

National Association for Music Education  
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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THEMES  
RESULTING FROM THE PERCEPTIONS OF  
WOMEN TEACHING SECONDARY  
INSTRUMENTAL EDUCATION**

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# Methodology



- A survey consisting of open-ended and forced-choice questions was sent via email to 397 female instrumental music educators in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa.
- 208 participated in the survey yielding a 52% response rate.
- A focus group of eight women from Minneapolis/St. Paul and surrounding area

# Resulting Themes From This Study



- Current literature about women in music does not reflect the lived realities of women “in the trenches”.
- There remains a “Good Ol’ Boys Club” in instrumental music education.
- There is a conflict between the public’s and women’s perceptions of women instrumental music educator’s personality and discipline styles.
- Women believe that the issue is not a lack of gender specific role-models in music education, but a lack of mentorship.

# Current Literature about Women in Music



- **Traditional Roles of Women in Music Education** (Gould, 1996; Grant, 2000; Jackson, 1996; Koza 1990; MENC, 2001; McWilliams 2003; Ogren, 1996; Sears, 2010; Solomon, 1985; Sullivan, 2008)
- **“The Exceptional Female”** (LePage, 1980; Macleod, 2001; Oestreich, 2008; Tommasini, 2007; Wittry, 1994)
- **Gender Studies in Music Education** (Abeles, 1978; Abeles and Yank, 1978; Gould, 1992; Hoffman, 2008)
- **The Importance of Role Models or Mentors in Music Education** (Gould, 1996, 2001; Grant, 2000; Jackson, 1996; Sears, 2010)

# The Balancing Act of Being a High School Band Teacher and a Mother



- Is it possible for women to teach High School Band and be a mother?

*“It is impossible to raise a family and devote the necessary time to the band job. One or the other is going to suffer.”*

*“Having a family and teaching high school is like having two full time jobs.”*

*“Are women less likely to pursue being a band director because of their desire to have a family?”*

- *“I have always hated the idea that women can't be high school band directors. Now that my husband and I are considering starting a family, I'm starting to understand why that horrible stereotype exists. I have so many after-school, early-morning, and weekend commitments that I hardly ever see my husband... I can't imagine raising a family and maintaining my career at the high school level. I love my job and I love my family, and I sincerely hope I don't need to choose between the two.”*

# The “Good Ol’ Boys Club”



Question: **“Do you feel that there is disconnect between women in the profession, versus men who have seemed to have a ‘good ol’ boys club’ entitlement towards the profession?”**

- *“ABSOLUTELY!!! Many of the men in our district with similar positions are the ones who make the decisions. Many of my students' parents have also treated me differently because I'm a woman 'in a man's job'.”*
- *Absolutely!!! The only way women have a "connection" to the boys is if they are married to a band director, or if they are attractive and young. Otherwise, we, as women, feel like COMPLETE outsiders.”*
- *“Yes- but it is more a disconnect between school districts, age, and who you know. If you teach at a particular district, you are included in the club. If you are a director and wife of someone in the school districts, you are included in the club.”*
- *“I often feel that in larger schools, women are NOT taken seriously in this position. That men, no matter what their experience or knowledge, are given way more respect in this position than women.”*

# Personality and Discipline



Questions: **“Are women conductors perceived differently than male conductors in our society?” “What have been your experiences being a woman in what is still considered to be a male-dominated profession? Are there issues that are a result of gender? Do you have any potential solutions to dissolve the inequality-if you believe there to be inequality?”**

- Women, and society at large, hold conflicting ideas as to what kind of personality is expected of secondary instrumental educators.
- *Demanding, nurturing, confident and strong* were used to describe positive attributes of educators.
- *Nurturing* and *maternal* were used to describe female educators and *demanding* and *strict* were often used to describe male educators.
- Women found conflict in discipline expectations when comparing themselves to their male colleagues.

# Role Models: Does Gender Matter?



**Question: “Do you feel there are sufficient role models for women in the profession?”**

- Previous studies have indicated that women desire more gender specific role models.(Gould, 1996, 2001; Grant, 2000; Jackson, 1996; Sears, 2010)
- This study concluded that women are not as concerned about the gender of the role model, rather the quality of the role model.
- Mentorship was suggested as a means to continuously support music educators (male and female) throughout their career.

- Definition of a Mentor:
  - ✦ A process that is intentional
  - ✦ A nurturing process
  - ✦ An insightful and encouraging process
  - ✦ Supportive and protective
  - ✦ Is best accomplished if the mentor is an accessible role model
  - ✦ An affirming process

Grant, Denise Elizabeth. "The Impact of Mentoring and Gender-Specific Role Models on Women College Band Directors at Four Different Career Stages." Ph.D diss., University of Minnesota, 2000.

# Additional Considerations



- Perceptions of Female Conductors versus Male Conductors
- Further Career Aspirations
- What do Female Conductors Wear?

# Final Thoughts



- **Further Research:**
  - Replication in other regions of the United States.
  - Acquisition of additional statistical data to create a profile of women teaching secondary instrumental education.
  - Research the demographics of the schools where women are teaching.
  - What do women need as a support system?
  - Generate a study at the elementary school level that researches men teaching elementary music.