ASBDA convention so I could do both things. So yeah, pretty involved!

JT: You said your kids are 7 and 12, are they in your program?

ELLEN: We live in a different school district—I commute about 22 minutes a day. I used to commute an hour and I did that with my daughter until she was kindergarten age and then we moved closer. We commuted because my husband’s job was like 5 minutes from our house and he drove everyday. He was a television news photographer, so he was on the road like hundreds of miles a day and it made more sense for him not to have to add another thirty or so each way. At the time when we first got married and didn’t have kids, it was not a big deal. So, I had Natalie and brought her with me to the city where I teach, so she went to daycare there, she went to preschool there, so she was in the car with me everyday, but we left the house at quarter to six in the morning and that just became unreasonable once we decided to have our second child. So we decided to split the distance and moved about 20 minutes away from here. So my kids—we talked about having them in my program, but she has a lot of community friends, neighborhood friends, and she would prefer to go to school with those kids right now.
JT: Let’s jump right into the career choices and responsibilities, why did you decide to become a band director?

ELLEN: That’s a really hard question.

JT: Or when—maybe when would be easier.

ELLEN: Spring term of my senior year of high school—I was pre-med, I was convinced that where I was going to be. My GPA was good, my grades were good, I mean, I graduated with a “4” and ended up third in my class because I got an A- in typing. Just one of those things... But I was pre-med all the way and that’s where I was planning on going. And I was taking some private lessons, and I was playing saxophone, and I wanted to march in a college marching band just for the social experience, so I bought an alto cheap and learned how to play that and decided “I’ll go to the state university, I’ll play in the concert groups, I’ll...” you know, whatever, but I’ll do this career path. And my high school band director and my private teacher both kind of pulled me aside and convinced me to try to do an audition. So I went through the audition process and was rewarded a pretty substantial scholarship for flute and they sort of nurtured me and said “You could do that.” So at the time I thought, I’ll do music therapy, that will kind of combine my medical interests a little bit, psychological with my music background and my college band director pulled me aside my sophomore year and said, “You do not want to be a music therapist, you’re a good teacher, you’re a natural teacher, you’re a good conductor, you need to be on the podium, you should consider the school of music alone.” So I switched my major completely my junior year of college. So it was through advice from others.

JT: So would you say that he was a role model by telling you to pursue music?

ELLEN: Oh sure, absolutely. My high school band director for sure, she’s now at University of Texas, she only spent 3 years in the public schools, and went back and got her master’s degree and moved on, but she was fairly supportive. My private flute instructor was very supportive. Incidentally, she ended up marrying my college band director after I graduated from the program, so it was a very small circle. But, yeah, he was a significant role model.

JT: Can you describe your teaching experience here, because you’ve been here the whole time, and you’ve done high school for 20 years—since the beginning.

ELLEN: My teaching day has been a little different. I started this job when I was 21 and I had 2 hours at the high school and I team-taught 2 hours at the middle school. And that was it—it was full time. So I had marching band, I had orchestra, and then I went to the middle school and helped. So it was a cake job and I was a little nervous about that. Like any program when there’s a change, a lot of students drop out, so before I even started, the marching band was down to like 106, 9 through 12, in a class B school at the time, (we only had an enrollment of about 900). And orchestra was about 35, so it was still 140 kids, but just two classes. And at the end of my first year, I proposed to my principal a music theory/history class—they did add that. By the end of my fifth year, the band had grown to 190, so I proposed a third band. And by the end of my seventh year we had hired a third band director to team-teach the high school and the
middle school as well. The orchestra was up to about 70, so I doubled the numbers in about 5 years.

JT: So the program was big by the time you were having kids?

ELLEN: Huge. And I had already committed to take the band to France and that happened . . . I did the French thing. We started planning in '96, we’d hired Jeff, in '97, we took the band '98-'99, so I wasn’t pregnant when we started planning to do that big trip, but the program was large. And I’m not sure how I would have handled having kids had we not hired that third band director because I had a vision of where I wanted the program to go and it was in place, so we had someone that, on maternity leave, was still kind of in position, and I had student teachers that were quality student teachers so the kids had some kind of instruction. So I felt pretty good about taking time off, but I got married in '93 and we had our first child in '98, was when she was born (there was some time in there). So the job has changed—I’ve done beginning percussion, I’ve done beginning strings, I’ve done 8th grade strings, I’ve grown the program, it’s been back and forth. The only thing I haven’t taught all by myself is 7th grade band. It evolves—different superintendents and different principals want to use your talents in different places, or they don’t even consider your talents, they just know there’s a body and they can plug him in, so depending on what kind of a public school job you get and what kind of leadership you have, makes a big difference in what your actual role and responsibility is during the day. It may not always be Malcolm Arnold “Prelude, Siciliano and Rondo,” and “Urban Dances” and all the fun stuff we want to do as band directors.

JT: Sad, but true. Are you satisfied with your career as a band director?

ELLEN: Yeah, absolutely, but I’ve been able to stay in a place and prove that I know what I’m talking about, so to speak. There’s no modesty there, I guess, but because of that, I think people listen to what I have to say, and if I make a suggestion, for the most part, it’s at least heard and sometimes implemented. You know, I got a music theory class, I added the third band, they did hire another teacher, which was laid off by a superintendent that followed, so we’re back to just two. But that third person bridged the middle school and the high school as a team teacher through both pregnancies, so while I was having my children, there was another body that could step up to the podium. Huge help.

JT: Do you have any plans for the future? Regarding education?

ELLEN: We’re done having kids. I think I’ll end up staying here. You know, I want my Ph.D., I always have. I was going to take this job and work here 5 or 6 years and then go to Indiana University and get my master’s and doctorate back-to-back—that was my whole vision. And I kind of fell in love with the kids and the community, and next think you know, here I am 20 years later. And now that I have children of my own, I don’t have those kinds of choices available. I can’t simply take the assistantship, I have to worry about their health care, and their college tuition, and their lessons. I have kind of the golden handcuffs—I have been in a job long enough with a master’s degree and 20 years of experience—to leave this position and go someplace else, you would take a significant pay cut because most places, at least in Michigan,
aren’t going to match that kind of experience. And for me to take time off and go back and study would be irresponsible, financially, for the kids.

JT: Are you thinking about it when they get older?

ELLEN: My threat to my son who’s seven is that, “When you go to college, mom’s coming with you” and he thinks it’s really cute right now. So, I’d probably have to retire from public teaching to finish my Ph.D. and then consider collegiate travel. I think that might be really beneficial for a lot of younger students because you’ve got somebody with this breadth of experience that’s going to try to help the future of music education, and I’ll only be 50! Once you have kids, and you’re going to be—you know, I’m really pretty committed—I’m responsible for this program, I’m responsible to the children, and financially, I don’t know if I could do it any other way unless I win the lottery, I guess.

JT: So, you have two kids, and a husband, can you describe some of those relationships?

ELLEN: My husband and I met in college, very good friends, we were in band fraternity/sororities together and I was sort of quasi-dating one of his roommates, but we were always hanging out together (a group of ten or twelve) just, you know, like any undergraduate experience. We were in the marching band together (he was a telecommunications major), so I didn’t have him in the in the program courses. We started dating after he graduated and I was still a student. You know, he had a sense of humor and everything, and wanted to have a family someday, and he was supportive of my career, and at the time there were very few female band directors in the ’90s.

JT: He was always into news photography?

ELLEN: Photography, telecommunications. Actually, he was more interested in journalism and writing, but kind of landed a job at the local TV station shooting the news. The TV news thing just really caught his attention and he started shooting video and fell in love with that medium. So, his career took off that way, and now he is actually teaching at the college level with 18 years in the field, and has won a couple of Emmys, he’s just finished a documentary that he shot in Africa last year. It’s been a really great career path for him. Very cool—no money in TV photography at all. He’s enjoying, intellectually, everything, but there’s just no cash there. The collegiate thing has been really great for him. Ultimately, we would both like to be there while we still have our children in the house, but I don’t see it happening. So that has made a huge difference in our life. When he was shooting news and I was driving with an infant an hour a day each way, holy cow! Really hard to manage! Because now, he’s home 2 days a week.

JT: So before, you were pretty much handling everything?

ELLEN: I was it. He was an 8 to 6 job. I took them to day care, did the high school thing, picked the kids up from day care, took them wherever, took them to doctors appointments, if the child got sick, it was on my shoulders. All of it—still the traditional female role was still in place for us—but it was simply because he wasn’t there. I brought my daughter to work so I could be close.
JT: Since he’s become a professor—

ELLEN: He’s the “Room Mom” for his son’s classroom because he’s the only dad that’s free, he’s the room mom, he’s it—he’s the guy. He does that for my daughter as well. Huge change in family dynamic. I don’t know how else it would have worked because when Daniel was born, I made him do the drop off at day care—I couldn’t handle it. I used to cry every day that I dropped my daughter off. I would put my make-up on in the parking lot after I wiped my face, and I would come into work. And I did that for 4 years—I couldn’t handle it. I did, but it was exhausting, and when we decided to have number two, I said, “I can’t do the drop off again. You’re going to have to abandon your own child, I can’t do it.” Because that’s what it feels like as a parent, “Here, this is the most precious thing in the world, I’m going to go leave it with you, goodbye!” [researcher added: Ellen’s eyes began to tear]. Yeah, really hard [researcher added: Ellen sniffled]. Yeah, tough. But, that’s made a big difference. So relationship-wise, that’s helped. Because he’s a musician, he can understand what’s required, you know, he was in high school band, he was in college band, he played trumpet—all of those requirements were there. So, we got married in ‘93 and got pregnant in ‘97, so it was 4 years into it before we decided to have children.

