Music education professional organizations, helmed primarily by volunteer teacher-leaders, play a pivotal role in curriculum and standard design, advocacy efforts, and preservice and inservice music teacher professional development. Though the profession is self-led, music educators often receive no formal leadership education or training. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore the lived experience of music educators’ leadership identity development (LID) and illuminate the essence of their development into successful teacher-leaders. Through a series of three semi-structured, individual interviews with 13 leaders of state- and national-level music education professional organizations and hermeneutic reflective journaling, I sought to answer four research questions: (a) How do successful teacher-leaders in the music education profession experience leadership identity development? (b) How do music teachers’ leadership experiences relate to their teaching experiences? (c) How, if at all, do music educators experience formal leadership education or training? and (d) How, if at all, do music educators experience informal leadership education or training? Primary influences on participants’ LID included informal, on-the-job learning, interactions with mentors, and family, peer, and teacher influences during primary socialization. While development of their leadership and music teacher identities intertwined in the classroom, there were also distinct differences in participants’ journeys to viewing themselves as professional and organizational leaders. Those guiding music educators’ professional development, including professional organization leadership and music teacher educators, should consider providing structured leadership education and hands-on leadership experiences to assist with music educators’ leadership identity development.
“FINDING MY VOICE”: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE LEADERSHIP IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER-LEADERS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

by
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Approved by

_____________________________________
Dr. Brett Nolker
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Mark and Lisa Ramsey, and the rest of my family, whose undying love and support of my lifelong passions for music and education have provided me the space and opportunity to learn and grow.
This dissertation written by Nicole K. Ramsey has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Volunteer teacher-leaders serve as a vital and driving force in guiding the advancement of the music education profession. While leadership is a complex, interpersonal, and contextually situated concept, all leaders must be able to guide groups of people toward a common goal. Approaches to leadership vary depending on the context. Music educators lead in their classrooms by guiding students safely, effectively, and empathetically through lessons, performances, and trips. They inspire involvement, engagement, collaboration, and leadership in their own students. Some lead in their schools or universities, representing their program or department on leadership teams, committees, or taking on administrative duties in addition to their teaching load. Others lead in their school districts or counties by coordinating and hosting events or serving as peer mentors and professional learning community (PLC) leaders. Some serve as leaders in professional organizations that are responsible for curriculum and standard design, professional development, dissemination of research, and advocacy efforts. Despite the importance of these leadership roles in the advancement of the profession, music educators receive very little guidance or training in leadership prior to taking on professional or organizational leadership roles.

As someone who stepped into teacher-leadership quite early in my music education career, my interest in leadership in the profession began when I realized that many music teachers chose not to get involved with professional or organizational leadership. When I discussed professional leadership with my colleagues, some mentioned feeling underprepared for such roles or expressed concern that they would be unsuccessful leading their peers, even if they were comfortable with classroom leadership. Some of my fellow leaders in my county that did
serve in positional (formal or titled) roles expressed discomfort with the lack of leadership preparation they received before taking on those roles. For example, a friend and fellow high school choir teacher, who served as a department chair in her school, once told me that she felt she was “flying by the seat of her pants.”

Considering that schools, universities, and organizations cannot function without leadership, these observations concerned me and set me on a path to seek more information about leadership in the profession. I searched for literature on leadership in music education and combed through conference sessions to see if any focused on building teachers’ leadership skills. While some leadership resources existed within the profession, most focused on building student leadership within music programs as opposed to building those skills in the educators themselves. These experiences and observations motivated a desire to study leadership education in the field of music education more closely, especially as it relates to professional and organizational leadership preparation.

Need for the Study

While music educators serve as leaders in a variety of settings, organization leadership is of particular importance to the broader profession. Our state and national professional organizations are helmed primarily by teacher-leaders who volunteer to serve the profession by working on committees, hosting and coordinating events and conferences, and serving in positional leadership roles. These organizations provide important professional development, advocacy efforts, and other resources and services that aid music teachers and teacher educators throughout the United States. The music education profession therefore requires teachers who are willing and prepared to guide our profession through organizational leadership.
The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) is the primary national music education professional organization in the United States, under which several affiliated organizations exist. These organizations include each state’s Music Educators Association (MEA) and the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE). Other organizations, such as the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), American Bandmasters Association (ABA), and the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), serve a broader population that also includes applied teachers, conductors, and composers in addition to K-12 music teachers and music education faculty in the higher education setting. While music educators may be members of other organizations as well, I chose to focus on these organizations for this overview as they are the primary organizations that serve school music teachers and university music teacher educators.

Professional organizations provide many benefits to music educators and their students, music teacher educators, and other music professionals. They provide support for teachers throughout their careers, from their preservice years through retirement (Lambert, 2012). They provide a professional network where teachers can find others with whom they can plan, collaborate, or find ways to integrate certain concepts into their teaching (Gilbert, 2016; Madsen, 2010). They provide professional development opportunities and access to music education research through peer-reviewed academic journals (Madsen, 2010; Membership and Benefits, n.d.). Their members and leaders advocate and lobby in state and federal governments on behalf of the profession (Fehr, 2007; Madsen, 2010; Membership and Benefits, n.d.). Members of NAfME designed and published the national music standards that guide music curricula across the country (Music Standards, 2014). Finally, music education professional organizations
provide a community of like-minded individuals with whom a music educator may engage both personally and professionally (Lambert, 2012; Madsen, 2010).

Given the importance of these benefits that professional organizations provide to the music education profession, it is important that these organizations’ leaders are well-equipped to guide them. Leadership development involves helping leaders acquire “the behaviors, knowledge, and skills to meet the needs and expectations” of all stakeholders in their organization (Green & McDade, 1991, p. 1). In addition to developing leadership behaviors, knowledge, and skills, leaders also either consciously or subconsciously develop a leadership identity (Komives et al., 2005). A person’s leadership identity includes their philosophies, values, views, and actions related to leadership. Leadership identity development (LID) occurs in a six-stage process, including (a) awareness, (b) exploration and engagement, (c) leader identified, (d) leadership differentiated, (e) generativity, (f) integration/synthesis. A leader’s progression through these stages is influenced by their developing personal identity, their developing social identity, their changing view of self with others, and their broadening view of leadership. Upon reaching the final stage of leadership identity development (LID), leaders are able to recognize themselves as leaders and are committed to leadership development as a lifelong process (Komives et al., 2006). They also mentor other leaders and are able to transfer their leadership between different contexts.

While leadership literature exists in music education, it is somewhat sparse. Most leadership literature focuses on building student leadership within music programs (Hendricks et al., 2012; Lautzenheiser, 2006; Lautzenheiser, 2010; Lautzenheiser, 2014; Melton, 2012) or a director’s leadership within their classroom or program (Richardson, 2022; Vitter, 2011) as opposed to broader professional leadership. Each of these studies and books examined leadership
as isolated to a particular context, either band (Lautzenheiser, 2006; Lautzenheiser, 2010; Lautzenheiser, 2014; Melton, 2012; Richardson, 2022; Vitter, 2011), choir (Williams, 2014), or orchestra (Hendricks et al., 2012). Since professional organization leaders in music education come from many different music specialties, I chose to select participants that reflect a wider variety of music teaching backgrounds, including band, choir, orchestra, elementary/general, contemporary music/songwriting, K-12, and music teacher education.

Though leadership development literature exploring aspects of self and identity exists in other fields (Fought & Misawa, 2019; Heard, 2014; Madsen, 2007; Odom et al., 2012; Wagner, 2011), only one study addresses LID in music educators (Richardson, 2022). This study explored band directors’ leadership development and included elements of LID. It was limited to band directors as leaders of their classroom and program as opposed to professional or organizational leadership.

**Purpose of the Study**

Professional organizations play an important role in the music education profession; therefore, it is important to understand how current, successful teacher-leaders developed their leadership identities and the skills, knowledge, behaviors, philosophies, and values that compose them. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore the lived experience of music educators’ leadership identity development (LID) and illuminate the essence of their development into successful teacher-leaders. Through a series of three semi-structured, individual interviews with 13 leaders of state- and national-level music education professional organizations and my own hermeneutic reflective journaling, I sought to answer four research questions:
• How do successful teacher-leaders in the music education profession experience leadership identity development?
• How do music teachers’ leadership experiences relate to their teaching experiences?
• How, if at all, do music educators experience formal leadership education or training?
• How, if at all, do music educators experience informal leadership education or training?

Examining Leadership Through Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is “the methodology of choice for a topic as contextually rich as leadership” (Conger, 1998, p. 107) because of its goal of depth of understanding, exploratory nature, and analysis of emergent themes. Qualitative research “has its greatest role to play in the exploratory phases of researching a topic area” (p. 108), which made it particularly well-suited for this study in which I explore topics and questions about which there is very little prior literature in our field. Similarly, the focus on essence of lived experience (van Manen, 1997) made a phenomenological approach particularly appropriate for this study in which participants reflected on their past experiences with LID. Through this research, I sought to discover how successful music education professional organization leaders experienced leadership identity development.

Definitions

In this section I provide definitions for commonly referenced words, phrases, and concepts within this study.

Leadership

The term “leadership” has many definitions and uses. Merriam-Webster provides three definitions of leadership: (a) a position as a leader of a group, organization, etc., (b) the time when a person holds the position of leader, and (c) the power or ability to lead other people
(https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leadership). While these definitions provide a broad understanding of leadership, leadership is contextually specific in practice (Klimoski, 2012; Shamir, 2012). Approaches, values, skills, and behaviors demonstrated in leadership vary depending on the context in which it is situated. I used the general term “leadership” in this study to include all leadership contexts, while the terms below describe more specific leadership contexts.

**Positional Leadership**

Positional leadership is leadership that takes place while holding a formal leadership title (such as President, Chair, Vice President, etc.). I also refer to these titles as positional leadership roles.

**Non-positional Leadership**

Non-positional leadership takes place when a person leads without holding a formal leadership title, often in more informal settings.

**Professional Leadership**

To differentiate between the general term “leadership” and leadership within the music education profession, I chose to use the phrase “professional leadership.” I used professional leadership to describe both positional and non-positional leadership. However, I did use it specifically to describe those leading the broader profession as opposed to leadership of an ensemble or leadership within one’s classroom (both of which would fall under “leadership,” but not “professional leadership”). I also used this term to distinguish leadership of the profession from educational leadership, which is a term used in literature particularly pertaining to leadership via administrative roles in the field of education, and from student leadership, which is leadership demonstrated while in a student role in K-12 or collegiate settings.
Organizational Leadership

Organizational leadership is another subset of leadership that refers specifically to the leadership of an organization as opposed to leadership of a classroom, program, or informal leadership of peers.

Teacher-leader

A teacher-leader is a person who leads in the profession while their primary job responsibilities are teaching (Gabriel, 2005).

Leadership Identity Development (LID)

Leadership identity development (abbreviated through the study as LID) is the process through which a person develops a leadership identity (Komives et al., 2005). Leadership identity is distinct from leadership development in that the latter typically focuses only on skill-building, whereas a leadership identity includes one’s view of oneself as a leader, a leadership philosophy, and the intersections between one’s identity as a leader and other aspects of social and professional identity. I provide a full description of the Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives et al., 2006) and related literature in Chapter Two.

Music Education Professional Organizations

In this study, I use “music education professional organizations” to describe any professional organization that serves K-12 music teachers or music teacher educators in the higher education setting. I include organizations that are not exclusive to music educators but have education committees or components, such as the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). Because this research is limited to leaders in the United States, I included national and state organizations in the discussion and recruiting, but not international music education
organizations. Collegiate chapters of the national and state organizations also came up in interviews and the discussion, but I did not specifically recruit from collegiate chapters.

**National and State**

I kept the national organizations represented in this study confidential to protect the anonymity of the participants. I used the term “state Music Educators Association” or “state MEA” to refer to participants’ leadership of and experiences with National Association for Music Education (NAfME)-affiliated state-level music education professional organizations.

**Collegiate**

A collegiate chapter of a music education professional organization is a chapter that is housed in a college or university and led by collegiate students along with a faculty advisor. They are formally affiliated with the state or national parent organization.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Leadership is a complex topic about which plentiful research and approaches exist. In Chapter One, I defined leadership and discussed how I used different leadership terms in this research. In this chapter, I use existing leadership literature to frame the research and provide context for the research problem. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of music educators’ leadership identity development (LID) and illuminate the essence of their development into successful teacher-leaders.

Leadership

As described in Chapter One, leadership is not confined only to those holding positional leadership roles. Leadership is “the ability to produce change and to set the direction of that change” (Kotter, 1990, p. 104 in Green & McDade, 1991). The definition of leadership may also involve the ability to set and meet objectives (Gardner, 1990), the ability to guide and influence (Bennis & Nanus, 1985), and the ability to transform (Burns, 1978). Leadership is critical to organizational success and impacts organizational outcomes (Bass & Bass, 2008). Leadership is also culturally, societally, and contextually situated. The high level of variation in leadership needs and contexts has resulted in a myriad of leadership approaches and strategies.

