

“Conduct Like a Woman”:
Empowering Women Band Directors Through Meaningful Mentorship
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Introduction

- A significant disparity exists between the presence of male and female band directors.
 - The continued underrepresentation of women as band directors may deter young women from pursuing a band conducting career.
 - Not seeing oneself represented in the field may lead to feelings of not belonging, isolation, as well as that the career path may not be viable.
- Band directors should utilize methods of encouragement to support young women that may be interested in becoming band directors, as well as present the career option to students that may have not previously considered a band conducting career.

Historical Perspectives

- Numerous aspects of music performance and education have a history of gendered expectations and stereotypes that continue to affect women in the field today. Such researched, historical perspectives include:
 - History of Female Instrumentalists
 - Solo Instrumental Performance for Women (1800s – 1900s)
 - Limited opportunities for performance, deemed not ladylike or feminine. Performance deterred from the so-called need to “appreciate a woman’s face and body”.
 - Performers were expected to adapt their posture in order to avoid indecent playing positions.
 - The 20th century brought more performance opportunities, though the performance of wind and percussion instruments continued to be deemed unfeminine.
 - Gender norms from solo instrumental performance were evident in military band tradition, as well as Sousa/Gilmore type bands.
 - Limited opportunities for performance - led to the creation of numerous “all-women” or “all-girl” labeled jazz bands and brass bands, as well as women-led concert bands.
 - Early college marching bands modeled after military ensembles
 - Acceptance of women in bands stemmed from implementation of Title IX law in 1972
 - Sex-Stereotyping of Musical Instruments

- Though improving, research demonstrates gender biases with instruments continue to exist and impact instrument selection
 - The selection of an instrument can determine the performance and teaching experiences that individuals have within the field
- Women in Instrumental Music Education
 - 18th century: Private, in-home instructors
 - 19th century: "Group teaching" deemed acceptable for women
 - 20th century: Military traditions often influenced the creation of school music programs - Instrumental music led by men, general and vocal music led by women
 - 21st century: Though conditions may be improving, the effects of military traditions/gender stereotypes continue to be evident in school settings

Research Study Background

- Completed at Old Dominion University in 2020
- 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

Research Study Results: Discussion Topics

- Roles of Mentors
- Gender Identity of College Band Directors
- Importance of Mentorship
- Number of Mentors vs. Number of Female Mentors
- Preference of Gender for Mentorship
- Potential Impacts of Gender-Specific Mentorship
- Improvements for Mentorship

Methods of Encouragement

- There are numerous methods in which young women can be encouraged to pursue a band conducting career. A spectacular resource for these methods includes the article "[Motivating Girls to be Band Directors Begins in the Classroom](#)" by Virginia Allen. This presentation expands upon methods presented by Virginia Allen, while also introducing new concepts, which include:

- **Instrument Selection**
 - Band directors must understand the stereotypes of musical instrument selection and encourage students to consider all instruments, regardless of gendered expectations expressed in research or in students' personal lives and conversations.
 - Instrumentalists should be provided opportunities to learn secondary instruments, especially if their primary instrument choice limits performance opportunities (jazz bands, marching bands etc.)
 - Additional Options:
 - Students should experience such ensembles through observations, teaching experiences.
 - Students should have performance opportunities on their primary instrument in non-traditional settings.

- **Representation**
 - Students and colleagues should be made aware of successful women in the field and have opportunities to build relationships with said women.
 - Examples include: Guest conductors or speakers (in person or via virtual meetings), performance videos, repertoire
 - Students should also have opportunities to build relationships with these individuals, not just meet or see them once.
 - 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 pursuit of a career in wind band conducting through the creation and continued support of scholarships.
 - Students should be made aware of scholarship opportunities specific to their background/experiences.
 - May require research/additional time to find.

- **Classroom Opportunities/Experiences**
 - Students and colleagues should be provided "hands-on" opportunities to prepare for/thrive in a band conducting career.
 - For example: Conducting lessons/independent studies, conducting opportunities, leading sectionals, shadowing/interning for directors, drum major experiences, student-led ensembles, community ensembles

- Do these examples not exist where you are? Work to create them for yourself, your colleagues, and your students!
- **Personal/Professional Development**
 - Students and directors should be made aware of opportunities for them to grow both personally and professionally.
 - Gender-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, podcasts/interviews/panels
 - Students and directors may consider creating their own opportunities for growth to share with others.
 - 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 (though not exclusively).
 - Teachers should utilize effective mentorship methods to support students throughout their development as musicians and teachers.
 - Successful mentorship keywords: intentional, nurturing, insightful, supportive, accessible/approachable, empowering, affirming.
 - Methods include: clear expectations/needs, establishing a relationship of trust and honesty, demonstrating commitment, utilizing flexibility, and providing resources.
 - Teachers should help students develop self-advocacy skills necessary within the band directing career.
 - Students should also understand the possibilities available to them as band directors, as not all band conducting careers are the same.
 - In mentorship: Teachers should hold conversations on the process of becoming a band director, necessary skills/qualities, and experiences in the field to give students a comprehensive understanding of their potential career choice.