JT: Did you always want a family?

ELLEN: Mm-hmm.

JT: And he?

ELLEN: He did too. Absolutely. Yeah, that was on purpose. In fact, we didn’t want to wait 4 years for our kids, medically and otherwise.

JT: Did you ever have any second thoughts because of your career?

ELLEN: Yep, when we first started out, I knew right away that I could not have a child—first, second, even third—year. I still felt like that’s just not going to happen for me. But I never questioned whether or not I would not have a family. And I never really said, “I’m going to abandon my career for my kids,” I just thought of a different, maybe potential, career path. And that was because the program was growing. I mean, in ’91, there was 106, by ’93 there was 140, by ’95 we were at 190, I mean, okay, how do I parent all of these children plus produce my own?—that was always in the front of my thoughts.

JT: So, challenges of time?

ELLEN: Huge! Ten minutes—if you have a ten-minute break, it’s pretty impressive. Time management is everything.

JT: Describe your satisfaction with your family and home life.

ELLEN: I’m thrilled with my children and their resilience and their behavior and their grades and their personalities. I mean, the kids are just so great with everything and they come to
school with me. I mean, I’ve got the whole collage of kids on my desk—they’re with me all the time. And the high school students know who my kids are. You know, at football games they are with us, they go on trips with us. I include them when it’s responsible and feasible. I can’t bring them—if they have a snow day, they don’t come to school with me—I don’t think that’s the right choice. I try real hard not to talk about my family too much in front of my own students unless I think I’m doing a role model thing for them, so I do try to keep the two separate. The big change is—if you’re talking about satisfaction—I’m kind of a clean freak, which you can’t tell by this office. This room drives me crazy. You cannot be a clean freak and manage a career and family. I fought it for at least 10 years and I finally have come to terms with—I may go to work and the laundry will not be put away, or the mail pile will be on the counter, or I’ll have to step over toys—it drives me absolutely nuts! I hate it! And there are days when I walk in from a crazy day here at work and I open the door and then there’s chaos at home and it’s, “[Gasp! Groans] I can’t do this because there are just are not enough hours in the day.” You’ll teach your children how to pick up, but there are things they simply can’t do. You know, my seven year old is only 50 pounds. For him to try to manipulate and move his body to hang up all of his clothes in the closet—it’s not going to happen, you know? Nor can he reach into the sink because it’s a real tall sink, he can’t do the dishes. I’ve got to do that stuff! And he can pick up his toys and he can help with that, but then my husband is not a clean freak. In fact, he grew up in a chaotic environment—mother died young (when he was young), she had brain cancer, dad remarried, anyway—he doesn’t function that way and if it’s out of sight, he forgets about it. He’s so right brained, he’s left-handed—it’s the ‘yin and yang’ thing. So, for him, he’s got to see the mail out and spread out on surfaces. So the clean house thing, we’ve been fighting since we got married and then you compound it with children? Yeah, forget it. We did get a housekeeper when my kids were real little and could not do chores and then at least I knew that the bathrooms were scrubbed and the floors were vacuumed and it was dusted, and it was clean, it wasn’t clutter-free, but clean. And now that they’re older, Natalie can push the vacuum and Daniel thinks it’s hilarious to scrub the inside of the toilet with a brush and has gloves on. They’ve got to learn their chores too, but yeah, they do it. So it’s still clean, but you can bring a shovel in with you into my house and scrape the toys out of the way so you can walk from room to room. That would be the only thing that I’d be dissatisfied with. That and at work, I don’t have time to stay ‘til 5 or 6 o’clock and night and make a file for everything you’re looking at on my desk. That’s for my meeting on Wednesday, and that’s for my thing on Thursday, and that paper clipped thing, that’s the festival entry, and this is the fundraiser—everything has its place, but it’s not in it. And I don’t have time to stay and do that anymore, I just can’t.

JT: And you don’t want to spend time doing that, you’d rather spend time with your kids?

ELLEN: Well, I kind of want to get it done because I like the idea of walking in the next day and seeing everything in it’s little place, but I know that I can’t and in the scheme of life, this is not important at all. As long as it gets done and it’s competent, then, good. Your time management skills become from, “What did I do with all my free time before kids?” down to, “Wow! I can really do that in that amount of time, and it’s going to be a quality job!”
JT: Do you think your kids will be in band when they get older?

ELLEN: My daughter is already into oboe. She takes private lessons through her band director during school, which is great. She was good enough—she mastered the all-state materials as a seventh grader, and tried out and didn’t make it this year. As a young player, she’s already there. We started her on Suzuki violin when she was five and Daniel was still an infant. She did a couple of years with that—she just never fell in love with the instrument, so we’ve switched her since. My little guy can already play a little bit of trumpet and he’s very interested in being a lot like dad, so I think he’s going to do that too. And Daniel is pretty sure that the desk my student teacher is sitting at is his desk, when he comes in, he puts his things there and when grows up he’s going to work with mom! So, he’s got it all mapped out—he thinks it’s cool. And I’ve asked the kids before, especially when my husband took the job at the university, “Should we move closer to daddy’s work at this point?” My parents are very close to there, “Do you want to be closer to grandma and grandpa?”—“Well, then you wouldn’t be with the high school kids anymore.” So my own kids support the career. They don’t resent it—they may later.

JT: Are you worried that schedules are going to conflict in the future with your daughter’s band and your band?

ELLEN: I missed her first band concert because mine was the same night.

JT: So, that’s going to be tough to balance your band program with hers, and things are often on the same night . . .

ELLEN: Yep. The tougher thing will be that my daughter also has a passion for dance and she’s fairly active in that. Right now, she’s dancing 6 hours a week. Today, if I don’t leave by 3:16 and 30 seconds, I won’t make the bus in time to pick up Daniel and get Natalie to dance on time, and that’s if the roads are good. We time it down to, ‘I’m pulling up and the red flashers are on the school bus at the same time, I got it!’ You’re laughing, but it’s every day! And my son gets off the bus and he just expects the van to be there right in front of the bus because we pull up together. It’s scary—that’s what it is. So, the dance schedule is probably more terrifying to balance out than the band schedule. At some point, that is probably going to conflict before my gigs conflict. Back to that whole ‘I’ve been teaching here long enough for them to trust me and believe me,’ I sit down with our auditorium manager in early May and make the schedule happen. And I usually have a lot of her information at that point too, so I can kind of tweak the schedule as long as it doesn’t conflict with the curriculum and my goals for the kids, to work that family piece as well. I’m not as worried about that as I am missing the bus someday. It’s scary! It works, but it’s scary! And the only thing you can do is laugh about it. No time at all.

JT: What sacrifices have you made?

ELLEN: Sacrifices I’ve made for the career—that I don’t have my Ph.D. yet. I’m 42 years old in June, and I really wanted to be done teaching high school and teaching college students how to be music educators. I want your music ed. prof’s job. I feel a big passion for training those that need to get out there. I’ve always wanted to do that. I still love my podium time and I absolutely adore the high school kids—middle school kids too, at times. So, that’s a sacrifice
that I made because I had the family. Band program sacrifices—my instrument inventory is not up to date. If I were to get hit by that bus that I miss by that much, and they had to replace me tomorrow, the next person coming in would have a lot of work to do. For the program, there’s a lot of stuff that’s in my head that’s not on paper or the computer yet because it just takes a lot of time to sit down and do that and I don’t have the time. And when there were two of us, one of us was on the podium, the other was in, we called it, “hovercraft mode” they were either circulating through the rehearsal and then grabbing somebody by the collar and pulling them into a practice room and fixing the mistakes, or running the solo and ensemble thing, or when that was stable, they were on the computer entering data and managing the program, filing and keeping all that stuff up to date. I have about 4 days in June where I stay and finish the week every year and I get somewhat caught up, but this year my daughter’s dance competition and the ASBDA conference happened that week and I didn’t do it. So, the instrument and music inventory is about 3 years behind. The other sacrifice is, I used to do private lessons at night. I would bring teachers in and I would sit here at my desk and call if students missed their lesson, and I would file and I would write out parts by hand—this is before Finale and Encore—all those things that I could do to prep for the next day, and that vanished once I had kids because I wasn’t willing to give up the nights.

JT: How much time do you spend working at home?

ELLEN: Well, my first few years when I had kids, I used to bring a bag home every night. I still bring a bag home, but it’s usually not nearly as much. I would say I’d spend maybe 2 to 3 hours on a Sunday morning while the kids are at Sunday school, my husband will take them to Sunday school and I’ll stay home at work quite often.

JT: Score study and planning?