Full-Range Leadership Theory

Full-range leadership theory describes the relationship and interaction between three approaches to leadership: transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire (Avolio, 2011).

Transactional Leadership

A transactional leadership approach centers around contingent rewarding and management by exception (Bass & Bass, 2008). Contingent rewarding is a positive transaction
where a leader accomplishes a goal or outcome using rewards for and praise of desired behaviors. Management by exception is a negative transaction where a leader “monitors deviations from norms and provides corrective action” (Walumbwa & Wernsing, 2012, p. 393). Through the combined use of positive and negative transactions with followers, a transactional leader accomplishes their desired outcomes.

**Transformational Leadership**

Burns (1978, in Bass & Bass, 2008) described a transformational leader as “one who: 1) [sic] raises the followers’ level of consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and ways of reaching them; 2) gets the followers to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the team, organization, or larger polity; and 3) raises the followers’ level of need on Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy from lower-level concerns for safety and security to higher-level needs for achievement and self-actualization” (p. 619). A transformational leader “concretizes a vision that the followers view as worthy of their effort, thereby raising their arousal and effort levels” (p. 631). Transformational leadership centers and address issues of ethics, morality, and advancement of society. Many of humanity’s most influential reformers and revolutionary leaders used a transformational approach to engage, inspire, and motivate followers (Bass & Bass, 2008). I discuss charismatic leadership, an approach related to transformational leadership, in more detail below.

**Laissez-faire Leadership**

Laissez-faire leadership, which was added to the full-range leadership theory later, describes a hands-off or even nonexistent leadership approach (Bass & Bass, 2008). Simply put, laissez-faire leadership is defined by a complete lack of transaction, either positive or negative
The laissez-faire approach is more akin to management without leadership; I discuss leadership versus management later in this chapter.

**Summary**

While these approaches are not considered mutually exclusive, research has consistently shown that transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership, which is more effective than laissez-faire leadership (Avolio, 2011; Bass & Bass, 2008). However, when used in combination, transactional and transformational leadership can be effective in achieving goals while also satisfying and empowering followers to take an active role in designing those goals. The full-range leadership theory involves the use of both transactional and transformational leadership.

**Additional Selected Leadership Approaches**

In addition to full-range leadership theory, researchers have noted numerous approaches to leadership employed by leaders in a variety of settings. These approaches are connected to a person’s leadership philosophy and identity, and they impact actions taken and decisions made within leadership contexts. It would be impossible to include every possible leadership approach in this literature review; therefore, I have chosen to include the leadership approaches mentioned or demonstrated by my participants.

**Autocratic Leadership**

The autocratic versus democratic leadership duality has existed throughout human history. Philosophically, the juxtaposition between these two approaches is rooted in the following question: are humans inherently good by nature or inherently bad by nature? If the former, then leaders need to provide followers freedom to learn and grow. If the latter, they must
be controlled and uplifted by leadership. Autocratic leadership is rooted in the belief of the latter (Bass & Bass, 2008).

An autocratic leader is “controlling, power-oriented, coercive, punitive, and closed-minded” and takes “full and sole responsibility for decisions and control of followers’ performance” (Bass & Bass, p. 440). This type of leader is also described as being authoritarian and risks becoming abusive. An autocratic leader does not seek input from others in decision-making processes; instead, they pass down edicts to their subordinates. The foil to autocratic leadership is democratic leadership.

**Democratic Leadership**

Contrary to autocratic leadership, democratic leadership is “considerate (Fleishman, 1953c), democratic (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938), consultative and participative (Bass, 1976), consensual (Zaleznik, 1974), employee-centered (R. Likert, 1961a), concerned with people (Blake & Mouton, 1964), concerned with the maintenance of good working relations (Misumi, 1985), supportive and oriented toward facilitating interaction (Bowers & Seashore, 1966), relations-oriented (Fiedler, 1967a), oriented toward joint decision making (Heller, 1969a), and oriented toward group decision making (Vroom & Yetton, 1974)” (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 441). When presented with the philosophical question discussed in the previous section, democratic leaders believe that humans are inherently good by nature and simply need room to think, contribute, and grow. Democratic leaders strive to set parameters within which they allow other stakeholders to make decisions or express opinions or advice. Because of their use of shared governance, they rely on and support their subordinates’ strengths and skills (Nelson, 1950, in Bass & Bass, 2008).
Democratic leadership should not be confused with laissez-faire leadership, in which a leader becomes passive and abstains from responsibility or decision-making (Bass & Bass, 2008). A democratic leader is purposeful about relations with followers and consciously includes them in decision making, while still providing parameters, support, and perspective. Research from the past several decades have shown a shift in preference away from autocratic leadership and toward democratic leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008). Many different leadership approaches fall under democratic leadership, including most in this chapter.

**Servant Leadership**

Though servant leadership as a concept has been around for much longer, Robert Greenleaf coined the term in the 1970s (Spears, 2010). It took several years after that for servant leadership to catch the interest of leaders and researchers. Simply put, servant leadership puts the focus on the follower instead of the leader. The increased interest in servant leadership in recent decades represents a philosophical shift away from focus on the leader and toward focus on the followers’ needs. A servant leader “lead[s] with behaviors that do not ignore [followers], but embrace[s] them as whole individuals” while also “tak[ing] all stakeholders into account” (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010), p. 3). This approach emphasizes “the goals of the organization, its role in society, and the separate roles of the employees” (p. 5). It is defined by two primary elements: prioritization of individual followers’ needs over the needs of the organization (with the understanding that the former will improve the latter), and the use of means other than dictatorial power, such as stewardship and encouraging followers to excel, to achieve goals.

As it has grown in popularity, leaders have sometimes struggled to fully understand the core tenants of servant leadership (Prosser, 2010), sometimes using the term “servant leader” when, in fact, they are actually describing relational leadership (see below), democratic
leadership (see above), or any number of other leadership approaches. The most foundational distinction lies in one’s conscious decision to be a servant first. “What separates servant leadership from every other discussion of leadership is that, above all else, it concerns servants who lead and not leaders who serve; servant leadership must never be relegated to one among many descriptions of leadership, ignoring the fundamental and all-pervading concept of servanthood” (p. 37, emphasis in original). Therefore, while it may share some aspects of procedure or values with other leadership approaches mentioned in this chapter, servant leadership also directly connects to a person’s identity and view of self.

**Relational Leadership**

The relational leadership approach stems from the idea that most leadership happens as a result of human interaction (Komives et al., 2013), and that leadership context is often established by relationships valued by the stakeholders (Wheatly, 1999). The relational leader therefore keeps relationships at the forefront of their philosophy, decision-making, and leadership actions.

Relational leadership is based around five primary elements: (a) it is purposeful, (b) it is inclusive of people and diverse points of view, (c) it empowers those involved, (d) it is ethical, and (e) it recognizes that all four of the previous elements are accomplished by being process-oriented (Komives et al., 2013, p. 95). The five elements are interconnected to form one cohesive approach. Common purpose is at the center of this approach; the stakeholders’ purposes influence the leaders’ actions in being inclusive, empowering, ethical, and process-oriented. In relational leadership, the “how” is just as important as the “what.” Leaders should be just as concerned with how a goal is accomplished and who is involved as they are with the accomplishment of the goal itself.
The relational leadership approach does not end at the leadership team, structure, or even at the organizational level; a relational leader considers every stakeholder involved in a particular change even if that extends beyond the organization (Komives et al., 2013). In instances where all stakeholders do not agree on a particular issue, it is the leader’s job to maintain transparency and involve each side in the discussions. Through this process, stakeholders on opposing sides may better understand why a particular decision is made. Throughout decision-making and action, the relational leader fosters and values relationships, interaction, and process above all else.

**Systemic Leadership**

Like relational and democratic leadership, systemic leadership was born out of the philosophical and value shift away from autocratic leadership. It draws on concepts from the field of ecology, especially as they relate to the interconnectedness of individuals within a system (Allen et al., 1998). While relationships and interactions are also key to systemic leadership, leaders using this approach focus on leadership as a product of a “networked knowledge era” (Allen & Cherrey, 2000, p. 1). Systemic leadership is similar to relational leadership in that interacting and relationships are central to the approach, but it differs in that the organization and all stakeholders are viewed as a network or system. Within this network are connections and linkages, and the assumptions of systemic leadership are meant to help leaders see new ways of relating, influencing change, learning, and leading.

In systemic leadership, the proposed assumptions in the “new ways of relating” (Allen & Cherrey, 2000, p. 104) include acknowledging the following: (a) interrelatedness naturally exists within a system, (b) variables in a system mutually shape each other, and (c) in addition to information, emotions also flow in a network. Because of these assumptions regarding how
relationships exist within a network, practitioners of systemic leadership should be open to change from anywhere within the system and should understand that logic within the system can be non-linear. Leaders can exist anywhere within the system, and the leaders themselves serve as facilitators of change.

Charismatic Leadership

Sociologist Max Weber was the first to apply the concept of charisma, which originated as a theological concept, to organizational leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008). Weber’s concept of charismatic leadership involved a person with a “magnetic” and “inspired” disposition that emerged during times of hardship and successfully navigated crises through radical solutions (p. 575). The charismatic leader breaks continuity and introduces novel ideas to instigate change. As the definition of charismatic leadership continued to evolve through the following decades, it grew to include leaders to whom followers felt they could relate. The leader also may no longer require success, but rather endurance.

Because charismatic leadership is centered around followers’ perceptions of a leader’s behaviors and dispositions rather than specific procedures or actions, the definition of a charismatic leader is culturally and contextually situated.

Because societies and groups differ in their definitions of what constitute “extraordinary” qualities in a leader, the content of leadership images, projected and perceived, would necessarily have to differ from group to group. It was, therefore, impossible to construct a universal “charismatic personality.” (Conger, 2012, p. 377)

The impact of context on charismatic leadership can be better understood using a two-part framework consisting of an outer and inner context (Pettigrew, 1987). Inner context involves aspects within the organization, such as culture, structure, and power distribution. The outer
context includes the environment outside of the organization. Together, the inner and outer context provide insight into the characteristics followers may perceive in a charismatic leader. A leader having those characteristics may then be able to lead through the introduction of needed change in that organization, especially in times of distress. This leadership approach is closely related to transformational leadership; however, transformational leadership focuses more on the leader’s process and interactions whereas charismatic leadership focuses more on the leader’s qualities. “The charismatic leader is likely to be transformational, but it is possible – although unlikely – to be transformational without being charismatic” (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 620).

While the leadership approaches presented in this section all have unique qualities that distinguish them from the others, they are not all mutually exclusive. Some, such as autocratic and democratic leadership, are foils of each other, while others, such as transactional and transformational leadership, may seem to contradict one another but can be used together in certain circumstances. A leader’s approach often evolves as their experiences impact their leadership identity development, which will be discussed in depth in later sections.

**Leadership versus Management**

Until recent decades, much of the conversation about leadership was limited simply to management (Rost, 1993). However, it is important to make a distinction between the two concepts.

Leaders manage and managers lead, but the two activities are not synonymous…

Leadership is path-finding; management is path-following. Leaders do the right things; managers do things right (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Leaders develop; managers maintain. Leaders ask what and why; managers as how and when. Leaders originate; managers imitate. Leaders challenge the status quo; managers accept it (Bennis, 1985, 1989).
Leaders function in a higher domain of cognitive analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; managers function in a lower cognitive domain of knowledge, comprehension, and application (Capozzoli, 1995). (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 654)

A leader in any context will have duties and responsibilities that require both leadership and management skills. Each task can be perceived as existing within a spectrum, with some tasks requiring more leadership and less management, and others requiring more management and less leadership. Because of the close connection between leadership and management, those looking to refine and develop their leadership should also consider building good management skills (Lawson, 2011).

**Leadership Context**

As mentioned previously, leadership is inextricably tied to the context in which the leadership is taking place. Context (sometimes called “situation” in certain writings) plays a key role in influencing human behavior; “the situation that we may encounter is thought to elicit habitual behavior relative to its similarity relative to what we have experienced and learned in the past” (Klimoski, 2012, p. 268). Klimoski (2012) describes several different situational components of context, including interpersonal situation, task situation, emotional situation, and psychological situation. Humans’ responses to each of these situations can be either automatic or controlled. The interpersonal situation has to do with the impact that interactions have on a particular phenomenon in leadership. The task situation involves the intended goal or outcome to be achieved as a result of the leadership. As it sounds, the emotional situation refers to emotions that are involved as part of the leadership phenomenon. The psychological situation is a bit more complex; it involves the impact of a person’s perceptions and interpretations of a phenomenon, and how personality and disposition may have an impact on those interpretations. When trying to
understand a leadership phenomenon, it is important for researchers to consider that each of these situations or contexts may have an impact on the phenomenon (Klimoski, 2012). Likewise, it is impractical to assume that successful leadership in one context can be easily transferred to another context (Shamir, 2012).

