

Edited by
Mary Ellen Cavitt, Texas State University

Batons and Babies: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study of Mothers Who Are Band Directors

Renee L. Wilson
Texas Tech University

I do not remember when it was that I decided I would like to be a mother. While in elementary school, I decided that I would like to become a teacher, and in the sixth grade, I began to play the flute in our elementary school band. My director, Mrs. Spencer, was also a flutist and helped me pry open the door to music one shaky whole note at a time. I did not realize at the time what an unusual thing it was to have a female band director. After that year, Mrs. Spencer accepted a job a few hours away. We were getting a new band director named Mr. Lane. I was just miserable. Mrs. Spencer thought I was special! She had chosen me to play a solo for Solo and Ensemble Contest, and you have to be invited to play a solo in the sixth grade!

In spite of myself, I remember that it took no time at all for Mr. Lane to gain my complete confidence. To this day, I can remember the way he would smile and greet us by name with great enthusiasm and a pat on the back. I worked very hard through my junior high years, and band became my priority. I loved learning how to play all of the music, competing against other junior high bands and competing against other flutists. Nobody was very surprised when I began to talk about being a band director someday. No one said, "That's a man's job!" or "Wouldn't you rather teach elementary music?" While I usually attribute my initial desire to teach band to Mr. Lane, Mrs. Spencer has a place of honor in my heart. With the exception of one honor band conductor, she was the only female band director I would ever have. I do not remember much about the way she taught, but I am glad that she was my teacher because I suppose that is how I knew that it was okay for a woman to become a band director. When I graduated from high school, I began to study music education. My goal was to become a middle school band director.

This story is not so uncommon. Some girls love band and decide to become band directors. Some girls love family and children and decide to become mothers. Some of us do both. The concept for this research was born just over seven years ago when I, a band director, became a mother. Venturing into an overloaded lifestyle for which I had little model or guidance, I dealt with the demands of balancing motherhood with band directing in a variety of ways. At first, I left band directing and taught elementary music, and at one point, I left the profession for a year. However, I am most comfortable in the role of "band director," and when I re-entered the band directing profession, I was the mother of a four-year-old daughter and two-year-old son. There were scheduling challenges compounded by the fact that my husband and I were both band

directors and not employed within the same district. We dealt with each challenge as it occurred, often with the gracious assistance and support of in-town relatives. Whenever possible, I attended professional clinics, read and asked the few other mother/band directors I knew about how to balance this life effectively.

What I finally found out for myself was that I needed to be a band director to feel true joy for my work, and that a happy woman at work helped make a happy mommy at home. The challenges I faced were sometimes daunting. Laundry piled up. Dishes needed washing. The carpet needed vacuuming. Dinner needed to be made. Children needed baths, bedtime stories and goodnight prayers. I was constantly exhausted, but still happier than I had been in any other job. This is the birth of my research. How many other mother/band directors are looking for a community of support, resources and ideas? They have made decisions about careers and family. What have these decisions been like for them? How do they do it all?

Aims of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine what it is to be a mother and a band director from the perspectives of 15 women. The researcher hoped to create a document which will be helpful to band directors who are or who someday may become mothers. According to statements made in the Band Director Group on Facebook, there is a need for a sense of community among those who are mothers and band directors. The fundamental question that drove this study was “What is the experience of being both a mother and a band director?” Within that question, the joys and challenges of being both a mother and a band director were identified along with resources that mother/band directors reported as helpful. Also included is advice these women would share with others about managing this life.

This research is a qualitative, phenomenological study of the experiences of women who are both mothers and band directors, using a social constructivist interpretive framework. According to Creswell (2013), “In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (pg. 24):

Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they ‘position themselves’ in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences. Thus the researchers make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experiences and background. The researcher’s intent, then, is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. (pg. 25)

Review of Literature

Relatively little research exists on the topic of being a mother and a band director. With the exception of a clinic sponsored by Women Band Directors International at the Texas Music Educators Association 2010 Conference, few resources were found that address this particular phenomenon. There are books that address the concerns of conducting bands and managing programs (Janzen, 1985), and books that address the challenges of being a working mother (Benjamin, 1966; Brettell, 1999), but none were found that addressed both. It occurred to me that

being a mother and a band director has its own very specialized set of joys, challenges and solutions and that other women who are, or may become, mothers and also band directors, could benefit from the research and results of a study particular to this situation.