ELLEN: Oh, score study happens at the red light before I pull into the parking lot. “I’m going to work on, this! Blink! Okay that’s it!” Gosh! Most of the stuff I have to do at home is playing tests because I do it all on CD, that way I don’t give up too much rehearsal time, although I’ve gotten much more supportive of the ‘We’re going to burn three rehearsal days. You, as students, are going to sit and either do a history worksheet or have independent practice time, and I’m going to listen to those tests one-on-one so that they’re done during the day and I’m not taking hours home at night. I spend, I would say, zero time at home during the school week on schoolwork, now that I have two kids. Whereas before, I would stay at least ’til 5 o’clock every night and get everything done here at work.

JT: So, what kinds of things do you do at home with your family? Do you have dinner together?

ELLEN: You’re so funny! No. Depends on the day of the week. Today is one of those—I need to leave at 3:16:30, we’re going to pick up Daniel, I’m spitting Natalie out at dance at four, and then Daniel and I have to run to get the groceries and we have to do a return, and then we’re going to come back to pick up Natalie, but on the way we’re going to hit some kid of food, and Natalie—when I pick her up from dance—will have a bag of whatever food was there, and if Daniel and I are lucky, we’ll get a half an hour at the gym together and we’ll walk the track. And when we go home, my daughter is in seventh grade, so it’s going to be 2 hours of middle
school homework for her because that’s about what they’ve been sending, and little guy will do his homework which is about a half an hour and then I’ll stick him in the tub and quiz Natalie on something and then we’re going to go to bed. So, it’s homework. And tomorrow, Daniel has Cub Scouts ‘til 5:30, but dad’s off, so he’s going to pick up Cub Scouts and I’m going to stay late to work on the conducting symposium that happens Thursday and solo and ensemble kids. And then I’m going to leave here and swing by the house to get Natalie because dad will be getting Daniel, take her to dance, I’m going to go to the gym and work out for an hour and then I’m going to pick her up from dance and go home.

JT: So, you still find time to do things for yourself.

ELLEN: I didn’t until about 3 years ago. I had both kids before my husband’s job changed—I put on over 50 pounds because I did not have any free time to exercise, work out, none of the above.

JT: And you were probably not eating very well.

ELLEN: Never eating well. We do purchase a good number of meals at home, and I bring a lunch every day—I stopped eating school lunch, which was huge. My kids don’t eat school lunch, they get a lunch packed and they always have. Dinners get interesting because of their activities—the Cub Scout/dance thing this week. There you go. Natalie will probably eat at 4 o’clock. Daniel will take a snack with us in the car tonight, and if we’re lucky, we’ll stop at some place that has a healthy alternative, a Panera Bread or something, and get soup to go, just because we have to eat in the car. Every day is different. We do have a pretty substantial game collection, the kids got a Wii for Christmas, I played on it once. Because 2 days after Christmas, we took the high school band, so we were just getting back from that. My daughter plays oboe a lot, she loves it, so she practices that quite a bit. My little guy is into a lot of the hand-held Japanese toys, so occupies a lot of his time with that. Chores days are Sundays after Sunday school. And I still judge quite a bit, so my next free Saturday is in May. This is going to be your life—Sunday afternoon from 3 to 6, that’s your time, yep, we carve out those 3 hours.

JT: So, you’ve said that you’ve used daycare.

ELLEN: Mm-hmm. I had a woman whose husband taught at the middle school and she did in-home daycare, she had five children of her own, all different ages, they were all out of the house. She was great, she was 12 minutes from the school, and prep and lunch for me when Natalie was little backed up, so I was still able to nurse. I just talked to my principal, and we didn’t tell the Union, and I just left the building everyday and nursed. There was a half-hour break everyday in the morning where the kids watched Channel One and then I would go into the girl’s bathroom in the back of the school and lock the door and sit on a little chair with a breast pump and take care of that. And you know, it was nuts! Absolutely nuts. And we did that for a while, then we had a preschool in the area that we really liked, so she went to preschool every day when she was three and four. Benefits of that was that she had a great educational experience and she was very safe. Downside is that she entered kindergarten reading and multiplying and way ahead of everybody else. So now as a seventh grader, she’s in the gifted and talented program, she’s bored silly. Emotionally, she’s just turned 12, whereas most of her friends are almost 14. And,
so there’s this huge gap. Would I change it? No. She can deal with the social issues, I guess. We did the same thing with Daniel—he went to a different daycare provider in the neighborhood. My husband dropped him off, as I told you earlier, but it was an in-home setting because we felt better about that with other little kids to play with and then he started preschool and drove to work with mom when he was three and four. Now, Natalie babysits—she’s 12. So now I don’t have to worry about the bus quite so much, because Natalie can be there to meet it, but this is the first year that I’ve allowed her to be home and collect him from the school bus.

JT: That’s a big responsibility.

ELLEN: Oh, and huge time saver for me! Holy cow! Because up until that point, I would have solo and ensemble kids or kids coming in afterschool for help, and I’d have to leave by five after. And before we moved halfway, it was almost impossible, so a big difference there.

JT: Were there any other members of your family that helped?

ELLEN: My mother comes up quite a bit, she’s only an hour and a half away, and she’s just in her mid sixties, so long weekends—convention weekends, solo and ensemble, festival weekends, times where I have to be at school, you know, 14 to 16 hours—she comes up, just brings her suitcase and stays a couple of days. And that’s the only way it works. And there are times that I’ve taken my kids to stay with grandma and grandpa overnight for a couple of days because I just can’t be there to feed them, clothe them, bathe them.

JT: And, you know, you feel bad about it, but they’re probably excited about it.

ELLEN: Horrible, but they’re all over it. And it’s great for them, it really is, but you feel like you’re abandoning your kids and your responsibilities—it takes a huge emotional toll.

[pause]

My husband is the big piece, and there were definitely times where he and I had little arguments because we just can’t get it done. We just can’t get it done. We’ve made our priorities, the kids are first for both of us, but that takes a toll on your own personal relationship because you don’t have the opportunity to just spontaneously, “Oh, let’s go see a movie,” because you don’t have any free time. There is zero free time. So, fortunately he is very, very, very into the kids and raising them and being part of their life. So, our free time really is just centered around the children.

JT: Does that detract from your relationship?

ELLEN: Absolutely it detracts from the relationship. We call each other on our commutes, when we are mutually commuting, so about 3 o’clock today we’ll talk because he’ll be coming back from the university and I’ll be heading home at 3:30. He’ll send me email. He does a photo on his iPhone everyday of the kids eating breakfast and sends me the update of what they look like, so I get my morning photo, because I don’t get to see them eat breakfast every day. You know?
JT: That’s cute! I like it!

ELLEN: It’s very cute! Sometimes they’re really hilarious. Or sometimes he’ll have the kids call and leave a message on my voicemail because he gets to spend more time with them than I do. You know, relationship-wise, yeah, that’s insane and once there’s children in the house, you’re just exhausted, so staying up at night and watching a television show, forget it, I think I go to bed every night by 9 or 9:15.

JT: And when do you have to wake up?

ELLEN: Quarter to 6. It was 5 before we moved halfway. So, that 5 a.m. was really rough. And you know, the first 5 years were probably one of the least healthy—emotionally and physically—of my life because I didn’t prioritize the right way. I never took care of my person. I showered every day, I put make-up on, I got clothes that fit, you know what I mean, cosmetic, hygiene, I guess I took care of that. I did not eat well, I did not sleep, to the point where, when Natalie was about 3, I had migraines before I had kids, but migraines were daily, I mean, like debilitating. I’d have to pull over to the side of the road and vomit on my way to and from work just to function. And my doctor thought, “Well you might be having a brain tumor here,” so we did a whole 6 month study on what was going on with me and it was sleep deprivation because I never slept the night through—my daughter was a night walker. So, there would be this little blue ghost in her nightgown floating down the hallway every night at about 2 o’clock in the morning and I’d have to get her up and wake her up and put her back to bed. My husband would too, but he could handle it. I couldn’t handle the night after night, after night, it was like 3 years of not sleeping all the way through the night. And you can’t nap afterschool, there’s no way to do that. So, that was huge, and eating—I would just grab a drive-thru on the way home because I knew I would have to go home and go into mom mode.

JT: And take care of everybody before yourself.

ELLEN: Right, and the same thing with the high school kids. So I’ve learned to say, “No.” I’ve learned that I do need to get back on it—because I always was healthy, I always worked out. I was a swimmer, I was a golfer—I did as much as I could. And I just didn’t with Natalie. Once I had Daniel, I started going back to the gym, but even with him, I had a superintendent that didn’t understand how to utilize their personnel real well. It wasn’t just me, it was a number of staff members in our district that felt abused and just over-scheduled and poorly scheduled—our teaching days. I didn’t have a lunch period for 2 years. There was no allotted time for me to eat. I could grab a snack at 9:30 if I wanted, but you know, when you get up at five in the morning, at 9:30, you need more than a snack, you need a meal, and then the next opportunity to eat was somewhere around 2 o’clock and that was crazy. Human rights, you know?

JT: How would you say the teacher’s schedule has either helped or hindered?

ELLEN: Oh, wow!

JT: Helped?
ELLEN: Huge! I have first hour planning right now.

JT: Or the year schedule?

ELLEN: Both. If I have a snow day, the kids have a snow day, it’s beautiful, and usually when there’s a 3-day weekend it’s also with mine. I mean, the kids’ school schedule and my schedule rarely conflict, and when they do it’s ‘grandma to the rescue,’ but having those summers off with my children. And it’s not even summers off—it’s the freedom to have some flexibility with the time we get up in the morning. Because, as you know, to stay certified you have to have six credits every 5 years, so there’s usually 2 weeks out of every summer that I’m at school. So, there’s definitely an advantage.