**Diversity in Leadership**

Like the broader aspects of context mentioned in the previous section, all leadership activity is also defined by the societal and cultural context in which it is situated (Bass & Bass, 2008). “No societies are known that do not have leadership in some aspects of their social life, although many may lack a single overall leader to make and enforce decisions” (p. 3). While leadership itself is a universal phenomenon, existing wherever humanity and societies exist, what people view as leadership may vary from culture to culture and society to society (Hogg, 2001).

Despite the diversity in the United States, women and people of color are still often underrepresented in leadership settings (Bass & Bass, 2008; Collins & Hopson, 2007). These populations encounter barriers and conflicts that may restrict access to leadership roles or provide increased challenges within those roles. Similarly, they are subject to profiling and stereotyping that may influence how followers perceive, and therefore interact with, them. In the following sections, I provide an overview of literature relating to experiences of women and people of color in leadership in the United States.

**Women in Leadership**

While the percentage of women in leadership and managerial positions has grown in the last 50 years, women are often still underrepresented in leadership and management in various fields (Bass & Bass, 2008; Chin, 2007). Affirmative action laws have had a positive impact on the number of women in administrative or managerial positions, but they often still struggle with
discrimination based on the perception that they received the position because of the laws instead of the merits of their leadership (Heilman & Alcott, 2001; Singer, 1994). Women leaders experience stereotypes based on the enduring perception that leadership is a masculine trait; women who have gentler or more relational dispositions are often stereotyped as being too meek or emotional to lead, whereas women who have more outspoken or dominant personalities are stereotyped as being aggressive and manipulative (Heller, 1982). Female leaders may also feel pressured to make decisions and take actions to actively contradict these stereotypes, fearing that failure to do so will confirm the negative stereotypes for them and others (Steele & Aronson, 1995). They may also find themselves within a “paradox of power and oppression” as leaders, wherein they hold power because of the nature of their leadership position but still experience marginalization within their organizations (Smooth, 2010, p. 35).

Similar phenomena exist in the field of music education. While the first President of the Music Supervisors National Conference (now NAfME) was a woman named Frances E. Clark, only 18 of the 68 Presidents in the history of the organization have been women, and only two were people of color. While literature on female leaders in professional and organizational leadership in the field is sparse, authors have documented the struggles and barriers faced by female conductors (Bartleet, 2003; Webb, 2021) and female band directors (Sears, 2018; Sheldon & Hartley, 2012), both of whom must lead within their respective male-dominated contexts. Female conductors and band directors both must navigate expectations of masculinity and overcome stereotypes often placed upon them either consciously or subconsciously by their male colleagues. They may also struggle to find female mentors and role models from whom they can learn.
It is also important to note the intersectionality of gender and race in leadership (Smooth, 2010). The term “intersectionality” refers to the intersections between different aspects of a person’s identity and how that identity shapes their interactions with society and the world. Intersectionality literature challenges the idea that systems and hierarchies of power within a society interact with social identities such as race, class, and gender in ways that can be examined separately and then added together. Rather, the convergence of two or more of these categories present their own unique challenges for marginalized individuals. While discussions of intersectionality in women’s leadership literature are largely specific to a particular context, many potential female leaders of color find themselves overlooked because they are being compared to or evaluated by systems put in place primarily by white males (Smooth, 2010). Females of color also experience implicit and explicit racism and sexism and challenges to their authority (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Reed, 2012). Further research is needed to determine the potential impacts of the intersectionality of race and gender on professional and organizational leadership in music education.

**People of Color in Leadership**

Like women, people of color are often underrepresented in positional leadership. Despite affirmative action laws and many organizations’ efforts to diversify leadership, implicit and explicit biases and stereotypes still impact people of color in leadership roles (Bass & Bass, 2008; Roberts et al., 2019). Barriers faced by people of color in leadership mirror those found in society. “If society, communities and individuals are all significantly informed by race, then leadership must be as well” (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 876).

Research has indicated that leaders of color tend to be rated more negatively in evaluations than White leaders (Knight et al., 2003; Sackett & DuBois, 1991; Vecchio & Bullis,
2001). Black and Hispanic executives often require more years of experience before being hired in executive roles when compared to White executives (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). Societal views of leadership qualities also tend to negatively impact leaders of color; “being white (that is, race itself rather than stereotypes about race) is part of the business leader prototype and therefore whites are more likely to be seen as leaders” (Rosette et al., 2008, in Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 880). Chandler and Kirsch (2018) coined a process they call “critical leadership,” drawing on critical race theory literature, which acknowledges the systemic racial barriers that exist in society and seeks to explore the impact those barriers have on leadership due to its social and contextual nature.

While the impact of race on professional and organizational leadership in the music education profession is an under-researched area, experiences of people of color within the field have been well documented. Music students and teachers of color experience implicit and explicit racism in both K-12 and higher education contexts (Hess, 2017). Historically rooted in Western European musical practices, music education curricula marginalize musics of people of color (Gustafson, 2009). Music students of color often experience feelings of isolation and a disconnect between their racial identities and their in-school musicking due to the Eurocentricity of music curricula and aesthetics (Lechuga & Schmidt, 2018; Robinson & Hendricks, 2018). Similarly, scholars of color in music education also experience feelings of isolation due to the overwhelming majority of white scholars and faculty in the field (McCall, 2018; Robinson & Hendricks, 2018). As the developing self and the view of self with others are part of the Leadership Identity Development model (discussed in further detail below), researchers should consider the impacts of personal identity, especially for underrepresented populations, when investigating leadership identity.
Leadership Development

Leadership development is the process of developing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to successfully meet the needs or objectives of the people or organization being led (Green & McDade, 1991). Some authors also include the development or refining of a leadership identity in that process as well (Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Komives et al., 2005). While the corporate sector spends tens of billions of dollars on leadership development each year, the field of education spends far less and devotes much less time to leadership development education and training experiences (Green & McDade, 1991). However, the topic of leadership development has drawn more interest of educators and administrators in recent years. In this section, I describe leadership skills and competencies and the strategies used to acquire them.

Leadership Skills and Competencies

As stated previously in this chapter, leadership is socially, culturally, and contextually situated, and as such, a comprehensive, universal leadership skillset cannot exist. However, there are some transferrable skills and competencies that may help leaders in a variety of settings. These include broad, philosophical competencies such as a set of values, a sense of self, and a vision (Green & McDade, 1991) as well as more task-oriented skills such as communication, negotiation, and change management (LeMay & Ellis, 2007). A leader should have task competence related to their organization (Bass & Bass, 2008); that is, a leader should have the competence to deal with the tasks facing a particular group in a way that aligns with that group’s mission or intended outcome. At the same time, a leader should have socioemotional competence, as leadership is social and interactive in nature (Bass & Bass, 2008; Green & McDade, 1991). Leaders need to inspire and motivate (Lawson, 2011). Leaders have to be resilient and know how to manage conflict (Lawson, 2011). Leaders must be able to envision a
future and unleash their creativity while also handling managerial tasks and decision-making (Green & McDade, 1991). They should have an awareness of the role culture plays in leadership and demonstrate cross-cultural sensitivity (Lawson, 2011). Finally, a leader should have self-awareness and the ability to reflect (Komives et al., 2005; Lawson, 2011).

It should be noted that leadership is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, and none of these skills or competencies individually constitute good leadership (Zaccaro et al., 2012). Rather, leaders need “cognitive, social, personality, and motivational attributes to be effective” (p. 31). Likewise, skills needed tend to differ depending on the level of leadership within an organization (Mumford et al., 2007). As leadership structures continue to shift to a more democratic and relational model, further research is needed to explore how these traits might be shared across members of a leadership team in shared leadership settings (Zaccaro et al., 2012). Leadership development programs and processes should focus on building the skills and competencies listed in this section, as well as others related to the specific context in which the leadership is taking place.

Leadership Development Strategies

Are leaders born or made? In recent years, researchers and authors have shifted toward an understanding of leadership development that is rooted in nurture as opposed to nature. “Views of leadership have changed from the belief that leaders are simply born to the idea that the best way to learn about leadership is to study behaviors or practices of people who are viewed as leaders” (Komives et al., 2013, p. 93). Komives et al. (2013) discussed the process of leadership development as “knowing-being-doing,” which they derived from a motto used by the United States Army (p. 97-100). The knowing-being-doing process is a holistic approach to leadership development that incorporates building a conceptual knowledge and understanding of leadership,
building an awareness of self and others, and then acting on that knowledge and awareness. Also key to this process is the development of a personal leadership philosophy.

The experiences through which the knowing, being, and doing occur are often grouped into formal and informal experiences (Day, 2012; Green & McDade, 1991). Bass and Bass (2008) refer to these experiences as off-the-job and on-the-job learning, respectively, although they mention other influences on leadership development outside those categories, such as family influence and other education. For the purposes of this discussion, I will group the described experiences as either formal leadership education and training or informal leadership education and training. In the latter category, I include both structured and informal on-the-job learning, as leadership development is not the primary objective of any on-the-job leadership experience.

**Formal Leadership Education and Training**

Formal leadership education and training experiences exist with the primary purpose of aiding in a person’s leadership development. Formal leadership education and training may include workshops, seminars, classes, conference sessions, and guided internships (Green & McDade, 1991). Formal workshops or seminars may include activities such as lectures, discussions, role playing and simulations, games, evaluations and reflection, and skill or behavior modeling (Bass & Bass, 2008). Formal leadership development experiences should be designed in a context-specific way to be the most relevant to attendees (Peters & Baum, 2007). Formal leadership education and training can assist leaders in developing their knowledge, skills, values, and philosophies, effectively addressing some aspects of “knowing” and “being.” It is up to the leaders, then, to take what they have learned and apply it in their own contexts (i.e. “doing”). The success of formal leadership education and training experiences is largely
dependent on the quality of the experience itself; however, research has indicated that formal classes and activities can increase leaders’ “ability to set goals, sense of personal ethics, and willingness to take risks, along with leadership motivation, skills, and understanding” (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 1060).

**Informal Leadership Education and Training**

Informal leadership education and training, on the other hand, is learning and development that takes place in settings where it is not the primary objective. As leadership development is a lifelong process, informal leadership education often starts at a very young age (Bass & Bass, 2008). Parents who model leadership behavior and engagement have an impact on their children’s perceptions of a prototypical leader as well as their likelihood of becoming involved in leadership in the future (Anderson, 1943, in Bass & Bass, 2008; Keller, 1999). Adults that are charismatic or transformational leaders tend to have had leadership experiences in high school and college (Gibbons, 1986; Hall, 1983).

Experiential learning is widely recommended for leadership development (Day, 2012). Leaders best learn to lead by leading. While experiences should challenge learners, more research is needed to determine how much challenge is appropriate for a developing leader.

One issue that has not received much research attention is how much experiential challenge is needed to motivate leader development and how much might be too much. Specifically, if someone is placed into an experience that is much too challenging, then it is unlikely that much learning or development will occur. (Day, 2012, p. 83)

Mentors should “maximize feedback availability” during on-the-job learning to help leaders through particularly challenging experiences (p. 83).
On-the-job experience is the “primary source of learning” for leaders (Green & McDade, 1991, p. 33). Leaders taking on positional leadership roles continue to learn and grow as leaders while fulfilling the responsibilities related to that role. While formal leadership education can assist with building skills, knowledge, reflection, and perspective, informal, on-the-job learning assists with the more practical, context-specific task competence, relationship building and communication, refining values, discovering leadership temperament, and growing self-awareness. The combination of on-the-job learning and other informal leadership education experiences along with formal leadership education allows a person to develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to be a successful leader.

Day (2000, 2012) discusses another component of development; leader development, as opposed to leadership development, refers to the development of the leader as an individual. He includes metacognition and self-regulation as key skills for an individual to develop to become a successful leader. The concept of leader development as discussed by Day closely relates to the concept of leadership identity development, which I detail in the next section.

Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model

The Leadership Identity Development (LID) model, published by Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2006), goes beyond the development of leadership knowledge, skills, and behaviors to include the construction of a leadership identity. The LID model was based upon grounded theory research published by Komives et al. (2005).

LID Theory

Komives et al. (2005) set out to “understand the process a person experiences in creating a leadership identity” (p. 594). In their grounded theory research, they interviewed 13 participants, all of whom were college students who had demonstrated relational leadership
tendencies. Each participant completed three semi-structured interviews that followed Seidman’s (2019) phenomenological three-interview sequence, which is the same interview sequence I chose to use in this study. Through constant comparative analysis that involved open, axial, and selective coding, the researchers created the Developing a Leadership Identity theory, illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Developing a Leadership Identity theory (Komives et al., 2005, p. 599)**

The Developing a Leadership Identity theory includes five categories of leadership identity development (indicated by the darker lines and arrows in the illustration) and a six-stage developmental process (indicated by the light grey boxes and arrows in the illustration). The categories in this theory comprise a continuous cycle throughout a person’s life. It should be noted that the concept of a leadership identity is closely related to the social identity theory of
leadership (Hogg, 2001), which acknowledges that leaders are also members of the groups they lead, and that people in a group tend to choose leaders with whom they have a strong group identification.