Key words and phrases used for online and library searches include “working mothers,” “band directors,” “mothers who are band directors,” and “female band directors.” Most hardcopy resources limit discussion to that of a more generic “working mother” model, that is, not specifically mothers who are band directors (Benjamin, 1966; Hoffman, 1974). However, a more current academic journal article illuminated the issues surrounding mothering and band directing, and demonstrated a possible growing audience for such research (Fitzpatrick, 2013).

A mother working outside the home is not a new phenomenon. In fact, working mothers have been raising children for many years. However, there are emotional challenges that accompany the paycheck. Mothers appear to have experienced “mommy-guilt.” Benjamin (1966) illustrated this concept with a story about a child who was sick at home with his caregiver. She warned that, when the mother is tempted to leave work to care for her child, she should consider her motivations and the actual need (or lack of need) for her to do that.

The key to making the right decision every time lies in finding the delicate - maybe even precarious - balance between your level working head and your not-so-level mothering heart. It's almost like developing a new kind of woman's intuition - and even that isn't as hard as it sounds. You do what you think you *should* do, but you never base it on guilt alone. Some other, higher purpose has to be served by the decision - and not just temporary relief from those twinges. (Benjamin, p. 60)

Mothers who consider working must also evaluate the financial contribution the mother is making when working. Some families find that the mother’s contribution, after day care and additional food and gasoline expenses, actually is not significant (Benjamin, 1966).

That said, there are benefits of being a working mother. Hoffman (1974) cited one study in which women were asked questions about housekeeping and working outside the home. Their blood pressure readings were recorded as they responded to each question. Women who indicated that they were satisfied with their current housekeeping habits exhibited lower blood pressure. Interestingly, women who indicated that they wanted to quit their job in order to stay home actually exhibited lower blood pressure than those who responded that they desired to continue working. Researchers speculated that women felt that while housekeeping tasks were inescapable, working outside the home was negotiable, allowing some flexibility and freedom that may have had a positive impact on their blood pressure readings.

Hoffman (1974) alluded to other potential benefits of being a working mother. Mothers who worked full-time also reported having a greater satisfaction with their daily routine than mothers who worked part-time, possibly due to the decreased likelihood of promotion and decreased earning of part-time employees.

Given higher costs which full-time employed mothers incur in conflicts between household and employee roles and given their much longer working week, they still are more satisfied with their daily work than are those who restrict their responsibilities to housekeeper and child-care roles. (p. 219)

Working mothers also reported greater enjoyment of time and activities with their children. “Although many studies reported concern and self-doubt about the child-care role, employed

mothers were more likely to enjoy their activities and relationships with children” (Hoffman, 1974, p. 224). Finally, it is commonly thought that working mothers have a worse state of mental health than their stay-at-home counterparts. However, Hoffman suggests that working mothers were found to have a slightly better state of mental health than housewives (p. 211, 1974).

On the other hand, few band director resources comment on the personal aspects of band directing. Most often these resources describe budgeting, the act of teaching and building performance ensembles, selecting teaching materials and working with parent groups and administrators (Janzen, 1985). However, Janzen offers that a successful teacher must have the following quality:

Discipline of self in order to clearly define priorities and objectives. Simply stated, this trait means knowing what the mission is, finding out how to get it done, and being willing to sacrifice the hours within the framework of a rigid schedule to complete the task. (p. 2, 1985)

Clearly, the commitment of time is an important element in a band director’s success. Janzen describes the importance of commitment in education, saying:

For the teacher, the love of music must develop into a commitment, a deep and total conviction of the ‘rightness’ of teaching musical skills to others, and the urgency to share with others this universal art of communication that needs no interpreter. The strength of such a commitment may develop very gradually within the years of success and failure that trace every career. The important and abiding difference for those who stay the course is that the success, regardless of how minimal at the outset, continues to wield a far greater influence on professional commitment than the manifold failures. Alone and small victory in a year of teaching gilds the tarnish of a score of failures. The gradual, multiplying reinforcement of small successes is the elemental process by which commitment grows strong. (p. 5, 1985)