JT: And you have band camp.

ELLEN: And band camp, and—

JT: And they’re probably still involved in things during the summer too—dance and—

ELLEN: Blue Lake and dance, and scouts, so we’re going, but I’m just not coming to this building every day and I have the freedom to do that. So it helps a lot—the family environment is way healthier because of it. And the daily schedule, depending on where your classes fall, has been helpful too. You know, when Daniel was in kindergarten, just 2 years ago, I had sixth hour planning. And, I was able to work out a deal where if I came in at 6 in the morning, I could leave at 1:30 in the afternoon on certain days, and go to Daniel’s Halloween parade or help out in the classroom, or volunteer, and because I’m a teacher, I could do that. And it wasn’t every day, but I could. And now I have first hour prep, so I, until this week (we’re starting to make the switch), was able to get my daughter on the bus for the first time ever. I had breakfast with her, and you know, she’s 12—since preschool, because she went with me to daycare and preschool. But for the past 7 years, dad’s been doing that. So being a teacher does help—a lot. I’m not sure how 8 to 5 people do it. Our difference is the performance element is at night, and the weekend commitments, and if you choose to be involved in some those professional organizations, you know, I said, my next free Saturday is May.

JT: And if you want to move ahead, you need to do that.

ELLEN: You have to do that—it’s part of the whole career ladder. I judged last weekend in Livonia, which was great because my sisters-in-law are both in Farmington, so the family went with us. We had a jazz gig Friday night, so my kids—no I can back up one more—Thursday night was the rehearsal, so my sister came into town to watch my kids Thursday night because my husband plays in the gig with us for the rehearsal and Friday they came and watched the concert and we all got in the van and drove to Detroit and stayed in the hotel together. And then I got a ride from somebody else who was judging to go the school so that my husband could have the car with the kids. But the upside was that I had two and a half hours in the car there, they got to see their cousins and their aunts, and we had the drive home, so we were doing something as a family rather than mom just being out of the picture for 3 days. But I didn’t see my son from Wednesday night when I tucked him in until Friday afterschool either, because Bill
put him on the bus, my sister got him off the bus, and Bill put him on the bus Friday morning. Sucks. So any time you plan that night piece you run the risk of not seeing your own children. Saw him sleeping—he’s adorable—mouth hanging open, arms flopped over the covers, I cried. It’s the way it is—there’s my kid and I can’t be with him.

JT: Do you have any advice for women band directors in general or for those planning to have a family?

ELLEN: If you’re going to plan to have the family, you have to know what your own teaching responsibilities are going to be at the school. I have not had to do pep band since we hired Jeff in 1997, because he did it with the jazz band. So Tuesday and Friday is gone—I didn’t have to do that evening thing. I don’t do jazz band because that’s Jeff’s passion, so zero hour is not a problem for me. Another woman band director who may be all by herself in a 6-12 program would have those responsibilities as well as the family responsibilities. So, for me personally, I’m in a pretty good place. If I taught two towns north, I don’t know if I could do it. Especially if you’re really out in the ‘burbs and there are no private lesson opportunities or student teachers that can get to your building to help the kids prepare for solo festivals or do sectionals, that all ends up falling on your shoulders at work as well. And those kids crave that one-on-one attention and if they don’t get it from you, you know, they get angry. You have to think of yourself as like if you are piece of fruit and you’re trying to share it with everyone, you have to cut little pieces off. And there’s 212 students, so they all get a piece, and then your principal wants part of it and then the parents want part of it, your superintendent wants part of it. Your community wants you to play—I had a string ensemble play a wedding last weekend and a birthday party this weekend. They call, but it’s not just, “Kids, here’s a gig,” it’s, “We’re doing a ninetieth birthday party, we need an arrangement,” and—“Okay, who can play it,” so I ended up writing out a part, and it only took an hour, (an arrangement of Happy Birthday and He’s a Jolly Good Fellow), but that was an hour. A huge amount of time, and that wasn’t a job responsibility, it was a community piece, so I had to give a little bit there. And the next thing you know, you have about that much left for yourself and your family, if you’re not careful. So, my advice would be, if you’re going to have a family, you better be in a teaching position where your evening responsibilities are minimal. Or steer a program to a healthy place that doesn’t necessarily need those to function, because quite frequently, those evening responsibilities don’t add to the program, it usually detracts. Pep band doesn’t do much for building tone quality. It may help with reading skills, but I doubt it, and it just really burns everybody out. It’s bad all the way around from a music standpoint, but it’s a huge community and PR piece, so if you’re trying to build a program, you may have to do it.
Elizabeth

JT: How about we start with a reminder of your situation here and your situation at home.

ELIZABETH: Right, I’m the director of bands here, it’s my fifth year here. And I conduct the wind ensemble, I teach courses in music ed., conducting, sometimes I observe student teachers. It’s a lot of concerts and recitals—I’m the head of the instrumental area so I oversee about 13 adjuncts and scheduling juries and stuff like that.

JT: Do you have athletic band responsibilities?

ELIZABETH: No, we do have a second band director who oversees that. In the fall I help with band camp, but that’s it—kind of that typical “figure head” situation. But I do get load credit for band camp. And at home, I have two small children, a 7-year-old and a 3-year-old and a husband—I’m married—so, responsibilities at home are crazy.

JT: Let’s kind of build a background for you—where did you attend undergrad and then where did you further your study?

ELIZABETH: I did my undergraduate degree at a small college in New York. The school of music was a major aspect there—500 majors, I think. I don’t know if it was when I was there, but that’s what it is now. I did my master’s at—oh, I did my undergrad in music education, so after that, I taught for a while. So, then I did my master’s in and then I did my DMA in conducting.

JT: How many years did that take?

ELIZABETH: Well, just the schooling itself, the doctorate, I was in residency for 3 years. I finally got the degree a year later. And then my master’s, I transferred some things in because I had done some summer work, so that only took a year, but I taught in between my master’s and my doctorate.

JT: Let’s talk about your teaching experience as a high school band director. You were a high school band director, right?

ELIZABETH: I was.

JT: For how many years?

ELIZABETH: Three and a half.

JT: And that was between your undergrad and master’s.

ELIZABETH: Yes.
JT: What was that like?

ELIZABETH: I was the only female band director in my county. I mean, I don’t mean to “label” myself like that, but I mean, it was a fact. I first taught in a very rural school—I was 6 through 12 music. I did everything—band, choir, lessons, theory, music appreciation, recorder class, I mean, it was crazy. That was up in northern New York. I did that for one year and then I got the job—and I did high school band there, too. That was really open; there were a lot of female band directors up there—high school band directors. So in fact, the largest city around, she was—I don’t remember her last name, but Linda—was the high school band director. So there was, you know, I never felt strange up there at all. But when I got down around the big city and I taught there for two and a half years—that was very different. There was a big deal from the students that I was the first female director and some of it was positive, some of it was, they just didn’t want me and they told me because I was a woman and women can’t do band. I remember my bari sax player telling me that.

JT: What was your family situation like when you were in that position, were you married yet?

ELIZABETH: No, I was dating my husband, but we weren’t married.

JT: Describe how your family choices overlapped with getting your doctorate, because you must have had your children while you were studying, right?

ELIZABETH: I did. I went and did my master’s, then I got a job teaching, I was an adjunct at a small university—I was the assistant director of bands. I loved it. It was you know, one of those part time positions that’s full time. Well, full time with part time pay. So I was doing that, they asked me to stay an additional year for full time. I couldn’t be considered for the job because I didn’t have a doctorate, I hadn’t done any work on a doctorate. So they had a failed search and then they asked me to stay for one more year. And I did that one year extra—they held my doctoral assistantship for me to do that here, which was super nice. So I had been planning on this for over a year, and then I guess in May, at the end of school there on semesters, I discovered I was pregnant, so it was a surprise—it was not planned. So, I called the director where I was planning on doing my doctorate and said, “I’m pregnant, can I still come?” and, of course, I didn’t think about the fact that legally, he couldn’t say no. So we moved out there.

JT: So you began your doctoral study while you were pregnant.

ELIZABETH: Yeah, and I was the assistant, you know as a TA, we were doing the marching band, so there I was, 8 months pregnant.

JT: And did your husband go with you?

ELIZABETH: He did, he did.
JT: And what did he do?

ELIZABETH: He was a high school band director and he took a leave of absence of his job back home, but then he got a job where we moved, teaching high school band. JT: So, economically, you were okay to do the DMA.

ELIZABETH: Well, I got a stipend, it only ended up to like 500 dollars a month—it took care of childcare, I think, and it took care of my tuition. And we had money saved up, so we lived off of that. So we no longer have money saved up, but yeah. And with his job, we rented a house and I had great insurance through the college, so it didn’t cost us a penny for the “arrival.”

JT: So, your oldest—

ELIZABETH: My son, Andrew.

JT: How old was Andrew when you graduated with your DMA, three?

ELIZABETH: He was three, yeah.

JT: And then you had your second child.

ELIZABETH: My first year here in October, I discovered I was pregnant. We had talked about it, but didn’t expect it to happen so fast. She was sort of planned.

