



"Conduct Like a Woman": Empowering Women Band Directors Through Meaningful Mentorship

Laura Johnson Doeblen | 2022 Midwest Clinic | December 20, 2022

Presentation Outline

Introduction

Historical Perspectives

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- Instrument Selection
- Representation
- Funding/Scholarships
- Classroom Opportunities & Experiences
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- Mentorship & Allyship

Concluding Thoughts & Questions

Introduction: Preliminary Research

Significant disparity between the presence of male and female band directors at numerous levels, especially at the collegiate level

Similarities between mentees and mentors can inspire a feeling/belief that a specific career path is a possible option for a mentee



The Question:

What could impact, influence, and encourage young women to become band directors?

Introduction: Presentation Focus

Band directors should utilize numerous methods of encouragement to support young women that may be interested in becoming band directors.



Encouragement, mentorship, allyship must continue!



A photograph of a library with tall bookshelves filled with books and several hanging light bulbs. The shelves are filled with books of various colors and sizes. The light bulbs are hanging from the ceiling and are illuminated, creating a warm glow. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the shelves and the lights.

Historical Perspectives

Historical Perspectives

History of
Female
Instrumentalists



Stereotyping of
Musical
Instruments



Women in
Instrumental
Music Education



History of Female Instrumentalists

- Solo Instrumental Performance in 1800s – 1900s
 - Limited opportunities (not ladylike or feminine) (Jones, 2010)
 - Need to “appreciate a woman’s face and body” (Gillett, 2000; Doubleday, 2008)
 - Avoid indecent playing positions (Gillett, 2000; Doubleday, 2008)
 - 20th century: more opportunities, wind and percussion still unfeminine (Tick, 1973)
- Gender norms from solo instrumental performance evident in military band tradition, Sousa/Gilmore bands (McWilliams, 2003; Grant, 2000)
 - Limiting amount of performance opportunities - led to creation of new ensembles
- Early college marching bands modeled after military ensembles
 - Acceptance of women in bands stemmed from implementation of Title IX law in 1972 (Education Programs or Activities, 2018).

Stereotyping of Musical Instruments

- Extensive research on sex-stereotyping/gender associations of musical instruments – continually replicated
- Gender assignments of instruments by middle school students (Wrape, Dittloff, and Callahan, 2014):
 - Girls: Flute, oboe, clarinet, and horn (bassoon and saxophone nearly equal, though reported more for girls)
 - Boys: Percussion, tuba, euphonium, trombone, and trumpet
- Selection of instrument affects opportunities available for instrumentalists
 - Training for future band directors

Women in Instrumental Music Education

- 18th century: Private, in-home instructors (Ammer, 2001; Jones, 2010)
- 19th century: "Group teaching" deemed acceptable for women (Koza, 1990)
- 20th century: Military traditions influenced school music programs (Grant, 2000; Jones, 2010; Mullan, 2014; Sears, 2010)
 - Instrumental music led by men, general and vocal music led by women (Macleod, 1993)
- 21st century: The effects of military traditions/gender stereotypes continue to be evident in educational settings