Fitzpatrick recently completed a case study of mother and band director Sarah Lowell (2013). Lowell kept a blog for the purposes of the study, and was observed and interviewed by Fitzpatrick over the course of 21 months. Lowell is a mother of three children aged 6 and younger. She is married and has been a high school band director for 14 years. She currently serves as the only female officer on the board of her state organization. Upon having children, Lowell negotiated her teaching position to “part-time” in order to allow more time with her children, however she still works 40-hour weeks. She indicated that she has learned to delegate responsibilities, work efficiently and be organized. She reported that her husband is very supportive of her and is a highly involved parent. Her administration is supportive, and her program is very successful. Still, Lowell expressed sentiments of “mommy guilt” because of missed time with her children. She said that she does not take time for herself because so much is needed for her professional and personal responsibilities. She also cited logistical concerns that center on caring for children, household work, transportation to/from daycare or school and not having family nearby. Because her children are young, and there are three of them, her home life presents unique challenges (such as finding a discreet place to pump milk for the children when they were babies, caring for them when they were sick and attending preschool activities). Finally, Lowell identified the expectations of male parents as being quite different from those of female parents, both between herself and her husband as well as within her profession

(Fitzpatrick, 2013). Given the lack of studies examining band directors who are mothers, the following qualitative study was designed to explore that question in greater depth. The semi-structured questions that became the focus of the study were:

- How did you get involved in teaching band? Was there anything in particular that led you to that decision?
- Are there challenges in the dual roles you have as band director and mother? What are they? How do you achieve a balance between these two demanding activities?
- What advice would you offer a woman on this path?
- Have there been any resources to help you?
- Have you ever felt treated differently in the band directing profession from your male counterparts?
- Has anything changed over time in what it means to be a woman band director?

These questions were selected based upon the researcher's experience as a mother and band director, followed questions implied by Fitzpatrick (2013) and were evaluated by a panel of experienced music educators ($N=6$) for clarity and validity. The answers to these questions may provide practical advice to the new mother who is a band director, as well as illuminate other issues surrounding the blending of the roles of mother and band director.

Data Collection

A phenomenological study in qualitative research is the study of a phenomenon as experienced by multiple people (Creswell, 2013). In this case, the phenomenon studied is that of a mother who has the occupation of band directing. Initially, one local band director who is also a mother was selected for observations and interview. On the Facebook group "Band Director Group," the researcher invited all women who were both mothers and band directors to participate in this study. Twenty-one surveys listing the predetermined questions mentioned earlier were emailed to potentially interested respondents. Fourteen surveys were returned via email and were included in the study along with the local director who was interviewed in person.

Data Analysis

Fifteen women who share the experiences of being mothers and band directors served as participants in this study. Data collection included surveys, text messages and email messages. A local participant was selected to be interviewed and observed. Interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher. Data were analyzed for significant statements, detailed descriptions, and common themes, using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998). Four category headings were generated from the data, which accounted for seventy-six percent of the total data. The researcher then developed textual descriptions and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013), using them to convey the essence of being a mother and a band director. A copy of the research was distributed to each contributing member of the study for the purpose of data triangulation via member checks.

Findings

This study is an account of the experiences of 15 mother/band directors from various parts of the United States. The participants represent a diverse population, and yet common themes arise from their responses. They often talked about the support they receive from their husbands, families, colleagues and administrators. They discussed their passion for their biological families and their band families, the influence of music on their children and the unique relationships between their students and their children. The most common topic of discussion was balance: balance of time, balance of financial resources, balance of household duties, balance of childcare, and balance of emotional self. Four basic categories of information emerged from the collected data. The first category, “Logistical Concerns,” addressed such things as arranging childcare and caring for the home. The second category, “Time Management,” addressed the time mother/band directors spend with and without their children. The third category is “Resources and Support.” This category has the subtopics of “Supportive Husband,” “Friends and Family,” and “Discrimination.” The fourth category, “Emotional Effects,” has additional subtopics: “Advice Shared,” “Beneficial Effects of Music on Children,” and “Beneficial Effects of the Band Family on Children.” Pseudonyms are used in the following discussions to protect the anonymity of those participating in the study.