The first category, developmental influences, included adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement in leadership activity, and reflective learning. These influences impacted participants differently depending on their age, experience level, and context. Together, each of these components served as the environmental context for participants’ leadership identity development. The second category, developing self, involved a deepening self-awareness, increased self-confidence, an established interpersonal efficacy, application of new skills, and expanding motivations. The third category, group influences, demonstrated the impact of engaging in group activity and interaction and learning from membership continuity. In this category, participants also demonstrated a changing perception of groups. The group influences category directly interacted with the developing self category. The fourth category, changing view of self with others, had to do with the leader’s view of their role in a group. For example, some participants wanted to be the leader, while others wanted to be on a team that led. The fifth category, broadening view of leadership, involved the evolution of participants’ understanding and definition of leadership. The differing perspectives of leadership are outlined in the six stages of the Leadership Identity theory.

The six stages as outlined in the theory include: (a) awareness, (b) exploration/engagement, (c) leader identified, (d) leadership differentiated, (e) generativity, and (f) integration/synthesis. In the awareness stage, a person is aware of leadership, but they view it as external to themselves. In exploration/engagement, a person intentionally gets involved in leadership activity, primarily as a member of a group or leadership team as opposed to a
positional role. In the leader identified stage, a person views people in a group as leaders and followers, with the leaders being people in positional roles who “do leadership” to followers. At the leadership differentiated stage, a person begins to understand that leadership is an interdependent and transactional process. When a person reaches the generativity stage, they have a commitment to larger purposes, developed beliefs and values, a personal passion for leadership and the groups and individuals they serve, and a desire to mentor and help develop future leaders. Finally, in the integration/synthesis stage, a person has “continual, active engagement with leadership as a daily process” (p. 607). Together, these five categories and six stages comprise the Developing a Leadership Identity theory.

Figure 2. Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives et al., 2006, p. 404-405)
LID Model

Komives et al. (2006) used the findings and theory from their grounded theory research to create the Leadership Identity Development model. The LID model expands upon the concepts of the five categories and six stages described in the theory above. Their model is included in Figure 2. In this model, they demonstrate how each of the categories interacts with each stage. They also broke down each stage further using “emerging,” “immersion,” and “transition” categories. They included examples and participant quotes to further describe each interaction between category and stage. While the stages are linear and people progress from one to the next, they are also cyclical in that a stage may be repeated for deeper understanding.

Wagner (2011) completed a validation study exploring the stages in the LID model. Her research confirmed stages three through six, but did not provide distinction between stages four, five, and six.
While this model provides a detailed exploration of the process of leadership identity development, it does have a few limitations. The grounded theory research was conducted using participants who demonstrated a relational approach to leadership. While it may be transferrable to other leadership approaches, the research informing the model was conducted within the context of relational leadership. Participants in both the original research (Komives et al., 2005) and the validation study (Wagner, 2011) were college-aged students. Because leadership is context-specific, researchers should consider any potential impacts of differing leadership contexts on these stages and categories.

**Leadership in Music Education**

While some leadership research and other literature exists within the music education field, most of it explores student, classroom, or program leadership in K-12 school settings rather than professional or organizational leadership. In this section, I give an overview of the leadership literature in music education. I also provide a brief overview of music teacher identity development literature, as a connection between music teacher identity and leadership identity became clear during data collection and analysis for this study.

**Music Program and Classroom Leadership**

Perhaps one of the earliest writings on leadership in music education is Landon’s (1975) book, *Leadership for Learning in Music Education*. Landon situates the music teacher as a leader, incorporating everything from learning theories, aesthetics, individualized instruction, and meeting students’ needs in the discussion of music classroom leadership. He also provides an overview of leadership theories and introduces ideas and values in line with relational and transformational leadership. While the discussions in this book are fairly broad and cover a lot of
material, especially for the time in which it was published, it is situated firmly in the context of classroom leadership.

More recently, authors have written about impacts of music teachers’ leadership behaviors on their classrooms. Williams (2014) explored a teacher’s transformational leadership within the context of a choral classroom. Through qualitative analysis of interviews, observations, and artifacts, Williams discovered that the teacher demonstrated the following characteristics that aligned with transformational leadership: setting clear, challenging goals, holding high expectations, providing support and a friendly classroom environment, establishing a sense of community, and genuinely caring about students’ needs. These leadership behaviors contributed to the overall success of the choral program. Based on these findings, Williams concluded that preservice music teacher preparation programs should include elements of leadership development.

In a study investigating the commonalities of successful secondary instrumental music educators, Vitter (2011) found that program leadership skills were imperative for student and program success. Analysis primarily focused on administrative and managerial duties a band teacher encounters rather than leadership approaches, skills, and behaviors, but Vitter did mention teachers holding leadership positions in music education professional organizations as one of those duties.

Richardson (2022) explored band directors’ construction of leadership skills, behaviors, and identity, as well as those directors’ impact on their students’ leadership development. Richardson used a multiple case study design and analysis of interviews with teachers and students to determine their paths to leadership. Directors’ leadership development began as early as their high school experiences and continued throughout their careers, driven by interactions
with mentors and critical self-reflection. The band directors’ transformational leadership and involvement of students in managerial tasks aided in students’ leadership identity development.

**Student Leadership**

Much of the leadership literature within the field of music education focuses on building student leadership in secondary, large ensemble-based music programs. Lautzenheiser (2006; 2010; 2014) has published several books on the topic of student leadership, including a high school student leadership development curriculum. While his leadership works are technically not limited to music education, his background and much of his clinic work is situated in the music education field. His student leadership curriculum involves a sequential process where students learn about leadership approaches, set goals, build communication skills, build relational leadership skills, build mentoring skills, and keep a personal leadership diary in which they reflect on their experiences (Lautzenheiser, 2014). He addresses leadership identity as well, as is demonstrated in one of his key phrases: “leadership isn’t something you do; leadership is something you are” (p. 21).

In a study of bullying behaviors in band program student leadership, Melton (2012) explored power relations between student leaders and non-leaders. Some students in the study did experience bullying and coercion from student leaders in their band programs, though none demonstrated any long-term negative effects other than “simple dislike” of those in leadership positions (p. 157). Melton suggests band directors implement a checks and balances system in student leadership and meet with student leaders regularly to avoid bullying behaviors. He also suggests making a bullying report form available to students. Melton believes music teacher education programs should intentionally address student leadership so preservice teachers can prepare to facilitate student leadership in their own programs upon graduation.
Hendricks et al. (2012) published an article for inservice orchestra teachers about the benefits of building student leadership in their programs. Benefits included increased student motivation, the ability for students to continue teaching and learning in occasions where the teacher is not present (such as outside of school or when the teacher must be absent from school), extra-musical development and growth in students, and meeting students’ needs as human beings.

It is interesting to note that most of the sources in this section (Lautzenheiser, 2006; Lautzenheiser, 2010; Lautzenheiser, 2014; Melton, 2012; Richardson, 2022; Vitter, 2011) are situated within or grew out of a K-12 band context. Much less literature exists within other music education contexts.

**Professional Leadership in Music Education**

The music classroom or program served as the context for the leadership explored in each study in this section up to this point. However, an emerging body of literature has begun to address professional leadership within music education. Most research and other literature addressing music education professional organizations focus on the importance of those organizations for music teachers, students, music teacher educators, and preservice music teachers (Gilbert, 2016; Lambert, 2012; Madsen, 2010) as well as the organizations’ role in advocating for the profession (Fehr, 2007; Madsen, 2010; Membership and Benefits, n.d.). These organizations are often led primarily by volunteer teacher-leaders or others in the profession with minimal formal leadership education. Schmidt and Robbins (2011) argued that leadership education should be included as part of music teachers’ professional development and evaluation.
We need to recognize professional development as an enterprise that relies on and supports teachers as leaders and learners who can actively shape and assess their teaching and their students’ success. Evaluation processes must look at a teacher’s work in the school community over time and with attention to issues beyond the delivery of instruction. (p. 98)

They believe that leadership should be included along with, not instead of, professional development focused on content and instruction, and that teachers should also have a dual role as leaders.

While not situated specifically within music education, Burnaford (2009) completed a study examining elementary arts teachers’ professional development within a large urban school district. Music teachers were included in this multiple case study that explored professional development in six different schools. While the study focused on professional development more broadly, one of Burnaford’s research questions involved the impact of network-based professional development on teachers’ leadership capacities. She found that teachers were eager to get involved with leadership but felt they needed their administrators’ support to do so. When arts teachers got involved in leadership at their schools, non-arts teachers learned more about what the arts teachers did, leading to increased integration and collaboration across the school.

Nolker and Ramsey (2020) examined the values and beliefs of music education professional organization teacher-leaders that represented four different generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y/Millennial, and Generation Z. While differences existed between the generations, especially regarding communication and technology use, all participants pointed to the important role that mentors played in their leadership development. In another study that used Generational Cohort Theory as a lens, Ramsey (in press) examined the
successes and struggles encountered by Gen Z student leaders of National Association for Music Education (NAfME) collegiate chapters. Effective communication, member engagement, and professionalism were paramount to the success of participants’ organization chapters, and participants viewed professional development, advocacy, and networking opportunities as the most important benefits of their involvement in NAfME.

**Music Teacher Identity Development**

The intertwining development of participants’ leadership identity and music teacher identity emerged as such a prevalent theme in data collection and analysis of this study that I decided to retroactively add a section overviewing the literature in this area to help situate the discussion. Teacher identity is a concept that synthesizes ideas from many different fields, including psychology, sociology, philosophy, and sociolinguistics (Olsen, 2008). Olsen’s (2008) teacher identity model “considers that people are products of their social histories” (p. 24) and includes dynamic interaction of reasons for entry into the profession, teacher education experience, current teaching context/practice, career plans and teacher retention, prior personal experiences, and prior professional experiences. These elements and interactions comprise a holistic, sociocultural approach to teacher identity that is constantly evolving. A sociocultural approach can also be applied to music teacher identity, acknowledging that it is individually, socially, and culturally constructed (Pellegrino, 2009).

Researchers have explored music teacher identity development in many ways. Bouij (1998) created a model of Swedish music teachers’ salient role-identities. The role-identities were situated on a dual-axis spectrum and included performer, all-round musician, pupil-centered teacher, and content-centered teacher. Draves (2014) later used Bouij’s model as a theoretical framework to explore preservice music teachers’ perceptions of their music teacher
identity. Participants viewed their music teacher identity as multifaceted, desiring to develop qualities of all four of Bouij’s role-identities. However, some experienced cognitive dissonance in the process, especially when their own cultural and social settings did not align with those in Bouij’s research. This phenomenon illustrates the idea of music teacher identity as sociocultural. Early, authentic teaching experiences and positive peer interactions and mentoring were key to participants’ music teacher identity development.

Scholars have examined both preservice (Austin et al., 2012; Ballantyne et al., 2012; Draves, 2014; Draves, 2018; Haston & Russell, 2012; Isbell, 2008; Tucker & Powell, 2021) and inservice (Draves, 2019; Kastner, 2018; Russell, 2012) music teachers’ identity development, primarily through case study and narrative research. In their international, multi-site study, Ballantyne et al. (2012) found that preservice teachers often enter music teacher education programs with a stronger musician identity that shifts toward a teacher identity as their program progresses. Interactions with professors, mentors, and cooperating teachers, authentic teaching experiences, and intentional efforts on behalf of music teacher educators to build agency and critical thinking skills all impacted preservice teachers’ music teacher identities (Draves, 2018; Haston & Russell, 2012; Isbell, 2008; Tucker & Powell, 2021). Inservice teachers’ music teacher identities continued developing through interactions with students and other music educators, continued engagement with music education conferences, continued self-development and personal identity construction, and changing view of self with others (Draves, 2019; Kastner, 2018; Russell, 2012).

**Summary**

A paradigm shift in the last few decades has resulted in a changing view of what it means to be a leader. The definition of leadership no longer centers on an autocratic, transactional
approach, but rather a more democratic, relational approach. Leadership development is a lifelong process that is driven by both formal and informal leadership education and training experiences. Some authors and researchers ascribe to the idea that construction of a leadership identity is paramount in the leadership development process.