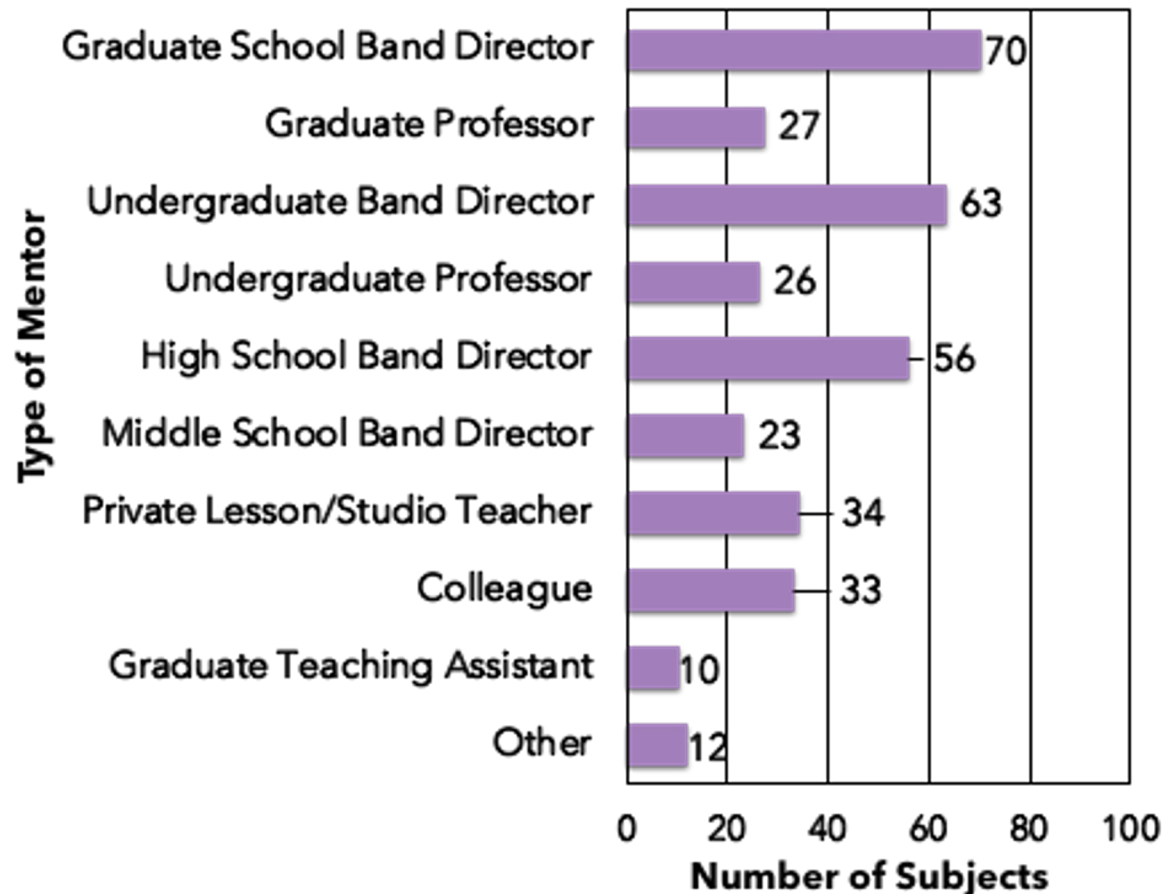
Research Study & Findings

Research Study Background

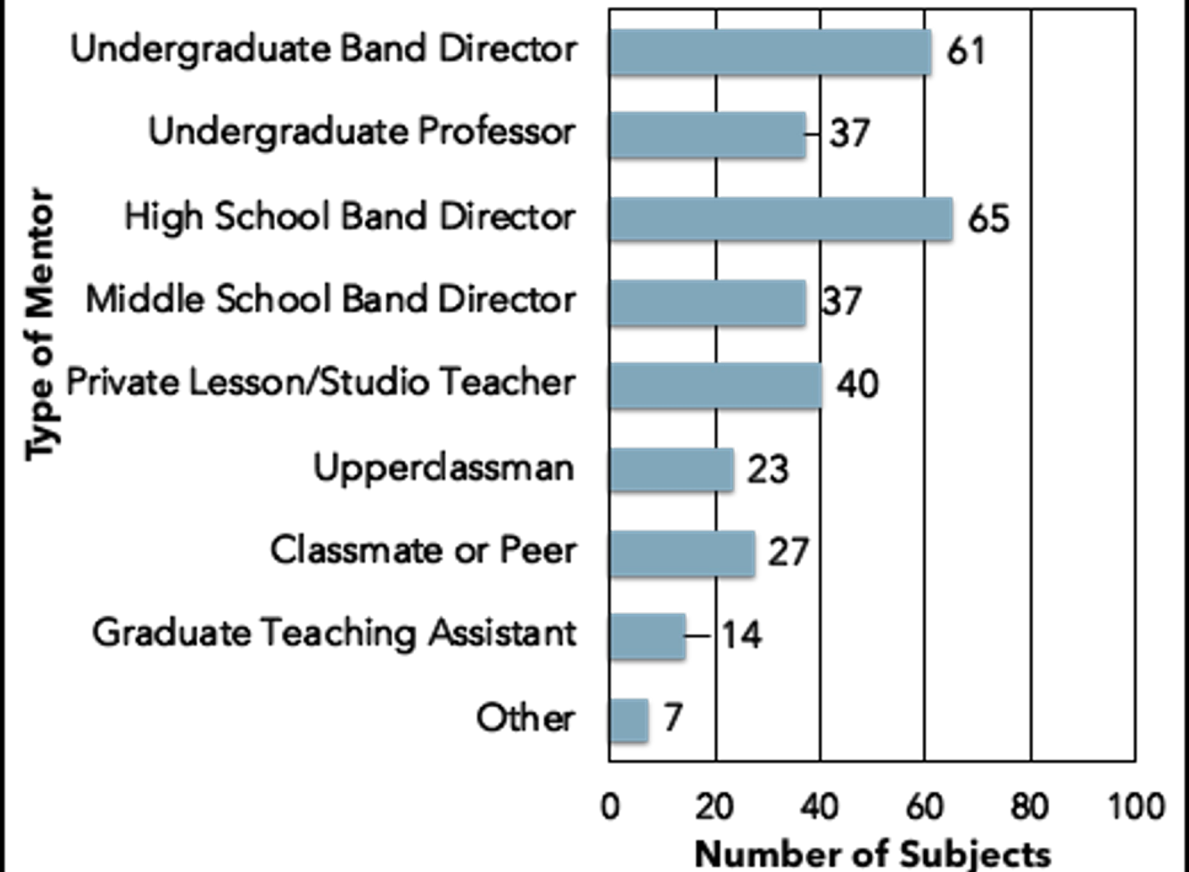
- **Purpose:** To provide insight on the impact of gender-specific role models and mentorship for aspiring female collegiate wind band conductors.
- **Subjects:** Female collegiate band directors, female graduate students (music education or conducting), female former graduate students (music education or conducting), and female undergraduate instrumental music education students
 - 190 subjects