JT: Did having your career here ever discourage you from having the second child?

ELIZABETH: Not until afterwards, when I realized what a big change it was to have two kids and to have an infant again and different responsibilities, etcetera. It was very stressful.

JT: Let’s talk a little bit more about that then, the challenges and stresses of balancing this job here and your family life.

ELIZABETH: Well, the big thing is transportation, because when Andrew was in daycare—that met from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.—there wasn’t an issue. And when my husband was teaching in the schools—he got a job as a high school band director here—it wasn’t a problem. When I started to feel it all was after my daughter was born—being able to nurse her and the things that I wanted to do as a mother, were very difficult. Andrew came to school with me when he was an infant, and I had care for him by a student who watched him at the school and then in between classes, I’d have him so I could nurse him, etcetera. And then we put him into daycare later on. But Michelle, we put her right in, and that was difficult, to schedule, I mean, I don’t mean to be graphic, but you know, if you’re going to nurse, you have to pump. And that was difficult to find that time when my body’s telling me that I have to do it, but I have to be in a meeting, or something else. So, that was very difficult. Now, where I’m finding the balance issues, are Andrew’s in elementary school, his bus comes at 8:38, one of us has to drop him off and my husband because of budget cuts and just a series of events, he’s selling Toyotas 40 minutes away. So, it’s stressful because there’s a dramatic income loss of about 50,000 dollars a year. And then
the schedule because he works, we’ve managed to work the days off, his days off so that he can pick up our children because I have rehearsal from 4 to 6 on Mondays and Wednesdays, well school is well, done with that. And Andrew goes to school about a block from here, but he can’t walk here by himself yet. So he has to be there to pick up Andrew. And then I have to make sure that I get home on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and Andrew’s dropped off at 4 o’clock. So, I can’t get to school before quarter of 9, well, actually, even before 9 o’clock, it’s difficult.

JT: And what about Michelle?

ELIZABETH: Michelle is at a daycare situation, and that’s worked out great. My husband takes her at around 8 o’clock in the morning, but when she starts kindergarten, because kindergarten is half-day, that can be very difficult too.

JT: So, getting them places is difficult.

ELIZABETH: Yeah, and then you still want to have the time to be able to—I mean, I do as a parent, I’m not willing to sacrifice this—Andrew wants to take violin lessons, well, he does and he does Suzuki violin, so that’s a commitment of 2 days a week, 1 for the lesson and then 1 for the group class. And then Michelle takes ballet, and she loves it, and these are things that I think are very important for their development, so each one of those, Monday nights are lessons, Tuesday night is group class and I have to bring both of them with me, and then Wednesday night is ballet, once Thursday hits, I’m very happy. But it’s stressful getting everybody fed, where they need to be, getting homework done, because it’s not like I can just say, “Andrew, go do your homework,” I have to be around to help him. I love it by the way, I sound like I’m complaining.

JT: What type of daycare situation are they in?

ELIZABETH: Andrew had been at a center. We became, actually Michelle was expelled for biting—she was the first child ever expelled from there. But they had changed owners and they weren’t doing the right things, anyways, so we found someone who had worked at the daycare that had been the first person to take care of Michelle and she goes to her house now during the day.

JT: So, the biggest challenge is transportation—is there anything else, getting to things like recitals, is it tough making events with all of your events?

ELIZABETH: I haven’t had that issue yet.

JT: Do you anticipate that you will?

ELIZABETH: Someday I probably will, but their things, to me, it depends on what it is, too, but I also know here, for instance, when the performance nights are. We have set performance times, so I can usually avoid scheduling things with that, or just say look, I can’t be there because of this.
JT: Let’s talk a little bit about role models, you said that there weren’t very many female band directors when you were near a big city, and there aren’t very many college band directors, so being in the position where you are right now, did you have any role models to get you here?

ELIZABETH: Well, all of my role models that have been female are all single. So, that’s been difficult. One who has become a good friend, I called her when I found out I was pregnant, and she said you have to do this because she said if anybody can do it, you can go get your DMA and she said, herself, I think she said this, I might be misquoting her, but she said too many women, you know, it’s been hard to get into the field and none of these people have families, she said, and I mean, that’s not totally true, but she said you have to do this to set the path for the next generation. So, she’s been my big person. I don’t know Mallory Thompson, I’ve met her, but I don’t know her, but she doesn’t have a family. She has a dog—I know that—that she loves very much. She’s doing fine.

JT: Are there any specific time management skills that you have learned balancing your life as a mother and a professor?

ELIZABETH: Not at all. I’m always trying to figure them out. I feel very harried a lot of the time, like I’m always trying to catch up.

JT: What about organization, I mean, your office looks nice, do you find time to stay organized at home and here?

ELIZABETH: I try, I mean, here, I’ve been trying to organize, you know, set time aside every week because my desk will just all of the sudden have a pile on it, so I make time every week to just organize the piles, just kind of stack them up a little neatly so I have a work space. But, home, it’s—no, I wouldn’t say that we’re very—we try to be.

JT: Does your husband help out a lot at home with the kids and cleaning?

ELIZABETH: He does whatever he can. He does as much as he possibly can, but he’s working about 60 hours a week. He still goes in on his days off, etcetera.

JT: I assume that he’s very supportive of your career, especially since he’s in music too.

ELIZABETH: Oh very, he’s always been supportive of that, moving out to—

JT: Following you everywhere.

ELIZABETH: Yeah, he’s been great, he’s been great.

JT: What about other family members, parents, brothers, sisters?

ELIZABETH: I have no brothers and sisters. My mother—my parents are divorced—so my mother lives out of state now and my father lives in another state as well. So there’s no family support.
JT: And your husband’s parents are not around either?

ELIZABETH: His mother lives out of state, and his father’s deceased, so—

JT: So you guys are kind of on your own.

ELIZABETH: We are totally on our own, yeah. We’ve created a friendship with some neighbors, who, their son, is friends with Andrew—Andrew’s—but they’re both in the same grade. So, last year, when they were both in kindergarten, we had a carpool situation worked out. So, it took my husband and I, both of them, and our neighbor’s parents, so there were five transportation possibilities because we took—the kids would go to kindergarten from 9 to 11:30 and someone would have to feed them lunch and then we’d take them to half-day daycare until 3:15 or something like that, so somebody had to go pick them up, so that was, yeah, that was kind of crazy.

JT: This was when?

ELIZABETH: That was last year, that was exhausting, but every now and then, if I have to come into work early, they can take Andrew to the bus or something, but it’s pretty sticky picking up from the bus because they have a crossing guard who, it’s just weird, she just doesn’t—I mentioned to our neighbors, it was cold, I said, “Do you want a ride home?” —“You can’t do that! You can’t take other kids,” and we do have a signed thing through the school saying that we can pick our kids up for each other, but that apparently didn’t get to her, so you know, we kind of have to sneak around a little bit.

JT: What are your plans for the future?

ELIZABETH: I would like to move on. I would like to be in a bigger school, with a more concentrated program, you know, position, I should say. I would love to be an assistant somewhere.

JT: What about professional organizations, I assume that you’re in them.

ELIZABETH: Oh yeah, and I participate, I go to conferences, College Band Directors National Association, and I’ve presented there and I’ve organized their Intercollegiate Band, the regional, I did.

JT: Do you plan on becoming more involved?

ELIZABETH: It depends on what it is. Doing that particular intercollegiate band was kind of a nightmare because I was only supposed to help and then all of the sudden, everybody vanished and it was in my lap, so it was kind of crazy. It just was very strange. But, I’ve presented at the national one, and I’ve had students participate in the international small college intercollegiate band. And that’s been great, I love doing that and I love—I got a grant—through CBDNA for a conducting study, and those types of things I really like doing, being on committees, all about that, but I don’t want to be an officer right now, maybe later, but there’s just no way I could do
that. At the state conference, I’d just like to go work the booth and see people. WASBE, I’ve presented at that conference, and I go to these conferences as much as I can, but it depends on, like this year, I can’t go to Seattle, I don’t think, for the national conference, number 1, I can’t afford it and the school can’t—I mean, they’ve cut back, just like every other school. And it’s the time—how will my husband deal with all of the extra expense of babysitters? So, we’re still weighing that and it’s about a month away.

JT: You mention time a lot. Let’s talk a little bit more about time. It seems like you spend a lot of time at work and taking care of things at home. Do you ever find time for health related things or family fun activities?

ELIZABETH: Health is a major issue for me because I don’t have time to exercise, I mean, I try to eat healthily, but I don’t think I would do that if I didn’t have kids because I know myself, I want them to eat well, and I know that I need to teach them how to eat well, so I make sure that those dinners and lunches are balanced, etcetera. But if I didn’t have them I’d be having crackers and cheese for dinner, breakfast, and lunch, you know, I mean, or a Snickers bar or something, I don’t know. And then the exercise aspect of it, the physical activity, we won a Wii a couple of years ago and I got Wii Fit 2 years ago for Christmas and that’s the extent of my exercise. My son’s always getting on me, “You need to exercise,” but there’s no regiment.

JT: What about family fun things? I mean, you’re on a teacher’s schedule, so tell me how the summers have helped out with stuff like that.