Leadership is an under-researched area in music education literature, and professional leadership and leadership identity development are even more so. Despite evidence that professional organizations play an important role in the field, further research is needed to explore professional and organizational leadership in music education and music educators’ development of leadership skills, behaviors, and identities.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenology was to illuminate the lived experience of music educators’ leadership identity development. Through my research, I sought to answer the following questions: (a) How do successful teacher-leaders in the music education profession experience leadership identity development? (b) How do music teachers’ leadership experiences relate to their teaching experiences? (c) How, if at all, do music educators experience formal leadership education or training? and (d) How, if at all, do music educators experience informal leadership education or training? In this chapter, I first present my choice of research design and its rationale. Second, I describe the theoretical framework I used for this research as well as my researcher role and positionality. Next, I provide demographic details of my participants and my procedures for selecting them. Finally, I describe the procedures I used for data collection, analysis, and trustworthiness, and research ethics.

Design and Rationale

I chose to use a qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological method to answer the research questions that guided this study. In this section, I describe qualitative research and phenomenology. I also provide my rationale for choosing this method, including example studies from other fields whose authors used phenomenology to explore leadership identity development.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a type of academic inquiry that focuses on gaining insight into people’s perceptions, meanings, and understandings of their world and their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Context is key in qualitative research; the participants or phenomena...
being studied should always be considered within their natural environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because of its focus on understandings and lived experiences, every individual is important within qualitative research. The most fundamental concept of qualitative research is that the data are words as opposed to numbers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, collected data often include interviews, observations, journals, and other artifacts. Findings and themes emerge from the data through analysis and reflection. The researcher should collect context-specific data and analyze the data with the intention of creating a holistic account of the topic, person, or phenomena being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative researchers approach their inquiry with the epistemological assumption that people construct “subjective meanings of their experiences” through “interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 24). Because these subjective meanings are unique to each person, qualitative researchers must take care to acknowledge their own perspectives, biases, and world views, especially as they relate to the phenomenon being studied. Glesne (2011) refers to this process as researcher reflexivity, which I have detailed in the Trustworthiness and Positionality sections of this chapter. Using a qualitative approach to this research allowed me to explore the meanings of the participants’ leadership identity development through co-investigation of their stories and experiences.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is both a philosophical school of thought and an approach to research methodology that is “guided by pedagogical standards” and centers around “textural reflection on the lived experiences and practical actions of everyday life with the intent to increase one’s thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness” (van Manen, 1997, p. 4). Researchers employing
phenomenological methods are interested in exploring and trying to comprehend the very nature of lived experience. Early phenomenological thinkers were concerned by the limits of positivist, quantitative methods for exploring the depth of human experience (Laverty, 2003), especially in education research (van Manen, 1997). Therefore, phenomenology was born of a desire for “reflective interpretation” resulting in “a fuller, more meaningful understanding” of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 10).

Central to phenomenology is the concept of essence; a phenomenological researcher seeks to grasp “the very nature of the thing” or its “internal principle” (van Manen, 1997, p. 177). Essence is “what makes a thing what it is rather than its being or becoming something else” (p. 177). Edmund Husserl, who is considered the “father of phenomenology” (Peoples, 2021, p. 30), referred to essence as the “whatness” of things as opposed simply to their existence, or “thatness” (p. 177). While approaches to analysis and interpretation vary among phenomenological philosophers and researchers, the goal of discovering the essence of a lived experience is characteristic of all phenomenological research. I chose to employ a phenomenological method because I sought to illuminate the essence of music educators’ lived experience of leadership identity development. Researchers in other fields have also used a phenomenological approach to explore leadership identity development (Fought & Misawa, 2019; Heard, 2014; Madsen, 2007; Odom et al., 2012).

Several different frameworks or approaches to phenomenological research exist, each with its own philosophical assumptions and procedures. In transcendental phenomenology, based on Husserl’s thinking, the researcher attempts to discover the connection between an object of consciousness and the act of consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). This intentionality is comprised of both a noema, the phenomenon itself, and a noesis, the underlying meaning of the
phenomenon. Husserl believed that, to discover the essence of a phenomenon, the researcher must bracket and attempt to transcend their biases through a process called *epoché* (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher should approach interviews and analyses as a stranger with no prior knowledge of the phenomenon. Martin Heidegger, a philosopher once thought to be Husserl’s philosophical “heir” (Laverty, 2003, p. 24), branched off from Husserl’s work to create a different approach to phenomenology. Heidegger’s rejection of the idea that one can bracket and set aside bias or prior experience led to the creation of hermeneutic phenomenology, which I chose to use as the framework for this research.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Heidegger posited that “nothing can be encountered without reference to a person’s background understanding” (Laverty, 2003, p. 24). He believed that we are “always in the world with others in the circumstances of existence” (Peoples, 2021, p. 32), a concept to which he referred as *dasein*. Rather than trying to bracket and set aside one’s own experiences and biases, Heidegger suggested that these fore-conceptions become an active part of the interpretation. A person should not only acknowledge, but also seek to better understand the meanings they bring to interpretation of a phenomenon through a process called the hermeneutic circle (Peoples, 2021).

The hermeneutic circle is a way of understanding interpretation; as the phrase suggests, the process is circular as opposed to linear. A person takes their fore-conceptions about a phenomenon and then constantly reflects throughout the interpretive process to revise their own understanding of the meaning of that phenomenon. I engaged in the hermeneutic circle by writing about my own experiences with leadership identity development, which I included in the
Researcher Role section below. I then continued to journal throughout data collection and analysis as I revised my understanding of the phenomenon, which I detailed in the Data Analysis section of this chapter.

**Researcher Role**

In hermeneutic phenomenological research, it is important for a researcher to orient their experiences and role as they related to the topic being studied and the research procedures (van Manen, 1997). In this section, I describe my relationship to the participants and my interactions with them throughout their participation in the study, and I detail my own positionality as it relates to leadership identity development, especially within the music education field.

**Relationship to Participants**

I had pre-existing relationships with four of the participants in this study; I had previously met two of the participants through my professional network at music education conferences. Two of the participants were colleagues with whom I had previously worked closely. I did not know the remaining nine participants prior to beginning this research; I met them for the first time the day of the first interview.

**Interactions with Participants**

In hermeneutic phenomenology, “the interviewee becomes the co-investigator of the study” (van Manen, 1997, p. 98). I worked with the participants as co-investigators throughout the course of the data collection and analysis through communication and reflection. van Manen (1997) suggests that “by setting up situations conducive to collaborative hermeneutic conversations, the researcher can mobilize participants to reflect on their experiences (once these have been gathered) in order to determine the deeper meanings or themes of these experiences” (p. 99). I invited participant reflection and collaboration throughout the research process by
asking reflective interview questions, encouraging follow-up reflections via email between interviews, completing verbal member checks during each interview where I invited participants to share their thoughts on findings from the previous interview, and allowing those findings and participant feedback to inform the questions for the following interview. I was also flexible to the participants’ changing schedule needs and communicated promptly and consistently.

**Researcher Positionality**

Prior to beginning this research, I reflected on my positionality regarding my own leadership identity development. The following statement summarizes my experiences related to the phenomenon.

Growing up, I was a shy child. While the shyness waned in middle school, my introverted nature remained. However, my introverted tendencies melted away when I was on stage singing or acting. When I was asked in middle school to be a mentor for a younger singer in my extra-curricular choir program, the Charlotte Choir School, I immediately said yes. After all, working with another singer one-on-one didn’t seem too intimidating, and I felt validated as someone who had something more to give to the choir program. I thrived in that mentor role, and I served as a peer mentor every year between then and the time I graduated from high school.

In 9th grade, I joined a non-profit organization called Playing for Others (PFO). PFO is “a leadership training program that combines personal development, service, and the arts to foster leaders who are confident, compassionate, and creative” (Playing For Others, n.d.). As well as participating in this program through 12th grade, I also served as the founding Vice President of the first Teen Executive Board. My experiences in PFO and as a mentor in the Charlotte Choir School gave me the foundational leadership knowledge and skills that I needed to take on more leadership responsibility throughout my career.
In college, I was actively engaged in several professional organizations, including the North Carolina Music Educators Association and my university’s collegiate chapter of the National Association for Music Educators (NAfME). I was also a founding member of our collegiate chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and a member of the Sigma Alpha Iota music fraternity. I was elected as Historian and then Choral Chair in our NAfME chapter and was Secretary of the founding Executive Board of our ACDA chapter.

Once I began teaching, I continued to stay involved in leadership. During my first year teaching at Walter Hines Page High School, I was asked to host the Guilford County Schools high school All-County Chorus in the fall and middle school All-County Chorus in the spring. These experiences were an exciting challenge for me; they were a lot of work, but they immediately got me connected to our county-level leadership and served as important learning experiences in facility and schedule management. It was a lot to ask of a first-year teacher; in fact, the high school All-County Chorus event began the morning after my first choral concert at the school. Each event was a success, and my successful coordination of these events earned me the recognition of my colleagues and principal. At the end of my second year, my colleagues in the Fine Arts Department nominated and elected me to serve on the school’s Leadership and School Improvement Teams, upon which I served until leaving the school in 2018. I was also elected to Page’s Equity Team, which reviewed and revised policy through the lens of equity for all stakeholders.

Since embarking on a career in higher education, I have served as a peer mentor, both formally and informally, to both undergraduate and graduate students. I have also consulted with the faculty advisor of my university’s NAfME collegiate chapter and worked with the student leadership team to restart activity after the Covid-19 pandemic. Upon anecdotal realization that
my early and formalized leadership education was unique, I began to ask questions that have resulted in a research agenda related to music education professional leadership.

It is my job as the researcher to acknowledge my experiences with the phenomenon being studied – in this case, leadership identity development. My own LID was driven by both formal and informal leadership education, interactions with and invitations from mentors and other leaders, and experiential learning through hands-on leadership experiences. Throughout the design, data collection, and data analysis of this study, I revisited these biases and refined my understandings of the participants’ own experiences with LID through use of the hermeneutic circle and trustworthiness measures detailed later in this chapter.

Participants

Participant Recruitment and Selection

I began participant recruitment upon receiving IRB exemption in the spring of 2021. I sent recruitment materials to the President of every NAfME-affiliated state Music Educators Association (MEA) as well as the current President, President-elect, and Immediate Past President of four national music education professional organizations. I compiled the contact list for these leaders using publicly available contact information on the associations’ websites or through contact forms on their websites. In total, I attempted to reach 63 potential participants through my recruitment contacts. I sent an initial recruitment email to each potential participant as well as a follow-up email to those from whom I did not receive a response to the first email.

I received 25 replies to my recruitment materials. Since I was interested in exploring the LID of music educators who are still teaching (therefore serving as teacher-leaders), I first used criterion sampling, described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) as a process through which the researcher “decide[s] what attributes of your sample are crucial to your study and then find
people or sites that meet those criteria” (p. 97). For this study, I employed the following participant selection criteria:

- A person currently serving as either the President of a state MEA, or a President, President-elect, or Immediate Past President (or comparable role) in a national music education professional organization.
- A person currently teaching in a K-12 music setting or in higher education (within the field of music education)

Potential participants had to meet both of the above criteria to be considered. The criterion sampling left me with a remaining pool of 17 potential participants, at which point I employed purposive, maximum variation sampling to select the participants that would represent the most diversity with regards to demographics, geographical location, and professional background. Maximum variation sampling strengthens phenomenological research because it provides “widely varying instances of the phenomenon” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 98).

Polkinghorne (1989, in Creswell & Poth, 2018) suggests researchers include from 5 to 25 participants in phenomenological research. Upon examining the demographic and professional information voluntarily provided by potential participants, I selected 15 to include in this research. The 15 participants represented maximum variety while avoiding over-saturation of the data. After participant selection but prior to the first interview, two of the selected participants withdrew from the study. The remaining 13 participants continued involvement for the duration of the study. Because the two participants that withdrew did so before any data were collected, they are not included in the demographic information below or in the presented data or discussion.
Participant Demographic Information

Participants in this study represented variety in both demographics and professional background. The participants voluntarily provided all demographic and professional background information reported in this section. Five of the participants identified as male; eight identified as female. Their number of years in the music education profession ranged from 14-43. Seven participants were band specialists, five were choral specialists, three were string specialists, two were elementary/general music specialists, and two also taught contemporary music and/or songwriting (the total number here exceeds 13 because some participants identified themselves as specialists in more than one of these areas). Five of the participants were currently in teaching positions in K-12 schools; eight participants were currently in postsecondary music education teaching positions. Six participants were serving as national leaders at the time of this study; seven were serving as President of a state MEA. Participants represented 10 different states from all four geographical regions of the United States. All participants in this study were White; upon reviewing the pool of 17 potential participants for maximum variation sampling, none of the respondents were people of color despite two waves of recruitment contacts. The lack of racial diversity in the participants is a limitation of this research and may indicate an underrepresentation of people of color in music education professional organization leadership across the United States. I discussed the need for future research identifying barriers people of color face in music education leadership in chapter six.