Mentors

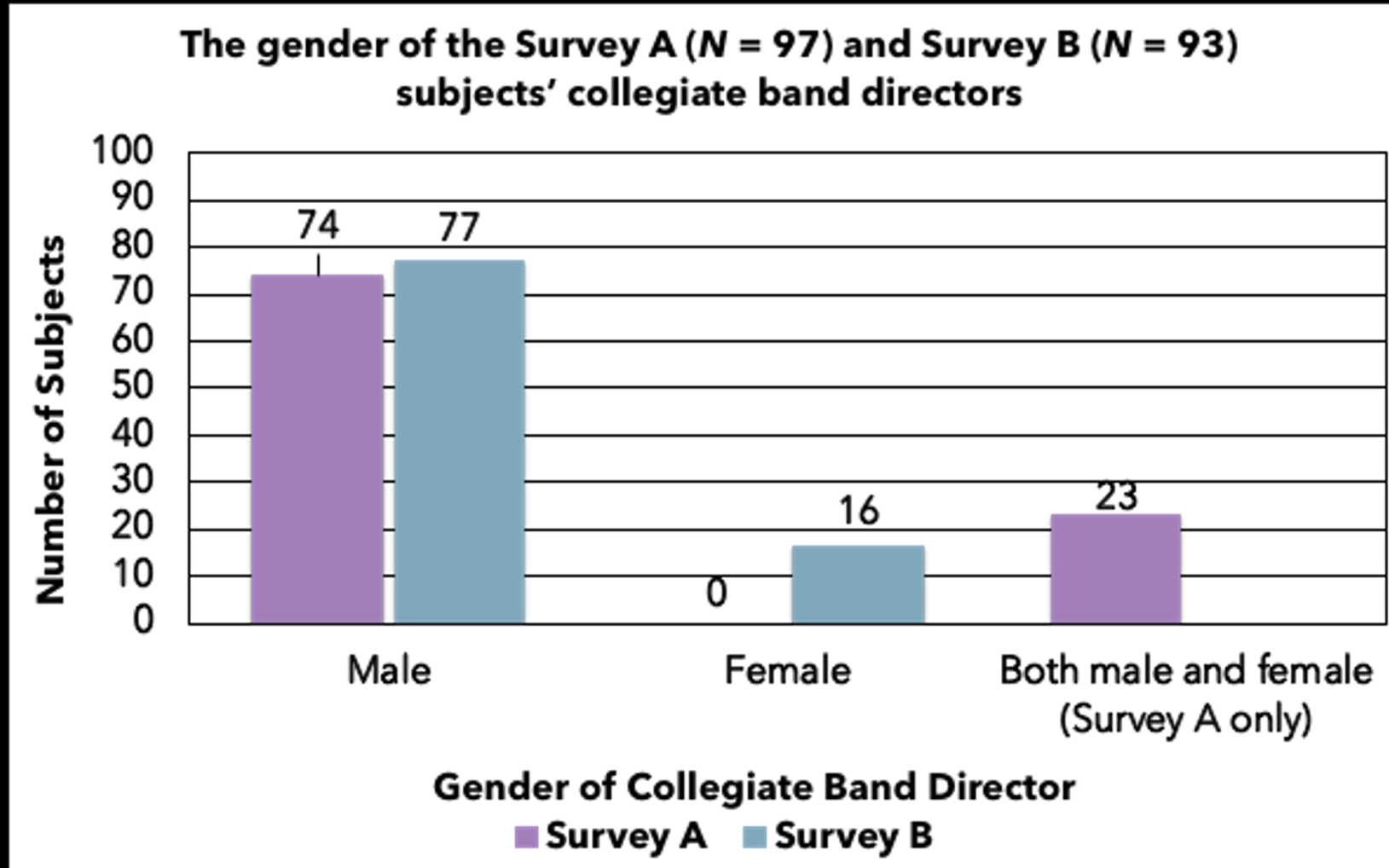
**Mentors reported as impactful by the
Survey A subjects (N = 97)**