Logistical Concerns

Mother/band director participants indicated that there are two main logistical concerns with their chosen profession. The first was that they must be able to manage their lives. Learning to balance time, money, and childcare resources was a priority for them, and these concepts were clearly articulated in their advice to others who might choose this path. The other logistical concern mentioned was that of domestic responsibilities. The idea that was expressed by a few is that cleaning the house moves lower on the list of priorities. Hannah volunteered that:

I am fairly anal retentive and feel that my house gets severely neglected (vacuuming, dusting, etc.) during those crazy concert/parade/game/etc. weeks -- I am constantly doing housework at night or going crazy on Sunday afternoons so that I can truly relax and not feel guilty about just sitting down and doing nothing...I need a hobby!

Chandra affirmed this with her own statement.

Both of us have had to come to a point where we say, “Ya know, if the kitchen isn’t clean before we go to bed at night, that is okay.” We make spending time with our children outside of the band world a priority and spend the first Saturday after marching contests end really cleaning our house from top to bottom.

Sometimes the efforts to conserve one resource will deplete another, as Kayla mentioned:

When I get home at night, I am physically and mentally exhausted. But, there is dinner to cook, laundry to do, and a toddler to care for. My husband works second shift (we did

this on purpose so we could keep daycare costs down), so it's up to me to do the after-work care for our daughter.

This resilient statement from Karen expressed the Superwoman concept: that we can be it all, have it all and do it all.

The hardest thing was trying to nurse twins (four years ago) and still having time during the day for planning. I managed to direct a musical as well during that time so apparently I found a balance. You just do what you have to do. Women always make it work!

Time Management

Balancing time spent with family with time spent at work can be one of the greatest challenges. Fall is a notoriously busy season for most band directors. In West Texas, the fall season typically includes 10 football games, band contests (as many as 6 of them, if the band advances to state), middle school and high school all-region concert band and jazz band auditions, and civic duties such as parades. Also, there may be weekly and daily professional commitments such as after school rehearsals, driving a bus route, cafeteria or bus duties, and being available after school to help students. Natalie, whose daughters Leslie and Avery attend different schools, painted this picture of their family life in the fall.

Right now, Leslie is going to school at School A, Avery is going to school out here (School B). We have Monday night rehearsal so I don't see Leslie on Mondays at all. Leslie has Tuesday night rehearsals, so I don't see her on Tuesday nights. Wednesday nights, I haven't seen my husband, so I want to spend time with him. And generally it's Jared and I sitting on the loveseat and Leslie's either squashed in between us or on the side because she wants her time also. Time is probably the biggest issue. Friday nights, Leslie goes off with School A, we go off with School B. And even with Avery being in my band, I don't really spend time with her because I've got 80 students that I'm trying to take care of. Generally, Avery's behaving herself, so you're dealing with the kids that you're trying to get to stay in their seat, stop touching them, et cetera!

Caroline detailed her family's answer to the lack of weekend time available for family relaxation.

When I'm home, I try very hard to focus on my family only and not work, but often times I am answering emails, returning phone calls and preparing for future band related items. My family and I recently have made a point to take a personal day in October to regroup and do something midweek to treat our family to a bit of quality time. Often times there is no weekend for family time because it's spent at school related functions. To be honest, the balance is often times not there.

Yet mother/band directors reported that they truly enjoy the time they have with their families during vacations, and that it is nice when the school calendars line up on special holidays. For those who carve time out of evenings and weekends for family time, it seems to be enough to re-energize for the week. Some mothers are still exploring possible ways to make more family time available. Said Karen, "I love coming home to my girls (when they're not

whining) and just snuggling. Unfortunately I have to teach private lessons at home too so our time is typically cut short. I should do away with private lessons.....”

Resources and Support

- Supportive Husband

Mothers reported that one source of significant support is their husband. Some helpful husbands were said to have a supportive and understanding attitude about the amount of time required by the job. Hannah shared this advice for unmarried band directors:

I would say to first of all make sure you find the right mate for your partner. They have to understand that the job is not just a 7-2:30 job, and not make you feel guilty for loving it so much. There has to be a true partnership for ANY teacher to be successful, and that partnership has to be even more solid for a MUSIC teacher (especially at the HS level).