Below is a table of the demographics and background information of each participant. I used pseudonyms and did not disclose the participants’ geographical region to protect their anonymity.
Table 1. Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years in MUE</th>
<th>Teaching Context</th>
<th>Music Specialty Areas (Primary Listed First)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Choir, elementary/general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Band, contemporary music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Band, contemporary music, songwriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Band, strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrice</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Elementary/general, choir, band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Higher Ed.</td>
<td>Strings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedures

Data Collection

Data collection took place over the course of four months from May to August of 2021. A sequence of three semi-structured interviews with each participant served as the primary data for this study. I also asked participants to follow up with me via email if they had any additional reflective thoughts or leadership experiences between interviews that they wanted to share.
When I received such emails, I included them as written data and analyzed them with the interview transcripts.

Interviews should comprise the primary data source in phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997). Since participant context and reflection is key in hermeneutic phenomenology, I chose to employ Seidman’s (2019) three-interview sequence. In the first interview, I asked participants to reconstruct their “focused life history” (p. 21) as it related to the phenomenon of their leadership identity development (LID). This discussion included a description of their personal and professional background, their journey to the music education profession, and their journey to leadership. In the second interview, the participants described the “details of the lived experience” (p. 22) of the phenomenon itself. Finally, in the third interview, participants “reflect[ed] on the meaning of the experience that we explored in interview two” (p. 23). As is consistent with qualitative research practice, data collection and analysis took place concurrently; between interviews, I completed data analysis (detailed in the following section) in preparation for the next interview.

All interviews took place over Zoom, and the interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes each. I used Zoom’s recording tool to capture the audio files, which I saved in de-identified form. I then had each de-identified audio recording professionally transcribed by Windy City Transcriptions. During my first listen-through of each interview during data analysis, I also double-checked the transcriptions for accuracy and made adjustments where necessary. Transcripts were saved in de-identified form for analysis.
Data Analysis

Data analysis is a constant, ongoing process in hermeneutic phenomenology. It begins when the researcher reflects on their positionality and understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher then seeks to revise their understanding through conversations and reflections with the participants. van Manen (1997) describes hermeneutic phenomenological reflection as the process through which the researcher attempts to discover the essence, or essential meaning, of the phenomenon.

Thematic analysis is key to hermeneutic phenomenological reflection. “Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience” (van Manen, 1997, p. 79, emphasis in original). Themes, therefore, serve as the foundational building blocks that comprise the essence. In hermeneutic phenomenology, thematic analysis takes place through the interaction between the parts and the whole (Peoples, 2021). While there is no one correct way to analyze data in this method, van Manen (1997) suggests three potential approaches to thematic analysis: (a) a wholistic or sententious approach, where the researcher reads the text as a whole and then tries to determine a phrase that expresses the significance of that text, (b) a selective or highlighting approach, where the researcher listens or reads through a text multiple times and then selects particularly meaningful statements that describe the phenomenon, and (c) a detailed or line-by-line approach, where the researcher specifically considers every sentence or sentence cluster for its meaning to the phenomenon. I chose to employ the highlighting approach in this research because it allowed me to move between the “whole” and the “parts” of the data without feeling too far removed from the participants.
Coding

While reading through each interview transcript, I identified the meaningful statements and then coded them using HyperResearch qualitative research software. Though I used software to maintain a codebook and highlight the meaningful statements, I manually coded and did not use any auto-coding feature. At points where I started to feel distanced from the data during analysis, I played the audio recording from the interview while I read to lessen the distance between myself and the participants (Peoples, 2021).

I used descriptive and in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016) to identify the meaningful statements in the interview transcripts. When using descriptive coding, a researcher assigns a representative word or phrase to a selection of data that describes or summarizes the statement. When using in vivo coding, the researcher uses the participant’s own words as the representative code. The coding process resulted in 137 unique codes. I then used the code links to revisit the meaningful statements within context of the interview transcripts during reflection, journaling, synthesis, and writing.

Journaling

Reflective journaling is an important part of phenomenological reflection and “one way in which a hermeneutic circle can be engaged, moving back and forth between the parts and whole of the text” (Heidegger, 1962 in Laverty, 2003, p. 30). I journaled consistently throughout the entire research process; I began with my self-reflective positionality statement and then journaled after each conversation with each participant, throughout coding of every interview, and during synthesis of the themes. In total, I wrote 55 pages of journals, in which I reflected on the participants’ meaningful statements, the “what” and “how” of their experiences, the meaning they seemed to draw from those experiences, my own evolving understanding of the
phenomenon in light of their statements, and follow-up questions I wanted to ask them related to the findings. I read back through these journals before each interview and while writing the manuscript. They served as a way to make connections between the “parts” (codes and meaningful statements) and the “whole” of the text and essence of the phenomenon. Together with the coded significant statements from the interviews, I used the insights from the journals and input from the participants to determine the themes.

**Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that broad generalizability is not the goal; rather, a qualitative researcher strives for transferability (sometimes called reader generalizability) of the findings to other people in similar contexts to those in a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Similarly, qualitative researchers address the trustworthiness or validation of a study instead of validity and reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). van Manen (2014) suggests phenomenological researchers address the following questions:

- Is the study based on a valid phenomenological question? (i.e. lived human experience)
- Is analysis performed on experientially descriptive accounts or transcripts? (i.e. accounts of lived experience rather than beliefs or opinions on a topic)
- Is the study rooted in primary and scholarly literature rather than secondary or tertiary sources?
- Does the study avoid trying to legitimate itself with validation criteria derived from sources that are concerned with other methodologies?

Prior to beginning this project, I designed my research in such a way that I could answer “yes” to each of these questions. Additionally, I employed member checks, thick, rich description, researcher reflexivity, and peer review as trustworthiness measures in this research.
**Member Checks**

Through member checks, a researcher can check the credibility of the findings by seeking participant feedback while data collection and analysis are ongoing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) also extend member checking to include participant collaboration, which is consistent with the co-investigator role expected of participants in phenomenological research (van Manen, 1997).

Throughout data collection and analysis, I completed member checks in both written and verbal form. At each interview after the first, I verbally presented the findings from the data analysis of the previous interview and asked for thoughts, reflections, clarifications, or corrections. When participants gave verbal feedback, it was captured in the interview transcript for later coding and analysis. I also made notes in my reflective journals where appropriate. Upon completion, I sent each participant their written portrait to review. Of the 13 participants, 10 responded either confirming that they agreed with their representation in their portrait or sent edits and clarifications. Three participants did not respond to the request for feedback.

**Thick, Rich Description**

Thick, rich description of themes and participants’ context aid in the reader’s ability to use the findings based on shared characteristics, thus increasing its transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). “Detail can emerge through physical description, movement description, and activity description.” (p. 263). In this research, I created thick, rich descriptions of each participant’s background and setting (Chapter 4) and each theme (Chapter 5).

I also addressed each of van Manen’s (1997) four fundamental existentials in my descriptions. They include spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality. Spatiality is the “felt space” (p. 102) or the way we experience the physical dimensions of space. Corporeality is
the “phenomenological fact that we are always bodily in the world” (p. 103) and relates to physical presence in any given instance. Temporality is the “subjective time as opposed to clock time or objective time” (p. 104). We may feel time passes more quickly or slowly depending on our circumstances. Finally, relationality is “the lived relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them” (p. 104). While I included aspects of all four existentials in my descriptions, relationality was particularly poignant because so much of the participants’ leadership identity development was the result of informal interactions with role models, mentors, and colleagues.

**Researcher Reflexivity**

A researcher engaging in reflexivity acknowledges the effect that their positionality has on their research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A positionality statement should include assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation. In hermeneutic phenomenology, researcher reflexivity is a vital component of the hermeneutic circle. Prior to collecting data, I reflected on my own positionality (included in this chapter) and continued to revise my understanding of the phenomenon as data collection and analysis progressed.

**Peer Review**

A peer review of research involves an external check of methods, meanings, and interpretations by someone not involved in the data collection or analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing of this research, I met weekly with my Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC) Chair to discuss progress and reflect on the findings. I also discussed findings informally with colleagues. My DAC Chair read through each chapter of the manuscript several times and provided feedback, and I provided a complete manuscript draft to my full committee for review and input.
Ethics

Upon my Dissertation Advisory Committee’s approval of my dissertation proposal, I submitted this research for review by UNCG’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB determined that participation in this study posed minimal risk to the participants and exempted it from further review. I protected participants’ anonymity by using pseudonyms, removing any identifiers from their quotes used in the manuscript, de-identifying data before storing it, and storing the data in an encrypted folder on my password-protected computer and in Box, UNCG’s highest-security digital cloud storage platform.

Throughout data collection and analysis, I communicated procedures with the participants. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the interview process “works within an environment of safety and trust, that needs to be established at the outset and maintained throughout the project” (Laverty, 2003, p. 29). Prior to the first interview and before each subsequent interview, I reminded participants that answering any question is voluntary, and they may opt out of answering a question at any time. If they made a statement or told a story and then subsequently asked me not to include that particular statement or anecdote in the manuscript, I respected their wishes. I also reiterated that there were no “right” answers to the interview questions, and that I was not expecting or seeking a particular answer. In addition to the trustworthiness measures detailed above, I checked in with participants throughout the process via email to confirm that they still wished to move forward with participation in the study and was flexible to their scheduling needs. I strove to maintain a friendly, transparent, and collaborative rapport with participants throughout data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER IV: PORTRAITS

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide portraits containing descriptions of each participant’s personal and professional background and how their early experiences shaped their views of both leadership and the music education profession. I then discuss their lived experiences with leadership identity development throughout their lives and careers and the meanings they have drawn from those experiences.

Laura – “Humble and Kind”

At the time of this study, Laura had been a music educator for 28 years. Prior to her current position as a high school choral director, she taught middle school choir and elementary general music. She was in the middle of her term as current President of her state’s Music Educators Association (MEA) when we began our conversations.

As we discussed her background, it quickly became evident that Laura’s family has always been a strong influence in her life, both personally and professionally. Her parents provided the opportunity for piano lessons and took her to sing at church from a young age, and she loved to play “school” with her sisters. She said, “I knew I wanted to be a teacher when I was like seven years old. I loved to teach my younger sisters and play school and give them grades and all that stuff, but I didn’t realize that I would be a music teacher I think until eighth grade when I first took chorus” (Interview 1). Her choir teacher that year was an influential role model for her, and it was their interactions and her feelings of success in choir that caused Laura to begin thinking about becoming a music teacher. Laura’s husband and her desire to be a mother also played a large part in her early career.
To understand what happened you have to know that I met my husband to whom I’m married right now and have been married to for thirty-two years – I met him when I was a senior in high school. When I left for college, I was also leaving him… I just could not get over the homesickness that I had. So, when I went to [a university closer to home] and I auditioned to come in the spring, they said to me, “Are you sure you want to be an education major? Why are you not a performer?” At that moment I thought, well gosh, maybe I could make it as a performer. But in my mind, being a performer meant that I could not be a mom. I was in love and knew that I would get married young. I wanted to have children and be married. So I said no, I don’t want to be a performer; I really want to be in music education. And I loved school; I loved being in school. (Interview 1)

By the time she graduated from college, Laura was married to her husband and expecting their first child. She chose to work in church music for a while before entering the schools as a choir teacher.

While she did serve as her high school choir’s Vice President, Laura’s leadership experience started in earnest after becoming an in-service teacher. She served first on the middle school choral board of her state’s MEA, then as a district President. Once she began teaching high school choir, she served on the high school choral board, where she eventually became Chair. She was also the Coordinator for a state-level honors chorus before becoming the President of her state’s MEA.

While she did have some experiences with formal leadership education in the form of a weekend leadership clinic and a few elective classes taken during her graduate studies, informal observations and interactions with influential role models and mentors drove Laura’s leadership identity development.
I recognize that I have been greatly affected by very strong leaders in my life. I watch them and try to draw from people, especially leaders, that I respect and look up to. I draw from them; what are things that they’re doing that I really am attracted to? That really speaks to me? (Interview 2)

Laura had several music educators that modelled teacher-leadership for her. First was her high school choir teacher, who was also the President of a state music education organization at the time.

You know, I’ll be honest with you, when I was a young leader, I think that my relationship with my former choir teacher and the fact that she was [the organization’s] President and I was one of her students made me feel proud. I was proud of her, and I wanted to emulate that. (Interview 3)

It wasn’t just passive observation of her high school teacher that was impactful; Laura and her classmates were given opportunities to be involved with her teacher’s leadership tasks simply because they were around and willing to help.

We spent time in class putting stamps on letters and licking envelopes and sealing them and stuffing the papers in envelopes about music performance adjudications – back then it was called “festival.” So, we helped her; I didn’t know really what I was doing, why I was doing what I was doing, I just knew that she was a leader and we helped her in class… All the things that she was doing definitely helped cement me in getting a leadership role. (Interview 1)

While in college, one of her choral directors also modelled professional leadership.
I just loved [the director] and being in that women’s choir really has made me who I am today. I mean, she was a leader in ACDA, and my senior year we went and sang for a conference for ACDA. [Before that,] I didn’t know the ACDA conference existed.