**Mentors reported as impactful by the
Survey B subjects (N = 93)**

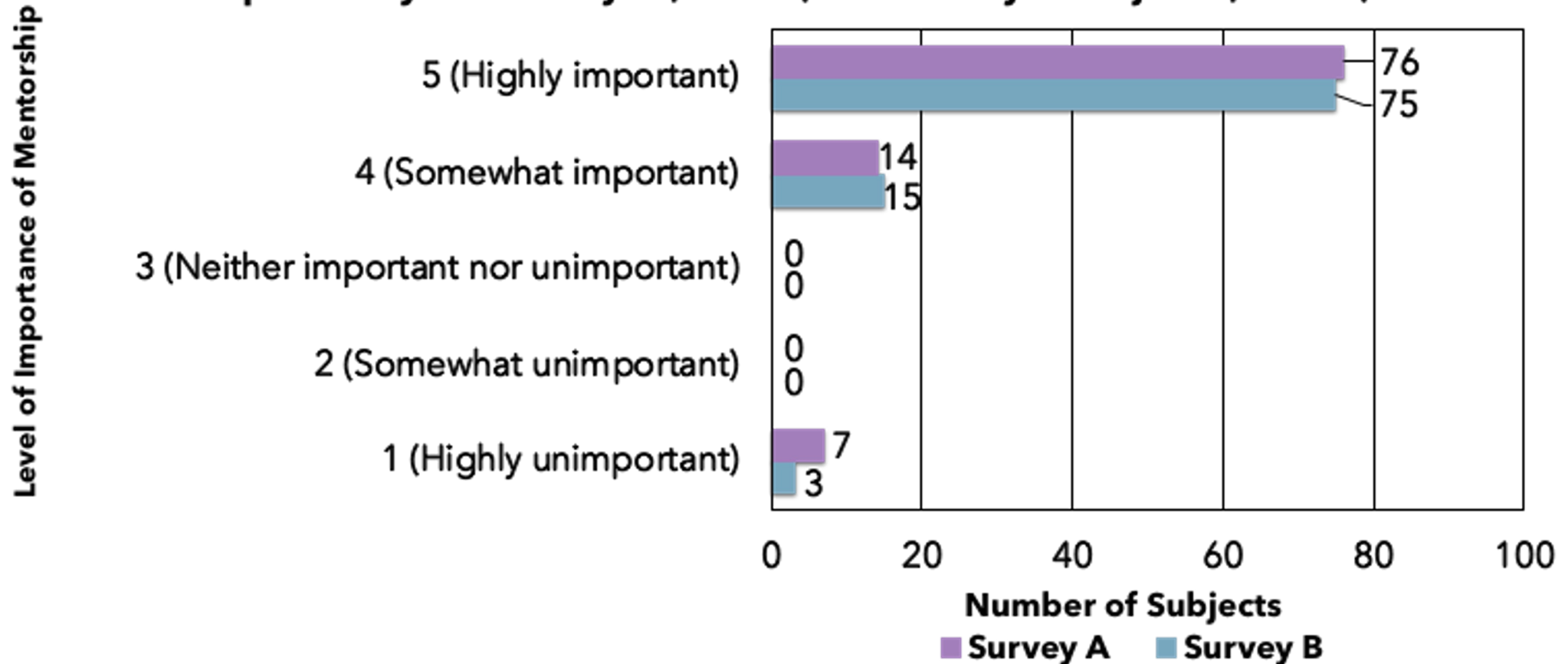


Collegiate Band Directors

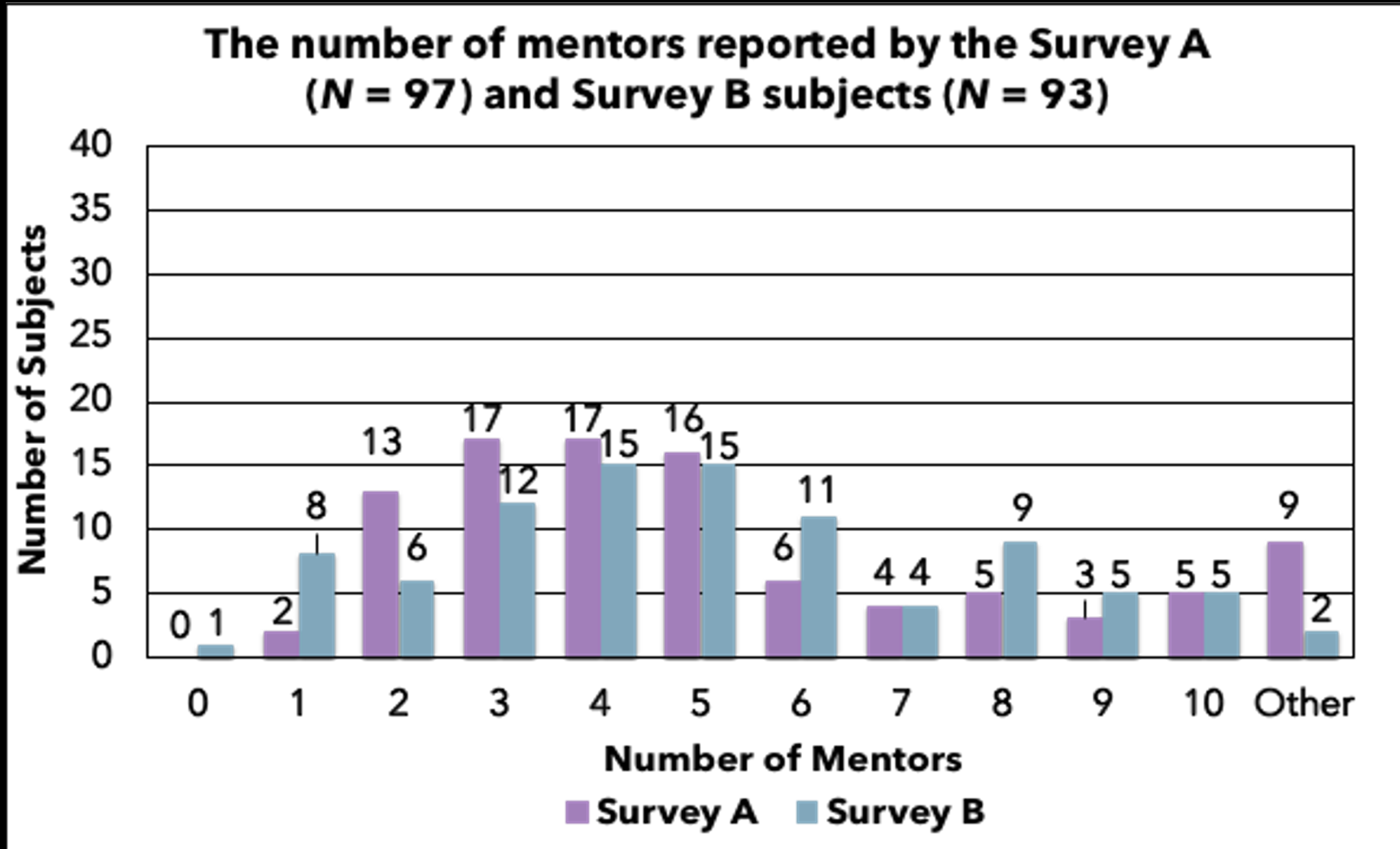