Some husbands use their technical or musical expertise to assist the band in such ways as setting up sound equipment for a concert or coming to practice. Julia remarked that she ought to pay her husband for all he does for her band, explaining:

My husband is my rock and my husband understands the demands my job has. So he has embraced it by totally helping me with it. Truly I need to pay my husband as an assistant for all the work he does. I am very blessed and very lucky to have such a support system through him. The band is as much his as it is mine.

Others husbands help with children by taking care of them while the mother fulfills her professional obligations.

- Friends and Family

Friends and family provide another area of support for mother/band directors. In-laws and parents who live nearby were often said to take care of children during band activities. Karen shared this about her child care options:

I live three minutes away from my in-laws so finding a sitter on concert nights or late rehearsals is not a problem. During the summer I had to pay for a sitter during summer marching band rehearsals but for the most part my mother-in-law will do it.

Colleagues who have children of their own provide childcare, emotional support, and a sense of community. A unique relationship was presented by Hailey:

It takes a village. Develop your community of family/friends to help. The parents of your kid's friends are an ally! For example, I am home for holidays, so I watch all of the kids while the non-teacher parents have to work. In return, when my spouse is traveling and I am teaching by 7:25 AM I can drop my kids off and they will get them to school. In addition if I have afterschool conflicts, they will pick the kids up from school.

Band parents and band students alike sometimes provide babysitting services. This is valuable to these mother/band directors because they feel as though they know these individuals exceptionally well.

- Discrimination

Mothers were asked if they have ever sensed discrimination at work. Of the 40 comments regarding discrimination, 57% indicated the mothers felt as though they experienced discrimination. Contrastingly, 43% of comments about discrimination actually indicated that they did not experience discrimination in the field. One common sentiment was that women may have experienced discrimination prior to the 1980s when there were fewer female band directors. A few respondents indicated that they felt that they were not discriminated against because female band directors are commonly accepted in the area or state in which they work. A few others commented that, either because their programs were very strong or because they do not care what others think of their gender, they do not experience discrimination. Lori said:

I think being a female band director now is much more accepted than it was even 15 years ago. That boys club I mentioned [previously] is getting smaller and smaller as women are taking higher level positions in the field. It's a great thing to see! And as more of those women are having children, it makes being a mom an easier choice too.

Some forms of discrimination are more subtle. More than one director reported being mistakenly identified as a choir director or orchestra director because of her gender. One mother said, "I don't know why, but I always feel slightly offended when people who find out I teach secondary music assume that I teach choral music." Hannah illustrated this point with the following story:

[This story] comes from an interview with an Assistant Superintendent and Principal for a MS band position when I was first interviewing. I sat in the office and he said "we have a part time choral position--wouldn't that be a better suit for you?" I told him that I was trained both vocally AND instrumentally and was certified and capable of teaching both, but was really looking forward to the full time band opening. I was called back for the job, but did not accept it because I knew that there was a serious chauvinistic attitude there that would most likely be a concern. Just because I was a petite female DID not mean that I was better suited for chorus! REALLY! (Granted, I LOVE teaching chorus as well, but I wanted that band job!)

Yet, the discrimination sometimes comes from within the community of women. Carrie shared a conversation she had with a female friend who said to her "you can't be a good band director AND a good mom." To Carrie, the comment was unfounded but still hurtful. Another respondent reported getting more "backlash" from women than men in the field.

Emotional Effects

Being a new mom, I've found several challenges! There is the standard "mommy guilt" of putting him in daycare while I go to work. That feeling is especially strong when I'm having a bad day, and I want nothing more than to be at home with my son. A major

challenge happens when my son is sick and I have to stay home with him. Since my band lessons are pull-out, my classes are usually just cancelled if I'm not there. I see my students once a week, so that can have a big impact on their instruction, progress, retention, etc. I feel pulled to go to work, and pulled to stay home with my child. -Lori

In the statement above, Lori summed up the basic feeling of “mommy guilt” expressed by so many working women. It seems that everyone addressed this on some level. Many discussed balancing their time at home and at school by working very efficiently during the school day so that they can leave school and have time with their children at home. Several also mentioned changing jobs to be a middle school director rather than a high school director, which requires fewer evening and after school responsibilities (in general). Still others remain in their high school positions because it is the job they prefer.