(Interview 1)

Throughout her own professional leadership, Laura struggled to find her leadership identity and fought impostor feelings brought on by a fear of what others thought about some of her personal life choices. In our first interview, when asked the first time she felt like a leader, she replied:

Even though I’ve had leadership positions and I have served on a Board for [my state MEA] since I was twenty-five years old, I don’t think I felt like a leader. Oh my God, Nicole, I don’t even know that I feel like a leader now! I just – I don’t know. I think people look up to me but I don’t – I’m not aware of that until somebody says that to me and I’m like “oh, okay.” (Interview 1)

When we further explored these feelings in the second interview, she admitted to a fear of judgement from others.

One of my problems I think was, and I see this in other young people that I feel are nervous speaking up, is my personal life affected how I thought of myself as a leader. So, always in the back of my mind was, I got married at 19, I had a baby at 22, I had another one at 24. It was until I had my last child at 29 that I let myself feel okay about that. And there was nothing wrong with me getting married that young! There was nothing wrong with me having kids that young. But as the comments were made to me by people at church, people at work… that affected my impostor syndrome as a leader. (Interview 2)
She mentioned that, while the impostor feelings have gotten better with more leadership experience and with age, they have never entirely gone away.

The deep-rooted impact that Laura’s family has had on her leadership is still present in her current leadership. Her daughter and son-in-law have since joined the music education profession and are following in her footsteps as teacher-leaders. She took care to mention the importance of her husband’s support of her professional leadership, as it sometimes requires her to be away from home more than she’d like. Finally, she ended our last interview with a leadership quality that she says her father and grandmother instilled in her – “be humble and kind.”

**Abigail – “Right Place at the Right Time”**

Abigail was a leader long before she became a music teacher. Whether it was being the cheerleading captain in high school, holding officer roles in clubs at school, or being a leader in Girls State, a program that teaches high schoolers about leadership and the American government, Abigail often found leadership “thrust upon” her. When asked how she got involved in leadership so young, she accredited some of it simply to “being in the right place at the right time” (Interview 1). However, she also had a family that instilled leadership as a value from when she was young.

I saw my parents be in a lot of organizations. In a small town – well, I suppose that’s true in any organization or town or city – but it’s always the same kind of 10% of people that do a lot of the organizing. My parents were in a lot of leadership positions in their community activities. (Interview 2)

In her first interview, she said “I guess I’ve always kind of felt like a leader.” We reflected on this statement a bit more in the second interview.
Maybe it’s just so inherent in me that I don’t see any other way to be. Like I said before, I looked at my parent’s example. And my brother was a school principal and now he’s a second career pastor so he’s always had leadership roles. I guess that’s just kind of been expected. (Interview 2)

Of all participants in this study, Abigail had been a music educator for the longest time. She was in her 43rd year in the profession and was teaching music education courses as an adjunct professor after having retired from her previous 7th – 12th grade choral teaching position. She taught in small schools and stayed connected with the surrounding community. As a teacher from a small school, she initially felt intimidated by the idea of taking on professional leadership roles that were primarily dominated by teachers from larger schools in her region. Much of her leadership identity development was driven by encouragement and invitation from others.

*Abigail:* [A current leader in my state’s MEA] and I went down to the cafeteria – we had lunch together – and she said, “I want to ask you to be the All-State Chorus Chair.” And I’m like, “oh no, what?” [laughs]. I said, “there are, like, 300 other people that would be better at this than me.” And she said, “no, and here’s why” and she starting ticking off all these different reasons why she thought that I would be a good fit for that, so I said yes.

*Nicole:* What reasons did she give you, do you remember?

*Abigail:* Well for one thing, I was a small school director, and she thought that would be helpful because in [my state] it’s hugely advantageous to be from a big school because you can have a maximum of 28 kids [audition]. So, if you’re the teacher at [a big school], they’ve got more than 28 kids that want to do this. So, their 28 are going to be awesome, stellar, perfect, wonderful. I mean they’re going to be really good. At a small school, it would be almost unheard of to have 28 kids that want to audition for All State because
it’s a lot of work and the odds of getting in are very small. It’s a whole different perspective, and the big schools have always wanted to get more. Why only 28, why can’t we have 32 or 36? I get that your 29th person is probably better than my best kid.

So I think they wanted someone with more of a small school perspective. (Interview 2)

She described similar scenarios for each of her music education leadership roles; she would often be asked or invited to take on a role. This led to her perception that music education leadership is partially driven by “who you know.”

Observations of mentors and role models also played a part in Abigail’s leadership identity development.

I appreciated learning from other people when I was the newbie. I looked up to the people in the organization that were the leaders like “oh, they are gods and goddesses, they know everything.” And then years pass and they retire, and all of a sudden you realize that that’s you - you are the ones that have been there for a really long time and you have the experience. You have wisdom and ideas to share, and you should [laughs]!

(Interview 2)

When asked if she had any formal leadership education, she quickly replied “No, nope, nothing. Just on-the-job learning.” (Interview 2) In fact, she described interactions she had with colleagues that attended leadership workshops as being vague and riddled with “buzzwords.”

You can tell when people have been to some sort of leadership workshop; I don’t care what it is. It doesn’t have to be the music profession - the same buzzwords keep coming back and it’s like, oh my gosh, they’re all drinking the same Kool-Aid, you know? I mean it just seems to me so vague and so “okay, this is this year’s mantra and we’re going to do these bullet points or these mission statements” or whatever it is, and to me I
think leadership needs to be more organic and, again, there is a value to peoples’ experience. (Interview 3)

Instead of formal leadership education, she described her experiences with on-the-job learning as a trial-and-error process where she figured out the “systems that worked for [her].” She also said that she learned to be a leader by being a teacher.

I would say that teaching makes you a leader, especially if you’re teaching a choir or a band, because if you can’t get up in front of a group of people and lead them to do what you want them to do, you will not succeed. (Interview 2)

Her leadership identity was clearly tied to her music teacher identity; when asked for examples of leadership, she often answered with examples from her teaching. Similarly, she said she tries to “think like a teacher” when leading, especially in situations where she is coordinating professional development opportunities or conferences (Interview 3). Ultimately, her family’s influence, her interactions with mentors, and her own teaching and leadership experiences helped to shape Abigail’s leadership identity.

Sophia – The “Bell Sheep”

Sophia was serving as the current President of her state’s MEA during our conversations. Formerly an elementary general and secondary choral music teacher, she was currently both a Professor of Music and Associate Dean at a university. Along with her administrative duties, she taught music education and music technology courses. Her decision to go into higher education was largely due to an invitation from a faculty member at a local university for whom she had served as a cooperating teacher for student teachers.

A person at [the local university] called me up and said, “We are looking for a choral music education person and I think you should apply.” I said, “I don’t have my
Doctorate.” I had my Master’s at that point; I got a Master’s in choral conducting while I was teaching, but I said, “I don’t have a PhD,” and she said, “Well, just apply.”

(Interview 1)

She wound up being hired for the position with the condition of Ph.D. completion by the time she stood for tenure. After completing both, she was eventually asked to move into administration as well.

Sophia’s role within her family dynamic played into her early leadership identity development.

I think I’ve always been a leader… I’m the last of a family of six so I have five older brothers and sisters who are all very different personalities. I love being from a large family, but in my family, in every generation there is somebody they call the “bell sheep.” You know, when you have a flock of sheep the lead sheep always has a bell around his neck to guide the rest to where they go. My aunt was the bell sheep of her generation and my siblings have always called me the bell sheep of our generation.

(Interview 1)

Her well-developed leadership identity and natural aptitude for leadership led her to become involved in her university’s NAfME Collegiate chapter during her undergraduate studies. She also got involved in state-level leadership fairly early in her teaching career through adjudication and serving on various committees in her state’s MEA. Her involvement eventually led to a district Presidentship, which then led to her current role as state President.

Other than a NASM training day for new Department Chairs and some mentoring structured into her current Presidency, Sophia never experienced formal leadership education or
training. When asked what informal experiences had contributed to her leadership development, she replied,

Role models, most definitely. A mentor of mine from the Adjudicated Events Committee, who’s probably 10 to 15 years older than I am - a strong female role model - I learned how to run a meeting from her because she was very good at it. That was certainly very valuable. (Interview 2)

It wasn’t only interactions with role models that impacted Sophia, however. Sometimes interactions with people she did not want to emulate were just as impactful.

I had a really horrible Dean that was inconsiderate. Inconsiderate of people’s time. Inconsiderate of people’s personal lives. That boundary between work/life balance was non-existent for him. One time we had a snow day and he called an emergency meeting, on the snow day, at a local restaurant that he enjoyed, and we were there for like four hours. First of all, it was a snow day and I live 35 minutes from the university so I had to drive in this awful weather to sit in a meeting with him, at a restaurant that I detested, for about four hours while he ranted and raved because he was a paranoid kind of person. It was unproductive, it was reckless in terms of our safety, and it was a waste of time. It makes people resentful when their time is wasted. (Interview 2)

Sophia took what she learned from positive and negative role models and synthesized it into a leadership style that worked best for her.

While she didn’t have any formal leadership education experiences, she had actively sought out more information about how to be a better leader. Most of her sources came from outside of the music education field, whether it was reading more generalized leadership books or talking to her sister who works in business.
I do tend read articles on leadership at times. I don’t actively seek out webinars or that kind of thing but, in my social media or in my on-line news consumption, I tend to get those topics in my feed. So I’ve read a lot of articles. Most of them are business focused, so I will read articles and think “oh yeah, I could do that” or “I could apply that idea in my own leadership.” My sister is a banker in a leadership role and she and I do often talk about leadership because our worlds are vastly different but, in many ways, we run into the same kinds of problems with employees and motivating people to accomplish large tasks or immediate tasks or things like that. So, we do have conversations about that.

She’s had probably way more formal leadership training than I have just because in the banking industry, well she has an MBA, so I know she had some of that kind of coursework in her Masters Degree, and in the bank that she has worked for she’s had a lot more formal corporate leadership development than I have. (Interview 2)

Sophia also mentioned the impact that being a woman has had on her leadership identity development.

I am often the only or one of a few females on some of the committees that I serve on or meetings that I sit in. I had always felt supported as a female leader by my mentors until I had that really awful Dean I was telling you about. He was the reason I did not want to be an administrator anymore, because I did not feel valued or equal as a leader with my male colleagues by him and that was intolerable for me. So that’s really the only position I feel I’ve ever stepped back from voluntarily because you have to feel valued as a leader. (Interview 1)
Fortunately, she had many strong female role models and mentors in leadership that helped her through the years. Now, Sophia is passionate about mentoring the next generation of female leaders in music education.

I’m very intentional about mentoring my students, especially my female students. I think a lot of it is just by example and perhaps presenting it as an opportunity down the road. You know, “right now you’re a department chair, but we’re going to have an opening at the associate dean’s level in a few years because I know this person is retiring” or “I’m retiring and you know that might be something you want to think about,” just to plant some of those seeds. And then teaching by example and modeling effective behaviors or talking through situations with them if somebody has a conflict that comes up.

(Interview 3)

Through her informal observations and interactions, Sophia has developed into a confident and successful leader that is willing and able to share her wisdom with others.

Evan – “What if We’ve Been Doing This Wrong?”

Though Evan was one of the youngest participants in this study with 16 years as a music educator, he was already a dynamic and accomplished leader. His passion for the work he had done in music education leadership stemmed from a meaningful shift in his definition of “success” in the profession. When he graduated, Evan took a teaching position that was very different from the one in which he grew up.

My school growing up was predominantly White in a White suburb, privileged, a decent amount of money; in [my state] we were called a Class-A high school… we went to the festivals, got all the high ratings, college band directors knew who we were. So that was my growing up, and as I entered college my definition of success was to play the hardest
music, achieve the highest ratings, people know your name, etcetera. So then I got my first job and my first job is in this rural, agricultural community… it was everything that my educational experience wasn’t. It was kids with pretty low motivation levels, it was very low socioeconomic conditions, it was an agricultural community, something I had absolutely no experience in whatsoever, and it turned out to be the greatest thing that could have ever happened. (Interview 1)

Evan’s experience teaching the students at this school led to a fundamental shift in his own teaching philosophy and challenged his beliefs about what “good” music education is. After a few years of teaching, he attended a student composition concert at a state conference.

I just sat there and effectively cried for 90 minutes. I told student teachers of mine and other teachers I have never felt more inadequate as a musician myself but also never felt more motivated as a music educator. So that started this whole huge journey of going okay, what if we’ve been doing this wrong? What if the goal is not who can play the most scales, who can technically achieve whatever benchmark; what if our goal is more personalized and centers on the expression and the ability to create instead of performance? (Interview 1)

Since having this epiphany, Evan has completely shifted his music program. At the time of our conversations, in addition to teaching large ensemble band classes, his program also included ukulele, songwriting, and two History of Rock classes. He also brought his new approach to his band classes.