Mentorship Importance

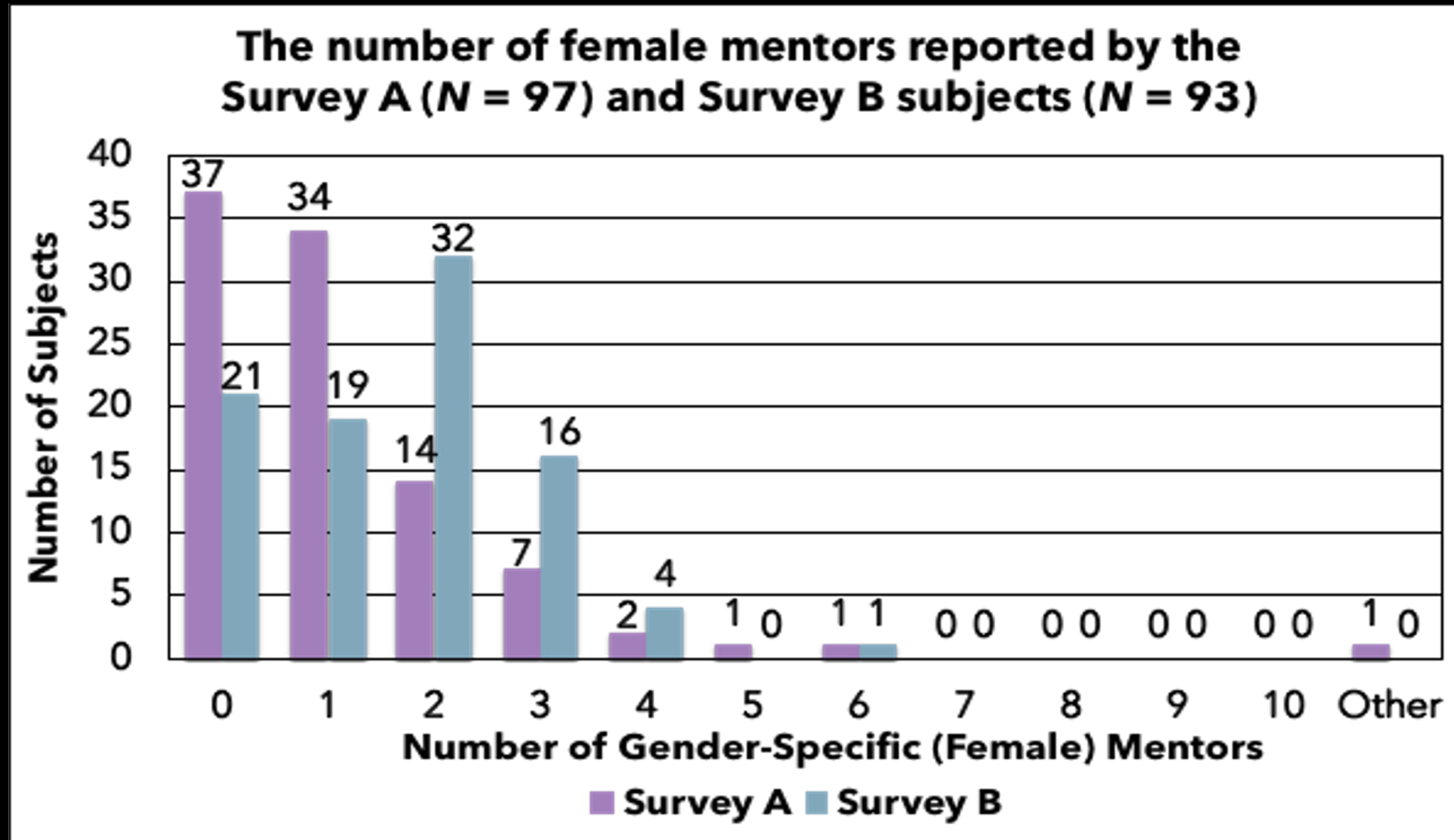
The level of importance of mentorship to aspiring female conductors reported by the Survey A ($N = 97$) and Survey B subjects ($N = 93$)