ELIZABETH: Well, summer’s even though we’re not on contract, if you don’t come in, it’s recognized, especially as a non-tenured faculty member.

JT: Really? So you come in all summer long?

ELIZABETH: They can’t require me to, but they like to see you, so it’s a political thing that I’ve learned.

JT: So there are really no summers off for you and your children?

ELIZABETH: No.

JT: Christmas breaks?

ELIZABETH: In December, it’s made very clear that you’re still under contract. I made sure that I was in every day in December, except when my son was off of school, and even then I came in a little bit. So, and then there are a lot of Saturday commitments, with festivals and anything, workshops. The workshops on Saturdays are really difficult. I did take my children to Washington D.C. this past summer, my father used to live there and he still has a house there so he was there, so we went and visited him and toured the city, but it was just the three of us—my husband couldn’t go, so anything that we do—yesterday was the first, with the snow day and my husband doesn’t work on Wednesdays—that was the first family fun day we’d had in over a year. So, you know, it’s, I think, I mean, Christmas, there was family here, he was around a
couple days. So, that becomes the issue is that it’s my responsibility to provide anything extra—
taking them to the zoo, taking them to any travel, or any, you know. Because he just can’t do it, 
he’s got to work. If he’s not at work, that’s potential sale that he could lose.

JT: You said before, “I love it!” I want to know what you love about it—your job, your family—
talk about your positive experiences.

ELIZABETH: I love what I do because of working with the students. I love making music with 
the students and making them think a little differently because I guess I think differently than 
some of the faculty as they’ve pointed out. I love the teaching aspect of it, the administrative 
side I don’t really care for, but it’s part of the job, and I do my best. And I love my kids. I love 
watching them grow, I learn, I’m a better teacher because of being a parent. They’re a little 
wild—but it’s because I want them to explore. I’m not a ‘sit down and shut up mom,’ which, I 
don’t know, they’re a little wild, but anyway. But they’re smart and they love school and they 
love to read and—

JT: And your marriage?

ELIZABETH: Oh my marriage? I love my—oh, my husband’s the best, he really is. He works 
hard and I’m grateful for everything he does and how supportive he is. He’s fantastic, I couldn’t 
ask for a better husband and he’s a terrific Dad. It’s all really good. I love my life.

JT: That brings us to the advice part—what advice do you have for women band directors in high 
school and maybe those are planning on going on for their DMA and having families?

ELIZABETH: You know, I’ve thought about that because I have a former student who’s going 
on in her DMA. I guess the advice that I received during my doctoral study was—I was so upset 
that I wasn’t working more, that I wasn’t having the time, that I had family obligations, that I 
couldn’t be there. I was upset that I wasn’t working enough as a TA. I remember him saying, 
because I said, “I should be studying all of these scores and I should be doing this, and this, and I 
just can’t because I’ve got these obligations,” and I remember him saying to me, “I don’t know 
anybody who’s ever said that they wish that they had spent more time at work, that it’s always, ‘I 
I wish I had spent more time with my family’” and he was really the one who taught me that 
family does come first, that you can find that balance. If you want a family, I don’t think anyone 
should sacrifice having a family for a career, because ultimately, what does that get you? I 
mean, if you want a family, if you don’t want a family, that’s another thing—if you don’t want a 
family, that’s fine too. I don’t know that I would have done it any differently, because we 
weren’t going to have children. We wanted to be dual-income, no kids. So, Andrew was a 
surprise and I wouldn’t trade it for the world—I love them to bits. And without Andrew, we 
wouldn’t have decided to have Michelle. But I don’t know that I would have had them any 
earlier—I wasn’t ready. I worry about kids that are getting married really young. Take some 
time to explore and find out what’s really important. I don’t know if that makes any sense, but I 
think the big thing is, you don’t have to sacrifice your family.
JT: So, with that, you don’t feel any guilt from being apart from your family?

ELIZABETH: No, I wish I had more time. I do—there have been times when I thought, if John got a better paying job, it’d be nice to be just home with them. And we talked about that when we found out that Andrew was on his way—when I found out I was pregnant. But my husband said to me, “What are you going to do when he goes back to school? Are you going to sit and clean house and join a bridge club?” He said that’s great for some people but he couldn’t see me doing it and I don’t either, but my goals may have shifted a little bit in my career. I no longer want to be the director of bands at OSU or somewhere.

JT: So, it has changed your goals.

ELIZABETH: I guess it has changed a little bit. Or maybe it’s just discovering what my strengths are, where I feel if I were an assistant somewhere, working in a much larger school, I think that would be a nice fit for me. But I don’t know that I’d want to be director of bands. The other part of it is that now I see kind of the junk that goes along with that job and I’m just not interested in dealing with some of that stuff. Does that make sense? So I don’t know that that’s my family that shifted that goal, it just might have been, “I don’t know that that’s really what I want to do.”
Rebecca

JT: Let’s get started with your educational and professional background. Tell me briefly where you attended college, degrees you have, how many years it took, and professional organizations.

REBECCA: I started college in 2001 at a MAC university and it took me 5 years to get my undergrad. I could have maybe done it in four and a half but didn’t choose to really graduate in the winter with the job market the way it is. It was strictly music education, I did not have time for anything else—there was no minor involved with that. And I went on to do my master’s degree at that same institution. I was very torn between performance and education and I really just didn’t feel like I wanted my playing road to end right when I had graduated so I received an assistantship where I did my undergrad and did my grad studies in performance, (trombone performance). That was right after I graduated, there’s nothing in between, and that took me 2 years. And that brings me basically—would you like to know how that leads me here? I got married and my husband was from the area—I’m from the general vicinity anyway. We moved back here and I subbed for a little bit, this opened up as a long term sub position and then I was qualified so I ended up doing that, which provided me with yet more real life learning experience to know is this what I really want to do and they offered me the position after the school year.

JT: Why did you decide to become a band director?

REBECCA: Music has been my life—I have been taking piano lessons since I was in third grade. And to be perfectly honest with you, I chose music education because I didn’t know anything else to be that was a music profession because I love music so much. So when I was a senior I really didn’t have a clue what I was doing. And I had just heard that if you’re a performer there’s really not much you can do with that, so I just said, “OK, well I’m going to be a band director because I love band and I love music and that’s what I’m doing.” So I got to college and that’s why I really chose to be that. As things went on, as I stayed in college more and I student taught and different things, I’ve found that I really do love to teach and I related with students fairly well, so that kind of helped ferment that.

JT: Were there any role models along the way?

REBECCA: Yes. I actually, surprisingly enough, my band director didn’t really have anything much to do with that. I was not one that was close with my band director. I had—there was a local trombone player—that I played in his jazz ensembles and was a really, really positive source of encouragement to me and then my professor, my trombone professor in college, is amazing, he’s an amazing person and musician and he was a source of inspiration to me throughout that whole process. And my family, my dad’s very, very musical and so I guess that factored in as well, growing up.

JT: What are your teaching responsibilities here?

REBECCA: I teach 6 through 12 band, which is the entire program. So I teach 6th grade band, 7th and 8th grade band, and they perform as one band but they rehearse separately because of scheduling issues. They have combined rehearsals; basically 3 days before a concert we put
them all together. It’s not optimal, but it’s what we do. And I have high school band here, there’s only one real band for high school and jazz band, which is also a high school band.

JT: And marching band?

REBECCA: Marching band is in the fall.

JT: So you don’t do concert band at the same time as marching band—it switches over?

REBECCA: Correct.

JT: How about your family choice and responsibilities? I know you’re married and you got married right after college, right? After your master’s?

REBECCA: After my master’s, yes.

JT: And how did you decide to begin the family? When did that play in when you were teaching?

REBECCA: Towards the end of my master’s degree, I met my husband. And I guess I always had wanted to get married. I’m pretty stubborn, and I thought, “I don’t really care what I do—I want to get married.” I didn’t want to ever let my career take over my life and then look back when I was 40 or 50 and say, “What did I miss?” So I met my husband at the end of my master’s and we got married and he’s not a musician at all, well, he sings, but that’s really it. He’s not professionally a musician. And he is an immense source of support, and I guess I could get into that later, I don’t know how much you’re going to ask me about that, but we moved back, we moved here, and basically we had our baby a year and a half after we got married and we chose to have a baby. It wasn’t an accident—we chose to start a family. We’re both approaching 30 and I just didn’t want time to pass me by, so as far as the way that that factors in here, I basically received the job in between time and I just try and balance it as well as I can.

JT: So you had the baby before you started teaching? No.

REBECCA: I got pregnant after I started teaching here and she’s about a year old and I’ve been here about 2 years.

JT: You already answered this, but having a career as a band director never discouraged you from deciding to have a family—that’s what you wanted to do.

REBECCA: Correct.

JT: Just talk a little bit about balancing that right now, in terms of time, where is she right now?

REBECCA: It’s a conscious choice to balance. I’m very, very emphatic on that. If people let band directing take over their life, it’s a choice—I’m a firm believer. But she’s—we have, between my mother-in-law, and I have a sister-in-law, that live in the general vicinity, within
about a half hour’s drive either way and she stays with them or my husband actually has a seasonal job. He’s a landscaper and then he does snow removal in the winter. So because of that, well the last couple days are not a good example because he’s been out and she’s been with the family members. But, I get to spend summer with her and he gets to spend winter with her because he’s not snow plowing that much. I mean, he usually snow plows in the middle of the night, obviously, I’m sleeping, so if she needs something I’m there and it works out that he’s with her half of the year at home and I’m with her the other half and the gaps are filled in with family.