Concluding Thoughts

- Gender-specific mentorship should not be the exclusive form of mentorship, however, making an intentional effort to provide gender-specific role modeling and mentorship can encourage and support women in the wind band field.

- 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 (as well as other underrepresented and marginalized individuals) in the field and make an intentional effort to support those individuals in their pursuit of a career as a band director, and throughout the entirety of their career.

Resources

This is absolutely not an exhaustive list of the plethora of resources available for the mentorship of young women in pursuit of a band directing career, and those currently in the field, but it is a great starting point!

- Organizations/Opportunities:
 - [Women Band Directors International](#)
 - [Athena Music & Leadership Camp](#)
 - [Key of She](#)
 - [Women Rising to the Podium](#)
 - [Girls Who Conduct](#)
 - [International Alliance for Women in Music](#)
- Research:
 - [*Motivating Girls to be Band Directors Begins in the Classroom*](#) - Dr. Virginia Allen
 - [*Breaking the Silence: The Phenomenology of the Female High School Band Director*](#) - Dr. Amy J Bovin
 - [*Gender-Specific Mentorship for Collegiate Female Band Directors*](#) - Laura Johnson
 - [*Defining Expectations for the Mentorship of Women Band Directors*](#) - Laura Johnson & Dr. Catharine Sinon Bushman (Page 19)
 - [*Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American Female Band Directors at the Secondary Level*](#) - Dr. Krista Faye Williams
 - [*Career Intentions and Experiences of Pre- and In-Service Female Band Teachers*](#) - Dr. Sarah H. Fischer-Croneis
 - [*Reflections of Female Band Directors: The Perceived Effect of Sex, Gender, and Race on Career Experiences and Professional Practices*](#) - Robyn Olichwier Lawrence
 - [*The Experiences of Female High School Band Directors: A National Survey Study*](#) - Dr. Amy J Bovin
 - [*Counterspaces in Band Programs: Experiences of African American Female Band Directors at the Secondary Level*](#) - Dr. Krista Faye Williams
 - [*Paucity of Female College Band Directors as Faculty and Conductors at National Conferences in the United States, 2017–2018*](#) - Dr. Shannon Shaker

- [*Patriarchal Killjoys: The Experiences of Three \(Women\) University Band Directors*](#) - Dr. Megan Foley
- [*Chocolate Maestra: A Narrative Inquiry into the Lived Experiences of Black Female Band Directors*](#) - Dr. Devan Moore
- [*Variables Affecting The Gender-Role Stereotyping Of High School Band Teaching Positions*](#) - Dr. Judith K. Delzell
- [*A Question for Reflection: Do Students and Staff See a Representation of Women in Music?*](#) - Dr. Lori Schwartz Reichl
- [*Women High School Band Directors' Perceptions of the Relationship between Their Gender and Professional Identities*](#) - Dr. Marsha Kincade
- [*What Color Is Your Baton, Girl? Gender and Ethnicity in Band Conducting*](#) - Dr. Deborah A. Sheldon and Dr. Linda A. Hartley
- [*The Impact of Gender on the Instrumental Music Experiences of Female High School Band Directors*](#) - Dr. Tiffany Cox
- [*The Socio-Cultural Reproduction Experiences of Women College Band Conductors: Five Case Studies of Resistance, Conformity, and Everything in Between*](#) - Dr. Stephanie Glenn Colburn DeLuca
- [*Reflections of Female Band Directors: The Perceived Effect of Sex, Gender, and Race on Career Experiences and Professional Practices*](#) - Robyn Lawrence
- [*"The Rest Is Lagniappe": The Female Secondary Band Director Experience in Louisiana*](#) - Margaret M. Webb
- [*Toward a More Inclusive Profession: A Qualitative Study of Female Wind Band Conductors*](#) - Dr. Pam Klena
- [*Exactly Where You Should Be: As a pioneer for women band conductors, Virginia Allen explains the importance of finding ways to foster growth, confidence, and development among the next generation of female band leaders*](#) - Dr. Lori Schwartz Reichl

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