Number of Mentors

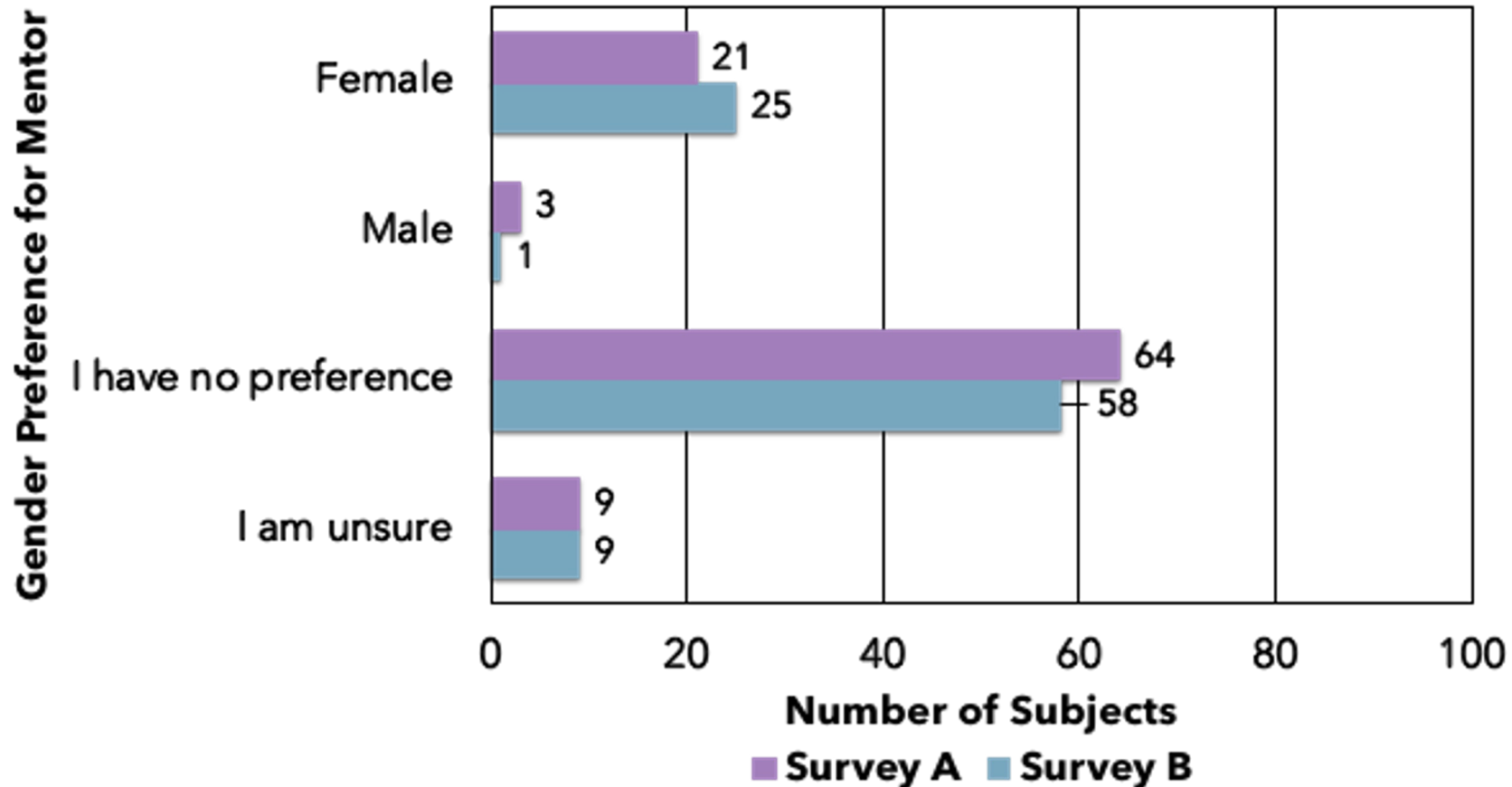


Number of Female Mentors



Mentorship Preference

The distribution of preferred mentor gender reported by the Survey A ($N = 97$) and Survey B subjects ($N = 93$)



Potential Impacts of Gender-Specific Mentorship

- 52% ($n = 44$) of Survey A, 37% ($n=31$) of Survey B: Understanding personal/sensitive topics specific to women in band and offering a female perspective.
- 24% ($n = 20$) of Survey A, 18% ($n=15$) of Survey B: Gender bias as specific issue
 - **Additional topics:** Sexism, societal expectations, microaggressions, discrimination, conducting attire, body image, femininity, work-life challenges
- 37% ($n = 31$) Survey A, 48% ($n=40$) Survey B: Represent successful females in the wind band field/viability of a career

Mentorship Ideas from Survey Subjects

- Need to increase the presence of women in the wind band field at all levels (Survey A: 45%, $n = 34$; Survey B: 29%, $n = 22$)
- Need to improve gender-specific mentorship for aspiring female conductors (Survey A: 32% ($n = 24$); Survey B: 34%, $n = 26$)
 - Specifically referenced “encouragement” (Survey A: 28%, $n = 21$)
- Raise awareness of women band conductors – specifically related to gender bias (Survey A: 24%, $n = 18$; Survey B: 20%, $n = 15$)
- **Additional Suggestions:** Supporting women with families/desire to start a family, make degrees financially feasible/offer scholarships, provide teaching and conducting opportunities to students

Mentorship Study Conclusions

- Mentorship is highly important for wind band conductors
- Gender is not the most important factor in selecting a mentor
- Gender-specific mentorship can have considerable impact
- Potential increase in women willing to/currently serving as mentors
- Improvements needed for mentorship of aspiring female collegiate band directors
- Attention to impactful methods of mentorship



Methods of Encouragement

Instrument Selection

- Band directors must understand the stereotypes of musical instruments and encourage students to consider all instruments
- Instrumentalists should be provided opportunities to learn secondary instruments, especially if their primary instrument choice limits performance opportunities (jazz bands, marching bands etc.)
 - OR:
 - Receive opportunities to observe/experience all ensemble types
 - Perform on primary instrument in non-traditional setting

Representation

- Students and colleagues should be made aware of successful women in the field AND have opportunities to build relationships with these women.
 - Examples: Guest conductors or speakers (in person or virtual), performance videos, repertoire, materials/environment
 - Should be encouraged throughout one's career - importance of building community and making ourselves seen.

Funding/Scholarships

- The band community should support underrepresented students in their pursuit of a band conducting career through the creation and continued support of scholarships.
- Students and colleagues should be made aware of scholarship opportunities specific to their background/experiences.
 - May require research/additional time to find - it's worth the search!
 - Examples for young women: University/college specific, community ensembles/organizations, CBDNA, WBDI, SAI

Classroom Opportunities & Experiences

- Students and colleagues should be provided hands-on opportunities to “light the fire” for a band conducting career.
 - Examples:
 - Conducting lessons/independent studies
 - Conducting opportunities (performance and rehearsal)
 - Leading sectionals
 - Student-led ensembles/chamber groups
 - Shadowing/interning for directors
 - Drum major experiences
 - Community ensembles