JT: So you’ve never had to take her to daycare?

REBECCA: No, I’ve never had to do that—I’ve always got family that I can depend on.

JT: Are there any challenges that you’ve experienced being a wife, mother, and band director?

REBECCA: Yes. Part of it is not typical. It’s a little more unique to my situation—I’m also an epileptic—I developed that after pregnancy. I have grand mal seizures and it’s pretty regulated—it was, until last week I had another seizure—so I can’t drive again for another 6 months. In the state of Michigan, every 6 months, you can’t drive until you had 6 months from your last seizure so that complicates things a lot more because I can’t drive. But if I take that factor out first and foremost, if I just focus on the fact of being a wife and a mother, my husband allows me to be able to be a mother to my child when I’m here because he brings her here sometimes, so when there’s pep band games, when there’s marching band rehearsal, he will come up here with the stroller and he’ll just push her around and she’ll get to see me here and so she can hear my voice—there’s things that at that age, she can still have me be part of her life. So, that part is not as hard as it is for other band directors who are female because a lot of times their husbands either can’t do that or they just don’t want to, nothing bad, but they just don’t want to do that. But, as far as the fact that I’m not home with her during the day, that’s the hardest part for me, being a mother, knowing that she needs me to take her to an appointment, if I just want to go take her to the beach, or I guess that’s not a good example because I can do that during the summer, but you know, just something else, like if I wanted to take her Christmas shopping or something, I can’t really do that. I can’t have my cake and eat it too. As far as being a wife goes, I don’t know, we’re very mutually supportive, and that started back when I met him because I was in college in a different city. He lived here and I lived at college, and there’s about an hour and a half’s difference, and so, from the beginning we knew that and it’s just like we’re very consciously—we make those times that we are together really quality.

JT: When you were pregnant and you had your baby, did you take the full maternity leave?

REBECCA: I didn’t. This is why—it was a couple of things. When I long-term subbed, I was technically a long-term sub, which meant I wasn’t an employee of the district when I got pregnant. So, because of that, I did not get paid for any time that I took. I got insurance, which was the very, very fortunate part because of how expensive it is. But, I did not get paid at all, and it would have just been easier, I mean, we could have managed without my income, but it was just a lot easier if I could not take a whole 3 months off. That was part of it, the other part was just that it I would have taken the full 3 months, I would not have been able to close out the
year, there’s a lot of different things that I wanted to do. She was born in February, so if I would have taken the full 3 months, it would have been the end of May, just right before graduation, and I wanted to come back, I took 6 weeks and so I basically kind of split the difference. In addition to that, my long-term sub situation was not going well, and I had a retired band director that came back, but kids are very, very attached and it was not going well. And I had told the district I had planned on taking 6 weeks to 8 weeks—wasn’t sure—was going to see how it worked out. And they were okay with me telling them, I could take up to 3 months, it was kind of my choice, but I said for the sake of my program, I have to make this really hard decision and it was hard, it was very hard, but my husband was very supportive and said you know what, you can come home at 3:00 everyday, it’s not the whole day that you’re, you know, I just kept reminding myself of that and I didn’t have to watch the program implode either, and you put yourself into your program, so it was a tough call, but I did not take my whole maternity leave.

JT: Was it really emotional? The first time that you had to come back to work and leave her behind?

REBECCA: It was actually, and I’m going to be honest with you, the first couple of days and then after that it was like, this is how it goes. And when I’m working—I know this sounds odd—I have her pictures, I have my husband’s pictures around and things, but when I’m at work, I’m thinking about work, and when I go home, I’m not thinking about school—that’s just how it is. When I’m here, I don’t think about her so much, because if I were to do that—it’s kind of my defense mechanism—it makes it too hard, so I’m here and I think about, “Okay, I’m here, and my husband’s not here and my baby’s not here, and I’m doing this,” and that’s kind of the danger in that, but it’s what I have to do to kind of cope. And so I do that, and that’s the way I do it.

JT: Do you talk about your family with your kids at all? Do they know your situation?

REBECCA: Yeah, oh yeah, they do.

JT: And they see her.

REBECCA: Yeah, they see her, and I’m very open with them. She comes and she crawls around before we have pep band rehearsals and things sometimes in here, and just different things. I want them to know that I’m a person too and that’s like a big thing because a lot of times, kids—I didn’t realize this when I got into the field—they think that their band director is just going to do whatever, whenever—they’re just always there for you. And it’s like “Yes, that’s true, but I am a person and I have a life, and I want you to know this,” and so I take those opportunities to say you know, “My baby just started walking,” and I’ll somehow tie that in with a lesson when talking about going to quarter notes to eighth notes, or talking about beginnings, and so I do that.

JT: What about time management skills? Have you learned anything new since you became a mom?

REBECCA: Well, let me think about that for a minute. I only bring work—well you know, it’s so hard this day and age because technology is always at our fingertips, and like, email—it’s work. So, it’s like I go home and I check my email and I will check my work email, I can’t get
away from that break, but I pretty much try to break it other than that. Unless it’s very important, unless I have to get these chair tests ranked in order by tomorrow because I just have got to do it or whatever. I sometimes will do that, but I’m pretty good with the time management. If I have to work, I will set the baby in the same room and it gets kind of crazy, and sometimes it takes me twice as long, but, at least I feel like she’s there and I’m still getting that and she’s getting me and I feel like a better mom for that. Time management, yes, I’m pretty good about leaving work at work and vice versa, but sometimes on the weekends, like, my husband, and I, and the baby will come up to school if I have to do work, if it’s just too much, we will just come all the way up here and it makes me feel so much better. If I had to just be here by myself and have them back home on the weekends, oh my gosh, it would be really bad. But on a side note, if I don’t get to tell you this, one of the best pieces of advice, is that I went to a clinic at the Michigan Music Conference last year and it was about women being band directors. She said that, “You know, the kids—kids do not remember that you’re not going to be there for the first couple of years,” it’s the hardest for the woman, to leave their baby, that is probably the hardest point when you have to leave them when they are babies, the first couple of years—they will not ever remember that. They don’t remember—people don’t remember ‘til they’re about 3, so they don’t remember that. And I tell myself that sometimes when I have to leave her and it’s so hard, and I’m like, “Okay, she really can’t remember,” and it’s more for me—it’s myself that has the problem with it and then after, yeah, they get older, but then they go to school too, and that’s the thing, and if she’s at school and I’m at school, it kind of takes care of itself.

JT: So in anticipation of her getting older, is she going to be at this school? Have you thought that far ahead?

REBECCA: That’s a good question. I have thought that far ahead. I don’t think so, and it’s kind of yet to be determined and the reason is because I don’t want her to be that kid that’s the teacher’s kid. Because I see that with some of the other teachers’ kids in the district and how uncomfortable it makes them feel and I don’t want to add that extra element of things to it. In addition to that, there’s a very good school district and band program—I think of that because I’m a band director—that we live basically in.

JT: How far away do you live?

REBECCA: About 20 minutes away, but the district is a really good district and it’s a small place but it’s a great district, and we live basically right by it.

JT: We forgot to talk about professional organizations, and that relates to time, so how much time do you spend and what are you involved in?

REBECCA: You have to be a member of MSBOA, and festival, solo and ensemble, there are just a couple of things that take extra time, but it’s really not a big deal. We have three meetings a year, so it’s nothing much out of the ordinary, that doesn’t factor in really hardly at all. Other than that, I’m not in any professional organizations because I’m a middle school and high school band director—you really are doing the job of two people and getting paid for one. And you don’t think about that until you’re in it, but when you’re talking about constantly thinking about recruiting, concerts, going between two buildings, it’s the job of two people. So, because of that,
I’m not in anything else. I manage actually pretty well with MSBOA—I have many more demands from the school than that organization.

JT: Do you have any plans for the future regarding educational and career moves?

REBECCA: Now—I would have never told you this when I graduated from college—I would be looking for a job as just a middle school band director because of the severe, severe, dramatic change of time commitments. Because, I mean, marching band’s the worst. I love upper-level music, but what I have found, the lesson I have learned as a band director, is that the musical nurturing that I need, that I thought that would satisfy me as a band director, that’s not the kind of fulfillment that I get being a band director. The kind of fulfillment I get as a band director is teaching, it’s not fulfillment, so for me to conduct Ticheli—I love Ticheli—but for me to conduct Ticheli, is not worth the sacrifice that I make teaching high school through the marching band rehearsals I have every night, well not every night, but once or twice a week, all of the extras, like pep band, parades, you name it—it all happens at high school, really, and post middle school, at least in this area. Because of that, I just see myself when I’m getting older, I don’t want to do that because my kid is going to be in school and have performances and concerts that I will want to go to.

JT: So it’s the family that has made you make that decision?