There are other emotional challenges in band directing and motherhood. Some mothers reported feeling a great responsibility to the students they teach, almost like another form of “parenthood.” In fact, one can feel the weight Kayla bears in her description of her experience.

I feel like I'm a mom to not only my own child, but 106 other students as well. Forty percent of our student body is considered “at-risk.” Many of them come from single-parent households, low socio-economic status, and are on free/reduced lunch. Many of them lack some kind of stability at home, and in some cases, band or school in general is where they get that stability. That's a massive (and sometimes overwhelming) commitment.

Julia echoed this sentiment as she described feeling like “a mother to [her] band kids.” She described feeling torn, after having her own children, between being there for both sets of “family.” Kayla summarized a related theme, stating that when she is at home taking care of a sick child, she is worrying about what may or may not be happening at school. When she has to stay late at school, she worries about what she may be missing at home.

There are positive emotions associated with band directing as well. Eight of the 15 respondents indicated that they would not choose to do any other job over band directing. They are overall quite satisfied with their work, believing that it is both valuable and rewarding. Hailey hopes that her children “are also learning the importance of not only hard work and success, but the blessing to have a “job” that you love, not just do.” A few remarked that they feel their particular position and students make their career choice desirable and will not consider leaving because of that.

- Advice Shared

Respondents offered much advice to the woman who aspires to be both a mother and a band director. Above all, they encouraged her to follow her dreams and to try to do it all if she truly desires to have both a band and a family. In order to accomplish this, they recommended developing a very strong support system. They advised creating boundaries so that one can have a home life separate from a work life. Yet, they advised bringing the two together from time to time. Many agreed that there are benefits to the band seeing their director as a mother because it makes her someone to whom they can relate. They also agreed that it is good for the children to see the mother as a band director, as someone who is professional and who has found work that

makes her happy and fulfilled. As Natalie stated, “I get to be a better mom because I am happy.” Anne, a brand-new mother, had a slightly different but valuable piece of advice.

My advice would be to follow your dreams and your goals, but also take into consideration how other aspects of your life will fit in. It doesn't even have to be about family. How will you maintain your friendships? Will you get to enjoy your hobbies? Will you pursue higher education? I had the full support of my husband when I worked on my master's degree and National Board Certification. I'm just thankful I accomplished all of that before having my son, because, looking back, I probably wouldn't feel like I had time for those things if I was a mother at the time.

At the height of frustration while trying to maintain this balance, Kayla began listening to “The Dave Ramsey Show,” a radio show about money management. In addition to giving advice about financial planning, he also talked about winning in life. She said, “When my attitude and my approach to work changed, I became happier, more successful. My students and husband noticed it, too!” Hannah suggested that different authors have been inspirational to her, such as Peter Boonshaft and Tim Lauhtzenheiser. Several turned to colleagues both in and out of the band world for advice about how to make this work. Many cited the Band Director Group on Facebook as being a source of inspiration, community, and professional development while on maternity leave. Caroline’s advice to others was simply, “It’s a difficult job to do both, but it’s okay to not be perfect at both. Set down the motherly guilt on the long days.”

- Beneficial Effects of Music on Children

One positive effect of being raised around music seems to be the development of musical skill and musical enjoyment in the band director’s child(ren). Mothers reported a genuine enjoyment of music by their children as evidenced by the children conducting the pep band at football games, playing instruments at home or mimicking marching around the living room while humming catchy band tunes. A few mothers reported that their children have learned musical instruments with ease. Chandra said her “5th grader picked up an oboe and started playing the other day. She reads music and plays pretty well and I’ve never taught her how to do that.”