Personal & Professional Development

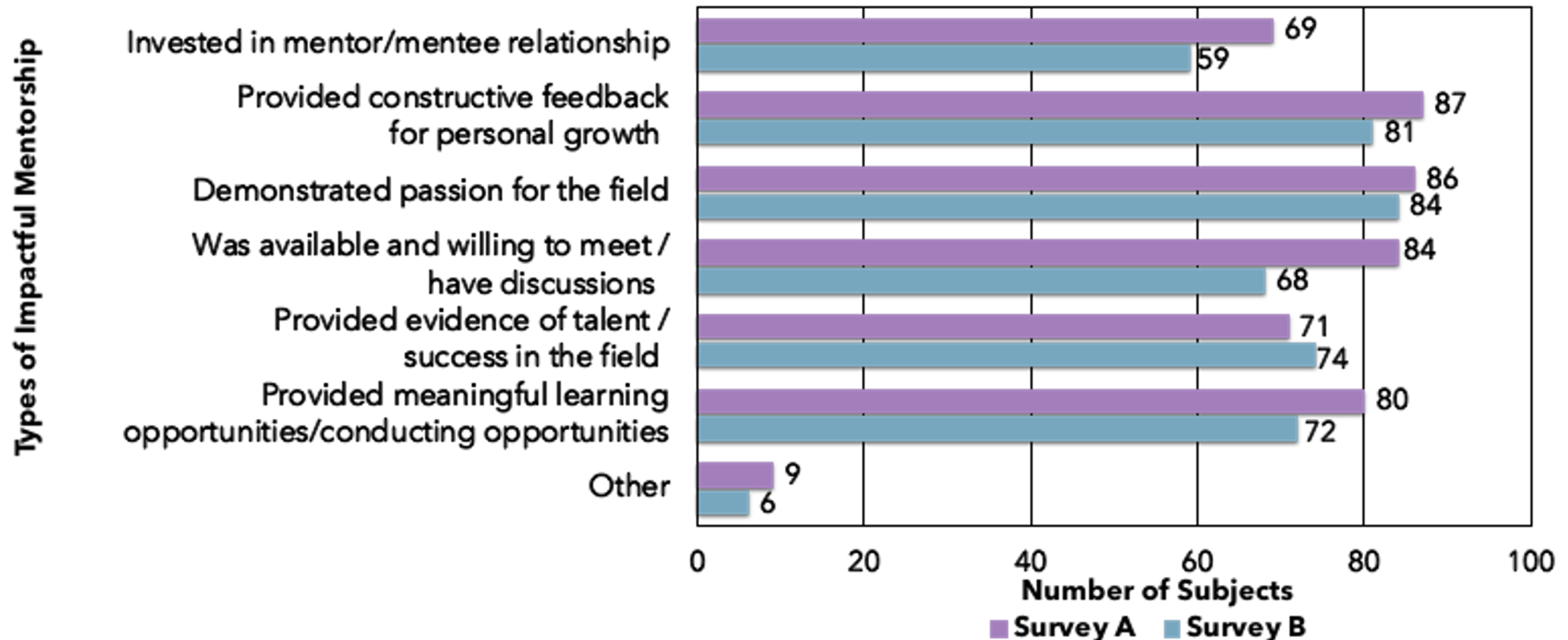
- Think COMMUNITY
- Students and colleagues should be made aware of opportunities for them to grow both personally and professionally.
 - Female-specific: Athena Music & Leadership Camp, Women Band Directors International, Young Women Composers Camp, Girls Who Conduct
 - Additional: Meetings or sessions at conferences/clinics, camps/academies, all-state/all-city events, media (podcasts/interviews/panels)
- See a need? Students and directors should consider creating their own opportunities for growth:
 - Recent Examples: Key of She, Women Rising to the Podium, Girls Who Conduct

Mentorship

- Students should be provided opportunities to experience gender-specific mentorship and role modeling.
 - **NOT exclusively**
- Teachers should utilize effective mentorship methods to support students throughout their development as musicians and teachers.

Survey: Methods of Mentorship

The impactful methods of mentorship reported by the
Survey A (N = 97) and Survey B subjects (N = 93)



Mentorship (Methods & Expectations)

- Be clear and honest about expectations, needs, roles, and goals
- Demonstrate a commitment to the mentorship process
- Utilize flexibility
- Encourage growth – support, support, support!
- Be approachable – encouraging of questions and pursuit of mentorship opportunities
- View others in the field as “allies” and not “competition”
- Provide resources – and find resources when uncertain of the answer

Additional Mentorship Goals

- Teachers/mentors should help students/mentees develop self-advocacy skills necessary within the band directing career.
- Students/mentees should also understand the possibilities available to them as band directors, as not all band conducting careers are the same.
 - Teachers/mentors should explain the process of becoming a band director, necessary skills and qualities, and provide examples of their experiences in the field to give students/mentees a comprehensive understanding of their potential career choice.



Concluding Thoughts

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- All students that demonstrate potential and/or an interest in teaching band should be encouraged and mentored to pursue a band conducting career.
- However, it is important to recognize the underrepresentation of women (and other underrepresented individuals) in the field and make an intentional effort to support those that may pursue a career as a band director.
 - And CONTINUE that support into their careers!

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Questions & Contact Information

Thank you for your time and attention! I am incredibly grateful to share this session with you all.

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