REBECCA: It is the family, right. And I’m going to be honest—if I would have found that for some reason, that teaching the whole spectrum (high school through middle school) had dramatically fulfilled that, and it was just the career move to make, I would maybe adjust there, you know, with my family, but the fact is that, for my situation, I would rather—I love teaching middle school students, I love giving to them, I love the enthusiasm that they have, and if I could just do that and not have to worry about the after school everything, ideally, that would be where I would want to be. And I’m not complaining now, I’m fine with the way it is, I’m probably not even looking for a position like that, but in the future, when, you know, looking forward, we would like to have more children and the fact that they will be involved with things, I want to make sure I’m there for them and she doesn’t require much other than just flat-out care right now, but she will know that her mother’s not there a lot, and I don’t want her to feel like she’s being raised by dad, so in the future, yes, that’s the difference.

JT: This is going to get a little bit personal, how do you deal with nursing?

REBECCA: That is a really good question, because this was a nightmare. We had planned a trip to Washington D.C. with the band over spring break, which was, I don’t know, 6 weeks after I had her. We planned a trip for spring break and the administration said, “You can take your maternity leave, but you have to accompany the band on this trip for spring break because everybody’s money is already in,” and I’m like, “I get that,” so then I’m thinking, “How do I do this? I’m nursing!” So, you have to pump, you have to own a breast pump, you just have to do it, there’s no other way around it. And I found that because I started depending so much on that breast pump, I don’t know what it’s like to just solely nurse because I never just did that all the time because I was getting ready to come back, part of me was getting ready to come back, I didn’t do that all the time, I mean, some mothers do it for a year or more—that was not me, I
mean, I nursed very sparsely, it was pretty much just once or twice a day and I pumped the rest, and that was how it went, and after I came back to school—this is where it changed a little bit—I developed seizures on the Washington D.C. trip, which is another story in itself. I had a huge seizure on a bus in the middle of the mountains of Pennsylvania, and pregnancy brought it on, but it had been underlying, I had epilepsy, they saw the abnormal brain waves, so that they knew that pregnancy had brought it on. Basically after that point, I was on medication and I did not want to breast feed anymore, so because of that, I instantly stopped after I got back from the Washington trip, but I had pumped and frozen for that trip because it was a long time, but I had mixed in formula with that as well, so it’s kind of like, my stories might be a little different than others because of the epilepsy thing, and going on from this point, I will never be able to nurse a baby—well, I could, but I don’t want to have to give them medication, because it’s a pretty big dose of medication for a little baby to handle.

JT: Let’s talk more about your husband—you said you wanted to talk more about spousal support.

REBECCA: Well, yeah, he is, I think, abnormal in the way that he supports me. He knows that I’m doing what I love to do and he loves to show—his love is through support, that’s how he shows that he can help me out and so he is here, like I said before, for all the pep band—almost every pep band game that he can come to, and this is regardless of whether or not he has to take me because I can’t drive between my seizures sometimes. Or, like marching band things, he pulls our little trailer out with the lawn tractor—he pulls it out for every game. He goes on all the competitions—he’s a registered chaperone for everything. He loves to be that. He thinks it’s great that he can be a chaperone in the program and that he can go to work with me, because that’s not typical for so many people, you can’t bring your spouses to work with you, but he can come. And even if I was teaching during the day, he could come here, he could watch what I do and file music because he’s a registered chaperone with the district and they don’t really care, I mean, I could have all kids of band parents in here, and it wouldn’t be a problem as long as they’ve gone through a background check. So, he loves that he can do that whenever he wants, and it makes him feel like he’s just not stuck at home and I’m the career person just going on, because he works very, very hard in the summer and I’m home and I never see him, and I can’t go to work with him. But he loves that he has that freedom and he makes my job immensely easier and I don’t think that I could—I don’t want to say that I don’t think I could do it—I would have to rearrange so many things if he didn’t do what he did to help me out. Like, I have never seen the lawn tractor, I have never tried to ride it out there, that pulls our carts, that, you know, in the past a band dad has done because my husband does it. There’s so many extra little things that he takes care of—I don’t have to worry about maintenance on anything because he’s like the maintenance man, so if anything breaks down, he’s there and he can help fix it, so there’s things like that that make my load so much lighter being able to teach high school and middle school. The guy that was here before me—he was not married or anything—he lived in the building. The kids said that they used to knock on the door at 11 at night sometimes just to come and practice and he’d be in here—I am not kidding. They were used to that, and that’s another thing, I mean, I’m a different person, but you can easily do that as a band director, you can camp out and there’s enough things to keep you busy. I just wanted to say that I think that’s abnormal—I have seen a lot of my peers with spouses that are very loving and supportive, but do not do the extra mile kind of a thing that he does. It is great.
JT: Just out of curiosity, was he in band at all when he was in high school?

REBECCA: He was in choir all the way throughout. He was very into choir—he did the stage things, but was not in band at all. So, he is learning how everything works. He doesn’t know the terminology sometimes—he’ll say, “Well it sounds really, you know, heavy, or what’s the word,” and I’m like, “Yeah, I know, the low brass are way too loud” or whatever, but he doesn’t know how to articulate it, but he likes that he knows enough to be able to understand a little bit.

JT: Talk about your positive experiences with your family and your career a little bit more, or about satisfaction.

REBECCA: Well, I am very satisfied—I’m very satisfied. I really rarely ever have a day when I’m like, “Oh man, I’m stuck here and I just can’t handle this anymore because I have to go home,” because in those cases, my husband would have already called me saying, “Do you want us to come up, we’ll just come up” and the baby’s sleeping, he just throws her in there, comes on up, brings her in and she’s still sleeping and whatever. And he’s like, “We’ll come up,” because it’s important to him that I’m comfortable in what I’m doing and he knows I went through how many years of school and I’m here doing this and it’s like, you know, you want to be doing what you go to school to do and he knew the demands—I thoroughly explained everything before we got married and I’m very satisfied with that. But it’s a conscious choice, and I said a little bit of that before, you know there’s teachers that teach English and it’s a stereotype, but still, there’s teachers that don’t do a fraction of what I do in this building that spend so much time and complain to me all the time how they never see their family and I just kind of want to say, “Don’t talk to me because you have no idea of my demands—what I have to do to between organizing pep band and having band booster meetings,” and I mean, you name it, there’s all kinds—I mean, we’re planning a trip right now so I have to have these trip meetings with band booster parents—extra things, you know? I think the positive—is that I just get a lot of support from my husband and if I didn’t have his support, if I didn’t have somebody, that was a husband supporting me and willing to come up and make that sacrifice and say, “I’m tired I just got off work, but I’ll come up if you want me to” If he wasn’t there to give that to me, it would be very, very difficult. I just can’t emphasize enough that I love what I do, I don’t really see a reason why somebody can’t have a large family and have a happy life and a husband and whatever they want to do and be a band director and I just, I mean, I don’t know how many programs you’ve observed or talked to, but you’ll see a lot of times, the older band directors get, they will kind of tend to go towards one school or another—they don’t want to be like me, spread out between a middle and high school. I guess I just—I’m very satisfied with the state that things are in, you know, my home life, I don’t really wish for everything different—I do feel like I get my cake and I eat it, too. I get to be with my baby, I get summers off other than band camp and things, and Christmas vacation. Being a teacher is awesome like that—I’m so glad that I’m a teacher when I get those 2 weeks and you get paid vacation days and holidays, it really is awesome, I mean, it really is. And it’s not the same musical nurturing I get to play the trombone, but you know what, that’s why I sub with the symphony sometimes, and that’s why I will teach lessons and really upper-level things and that keeps me feeling like all that work wasn’t for granted, or that it wasn’t just in vain, and you know what, having a master’s degree helps me teach my kids better—there are so many incompetent band directors out there, it’s ridiculous and it makes me mad, but it’s true.
JT: What advice do you have for women band directors in general, just being women, and what about those planning to have a family?

REBECCA: I’m kind of torn on a few things. If you’re a woman that’s a band director, I still just think that it’s entirely possible to do what you want to do. If you want to have a family, I think it is smart to try and plan that family accordingly, but don’t let it dictate your life. For instance, I didn’t really have a planned pregnancy for my first pregnancy, I mean, I had her in February, and I wasn’t really technically hired when I had her, so that could look pretty risky like you’re thinking wow, you know I was a long-term sub and not hired on paper which doesn’t happen until September when I got pregnant with her, but I made it happen anyway, and you know what, if it doesn’t work out and I can’t plan, and sometimes life just doesn’t go as planned, and if I can’t plan just to have babies in the beginning of the summer or whatever, it’s not going to stop me from having a family, if that means having a baby around festival time, that’s what that means. If that means, you know, whatever, you have to think that you can’t let it run your life—you can’t let the program run your life. You need to think of yourself first, and really, honestly, the bottom line is that if you can’t take care of yourself and if you can’t make yourself happy, you’re no good for the kids. If I’m unhappy, you know, if I don’t have my husband supporting me, and if I don’t have my time managed and different things like that, I’m not going to be as good for them if I’m not taking care of myself, so you have to think about that—“Is this going to be something that I can do? Do I plan on getting married? Do I plan on having children? Can I make sure that that guy’s going to be supportive or what’s the alternative?” You know, it’s a big thing, when you’re running a program that is crossing grades, it’s a big deal, there’s a lot of things that go into it, so, I don’t know how much advice that is, I just think you need to know what you’re doing and make sure that you’re taking care of yourself first, and that becomes clearer the more years that I live and the more I’m doing this.