- Beneficial Effects of the Band Family on Children

Another positive effect of being raised around the band seems to be the development of relationships between the band and the band director’s family. Many mothers appreciated the interest that students and band parents have in their children. It made them feel good, too, to see their children take an interest in the students they teach every day. According to Julia, her band was very involved with her personal life, even before she had a family. When Julia was single and was in her first year of band directing, her seniors set her up on a blind date. This man became her husband in 2006. In her words:

From the start he was my biggest supporter. He understood my love and passion for music and for teaching. He helped me with no questions asked and to be honest I think he enjoys it. He too was in band when he was in high school and even though it was not his profession I know he enjoys being around music.

About the children they now have, she said:

I hope my children choose to be in band but I will not force them to. I also hope by them being exposed to it already they will develop a love for it like I have. My band students love my kids and help me out so much. My kids love my band students and truly enjoy spending time with them. In fact, my children have each invited several of my band students to their birthday parties. This was their request.

Discussion

What is the experience of being a mother and a band director? These mother/band directors love their families and love their work. According to respondents, a typical mother/band director is surrounded by varying levels of support, including her spouse, family, in-laws, friends, band parents, parents of children's friends and band students themselves. She believes in the value of organization and managing her life. She arranges childcare for the times that she is unable to be with her children or is unable to take them with her to professional obligations. She prioritizes, accomplishes some goals, makes the most of her time with her family and usually longs for a little more time in the day.

Findings in this study concur with the literature reviewed. While some sentiments expressed in the literature review, especially those by Benjamin (1966) may be somewhat antiquated notions, the basic ideas are the same. The workloads on the job and at home are great. One must manage available resources and decide what "shortcuts" can be taken. Just as Hoffman's (1974) comment suggests, band-directing mothers do enjoy their time off with their children. My questions paralleled those of Fitzpatrick (2013) and it is notable that most of my respondents' comments closely resembled the results noted by Fitzpatrick.

The researcher was surprised by two findings in particular. The first is the report from two respondents that discrimination from other women had been an issue for them in the recent past. With so many messages of empowerment for women in our society, it is difficult to imagine that a female band director or any other woman would attack another in this way. The other striking concept is the timeless nature of the struggle of working mothers. Women have been combating the same "mommy guilt," the same balance of responsibility, the same balance of finances, and the same inequalities in societal expectations of parents (based on gender) for decades (Benjamin, 1966; Hoffman, 1974).

There were interesting statements made by individual mother/band directors that bear mentioning. Of all 15 respondents, and the many important statements they made, only one commented on the lack of "me-time" (e.g., time alone to shop, craft, read, engage in other hobbies) she manages to get. This could reflect that everyone else finds "me-time" in their schedules, or it could reflect that "me-time" is low on the list of priorities of many band directors. Even still, it could reflect that mothers who are band directors do not often consider the possibility of getting "me-time." One respondent included a note with her returned survey, saying that the experience of writing her answers had been "therapeutic," and a few others indicated that the experience forced them to reflect on the choices they are currently making (e.g., "I should do away with private lessons...").

Conclusions

Much like other working mothers, mothers who direct bands must become excellent managers of their resources. Coordinating childcare for evening and weekend obligations is an idea which surfaced many times throughout the data collection and literature review phases of this study. Supportive husbands can have a powerful influence in this area, providing care for their children, assisting their wives with logistical details of running rehearsals and setting up for concerts, and sporting a positive attitude regarding job demands. Family and in-laws can also have a significant, positive impact on the function of the mother/band director's family by their involvement and support.

There are many opportunities for additional research related to this study. Further research could assess the contentment of mothers who have changed jobs to have a more family-friendly schedule. Similarly, one could examine the differences between work-feelings of middle school and of high school mother/band directors. Stemming from the comments regarding negative feedback from women who criticize mothers who become band directors, further research could be done to study women's professional support of one another. Another interesting area of study could be a chronological history of the female band director to present.

The findings of this research may have been different if respondents had only been asked the central question "what is the experience of being a mother and a band director?" with follow-up questions relating to their initial answers. It would be interesting to see if the same categories would surface, and what the tone of the answers would be. The findings of this research could also have been different if a larger number of respondents had participated, or if a more quantifiable survey had been distributed to a larger and even more diverse sampling. Certainly there are boundless possibilities for research on this important topic.

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