One of my teaching goals, and I’m gonna do it at some point, gosh darn it, is to have a concert where I am not seen whatsoever. Like a full band concert, not a chamber concert. Full band concert that goes completely conductorless. They create the program. We
would rehearse it together but then concert night I get to sit out in the audience for the entire darn thing. (Interview 2)

Evan’s inclusive teaching philosophy, along with an invitation from a colleague, is what drove him to become involved with a sort of “alternative” festival through his state’s MEA. While other organizations in his state ran what he considered more “traditional” festivals, his colleague was interested in hosting a more interactive music experience for students, clinicians, and audience. He later began hosting this new festival at his school.

Slowly but surely our idea, our clinic, started to really gain traction. What started as one site, seven schools, in four years was four sites, four weekends a year, seventy-five bands. People are now joining our organization to come because of that shift that you and I talked about earlier, right, like what’s the point of what we’re doing? (Interview 1)

Evan’s successful leadership of this event led to more leadership opportunities within his MEA and eventually resulted in his election as the state President.

While he acknowledged that there may have been some implicit leadership education embedded in his music education coursework, Evan said that his own leadership development has been exclusively informal. He primarily attributes it to the trial-and-error of his leadership experiences and to conversations he has with mentors and fellow music educators. When discussing his own state conference, he posited that “the best professional development comes from the conversations after the sessions.” (Interview 2) His interaction-based leadership development was also confirmed by the fact that he would rather reach out to a person to discuss best practices rather than sit down and read research. He describes this as a sort of “co-reflection” that allows practitioners to come together to discuss what is working and what isn’t. Driven by his shifting teaching philosophy and affirmed through interaction and trial-and-error
with leadership experiences, Evan’s leadership within his organization has led to a breath of fresh air for his organization.

Nathan – “In the Trenches”

Having been a music educator for 35 years at the time our conversations began, Nathan was one of the most experienced teachers I interviewed for this research. The beginning of his career was anything but ordinary; after graduating with his undergraduate degree, Nathan moved to Nigeria, where he taught music at a boarding school for five years before moving back to the United States. Upon coming back, he took a position teaching 7th – 12th grade choir and has taught at the same school ever since.

Nathan’s teaching identity and leadership identity were clearly intertwined. Many of the early leadership experiences he described were also teaching experiences.

[I was] section leader of the choir. I would lead some rehearsals as needed. I remember when we went on choir tours, several of us could rehearse the choir through the song. This was a smaller college; no teaching assistants or anything like that. So, I guess we were the assistants. (Interview 1)

While he didn’t take on professional organization leadership in college, Nathan and his colleagues were members of their college’s NAfME chapter. It wasn’t until he was elected as District Choir Chairperson for his state’s MEA that he began holding professional leadership roles. After serving in a few smaller district roles, he was asked to be a district President and then the state President. As we discussed his progression into higher levels of leadership responsibility, it became clear that invitation from other leaders was a driving motivator behind his continued involvement.
I think [my state] does a really good job as far as recognizing people with leadership abilities and if they’re not in, you know, maybe the Presidential positions, we have them on the Advisory Board. We really try to find their areas of expertise… I think we have a good system in place where we tap our leadership potential. (Interview 1)

It was through this practice of tapping into leadership potential that Nathan continued accepting leadership positions to which he was invited.

Nathan did not have any formal leadership education experiences. Other than some shadowing built into the structure of his presidency, he had primarily developed as a leader through on-the-job learning and observing other leaders. He gave an example of learning through trial-and-error that he called the “oh no second.”

My very first email that I sent out to my membership, I pushed the send button and I realized, oh, wait, I did not correct something. I don’t remember what it was at this point in time, but within the next few minutes (laughs) I had to send out another email to all our membership giving them some of the correct information because I hadn’t updated something. That always sticks with me – that “oh no” second. (Interview 2)

Because of this experience, Nathan said he always proofreads his emails twice before he sends them out to the membership.

Nathan also liked to learn by watching others lead. He described an experience he had during a meeting of several state leaders where he got frustrated by some of the participants’ egos.

I’m gonna put it bluntly, they like the sound of their own voice. And sometimes I get tired of it, because when they’re “the expert” sometimes they don’t have the flexibility. I
saw a lot of good leaders, but I also saw a lot of those that I started to tune out because I didn’t like the way it was going. (Interview 2)

The frustration that he felt in dealing with the his colleagues’ egos led Nathan to adopt a more relational leadership style to which he referred as being “in the trenches.”

It’s being the person that’s in charge, but not the person that’s sort of out there up and above everybody else. Being in the trenches still with everybody else; that is my preferred style. I still do consider myself an introvert, so being in a position of leadership is a little bit out of my comfort zone. But it’s being there within the mix, looking to other people for their input. (Interview 2)

These interactions with others allowed him to continue to grow as a leader, as well. When speaking about the time he had observing and interacting with the past President of his organization, he said “without those interactions I would have had no clue as to what I was doing.” (Interview 3) Nathan has been able to overcome the lack of formal leadership education or training through thoughtful and purposeful interaction and observation that has helped him develop into a successful leader.

**Patrice – “I’m an Anomaly”**

Patrice was a fiery and outgoing K-12 music teacher in her 29th year in the profession when we spoke. Her passion for music was evident from a very young age.

The way our school was designed, we didn’t have a second story. The kindergarten room was above the cafeteria. Nap time was always at the time for beginning band downstairs, so I’d drag the mat over to the vent where I could hear the music. I never took a nap; I would lay there – of course they made you lay down – I would lay there with my ear next to the vent so I could hear the music. (Interview 1)
When an unexpected medical leave left her high school band without a teacher, she filled in while the sub sat in the classroom. It was then that she knew she wanted to be a music teacher. When we began our conversations, she had been teaching at her current school for 26 years and was serving as her MEA’s state President.

Patrice described herself as “an anomaly,” which was true in many facets of her career and leadership. She grew up on a farm in a rural part of her state attended a small school. It was because of this background that she had a true passion for working at small, rural schools. In her state, Patrice was an anomaly as a high-profile leader from a small school. In fact, she did not get involved in leadership until late in her career because “teaching in a small school, I thought no one cared what I had to say. So, my first leadership experience truly was only six years ago.” (Interview 2) She was also unique in that she taught all grades, K-12, and all music at her school. It wasn’t until she was specifically asked to get involved in leadership in her state’s MEA that she obliged.

It felt really good just being asked, but quite honestly, I took it thinking I wouldn’t get chosen. I wouldn’t get voted in. So, when I did, I was shocked. Because I was running against a suburban teacher in [a large nearby city]. And so, I thought, “there’s no way that I’m gonna get it.” And it was shocking to me when I did. So I think my background, because typically the leadership in our organization has been suburban, and the few that have been in a more rural setting have been bigger schools, mid-sized, larger, not anything like mine by any means. You know, I teach elementary, choir, band – I teach everything music-related on a daily basis. No one has ever been the President of the organization that taught everything. So, I think that is what has been good for me is
bring that unique perspective. I think one of the hardest things for me was just thinking of myself as a leader. (Interview 2)

Her small, rural school background was not the only thing that made Patrice question her leadership identity. She was also surrounded almost exclusively by male leaders. In fact, she said “since 1938, I’m only the 2nd woman that’s ever led the organization.” (Interview 2) Her identities as a woman and as a teacher from a small school impacted each of the leadership experiences that she shared. Until recently, she had struggled to view herself as a leader because of her interactions with others who questioned her authority. Fortunately, she received advice from her past President; he reiterated that the organization members wanted her to lead them – that’s why she was there.

That [advice] really helped me. Especially as a woman, you know, and from a small school. Because all these guys are from bigger schools and have had really successful programs, so making that transition for me from being the small school woman who’s never done this before into thinking myself as the leader of this organization – that piece of advice really helped. (Interview 3)

When asked how she learned to lead, Patrice replied, “it’s just a lot of watching and learning informally.” (Interview 2) Having no formal leadership education or training, Patrice relied on observing and interacting with others to develop her own leadership skills. Her past President was a helpful mentor for her.

The past-President and I were talking this week – he’d reminded me of something that I hadn’t even thought about doing. I was like “oh, crap.” I said, “do you ever learn everything about this job?” And he’s like “no – maybe your last day.” He said, “it’s months and months of internal guilt” (laughs) followed by very brief periods of great
satisfaction. So, I was like “that’s good, I’m right on schedule, ‘cause I sure got the guilt going on (laughs).”  (Interview 2)

Patrice is now purposeful about mentoring upcoming newer leaders. “I’ve got one person [on the board] that is really good, she just is unsure of herself and needs me to say ‘yes, you’re doing this right. Yes, this is how you do it.’ That kind of thing.” (Interview 3) She hopes that her mentoring will encourage other women and small school music educators to get involved in leadership.

**Thomas – “Work Hard, Be Humble, and Do Your Best”**

Thomas was a highly reflective thinker and band teacher of 24 years. Along with his high school band classes, he also taught music theory, AP music theory, guitar, jazz, and a class on music in society. As a prominent leader in a national music education organization, he constantly reflected on his experiences in an effort to better understand himself as a leader.

While he had participated in leadership in a variety of ways throughout his K-12 years, Thomas had a pivotal experience while he was in college that set him on the leadership trajectory that led him where he is today.

I was interested in running for President of [a band fraternity] and the upper classmen said “absolutely not.” They would not entertain me, even if I were nominated. This happened not in the meeting – it was like the meeting before the meeting. And they said, “no, you can’t be the President.” I responded, “why can’t I be the President?” “Well, you’re an under classman.” What does that mean? What if I have the skills to do the job? And I became very disenfranchised with the association. My feelings were, if you don’t want me to serve, then I don’t want to be part of it. (Interview 2)
While he described his attitude at the time as autocratic and driven by a damaged ego, what came after helped him to better understand what it means to be a servant leader. Two years later, he and some friends founded a chapter of a new music fraternity on campus.

[The other members] asked me to be the, the founding President of the group. And so, through that process – through feeling abandoned by one group, or not welcome in a leadership role – I felt validated by this other group friends that said “hey, you would be the guy to do this.” And then through that process, I really started to shift my thinking. It wasn’t on purpose at that time, believe me, it was something subconscious. But I started thinking more about servant leadership, because when you’re starting a fraternity from scratch, there are all kinds of hoops to jump through and processes. So it was a team of us working together to create something new for the campus. I felt so much more honored, too, by my friends asking me to be that point person. And at that point it wasn’t like something prestigious; it was a lot of work. So I was just seeing things differently at that point. (Interview 2)

His experience running the new chapter with his friends instilled in Thomas the importance of relational leadership and shifted his approach to leadership from autocratic to collaborative.

Contrary to most other participants in this study, Thomas did experience formal leadership education and training throughout his life and career. He attended Tim Lautzenheiser’s student leadership workshops as a student and as a band teacher. He said he purposefully seeks out leadership education, usually in the form of professional development sessions at music education conferences, leadership books, and leadership workshops and seminars.
So much of [what has been helpful] is philosophy and trying to figure out how to put philosophy into action. How to actualize what it is that you believe is important. And the construct of servant leadership – how do you break that down and what does that look like? What does look like as a teacher? What does that look like in a professional association? What does that look like as a family? I enjoy and have taken away a lot of concepts about all of that from my leadership education. (Interview 2)

While he has experienced formal leadership education, Thomas has learned through informal experiences as well. His father instilled a value in him from a young age that he brought into his leadership. “My dad’s advice when I was a kid was to ‘work hard, be humble and do your best.’ And, you know, that’s just who I am. It’s in my DNA.” (Interview 2) He also described the importance of his informal interactions with colleagues and mentors, mentioning that sometimes his formal and informal learning went hand-in-hand.

Take going to a conference or whatever that may be – a state conference or a [regional] clinic. We’re here to learn, we’re here to grow, we’re here to be part of a professional learning community, but then also just as important to me is getting to chit-chat in the hallways, going out afterwards, getting dinner or going for drinks, talking shop, sharing our roles, sharing our frustrations, sharing our excitement, connecting with friends. I do think that they coexist pretty seamlessly but I think the experiences are different.

(Interview 3)

Thomas’ experiences with both formal and informal leadership education, as well as the formative early leadership experiences in his grade school and college years, have helped shape Thomas into the leader he is today.
After describing his leadership experiences to me, Thomas reflected on and acknowledged the privilege in his journey.

Now, what I’ve just described to you is a pipeline of a certain person who is a male, white, high school band director, trumpet player, who came up through the ranks. I believe that we’ve got to widen those pathways and that there’s got to be more opportunity for people to be involved. (Interview 1)

Within his organization, Thomas has attempted to disrupt the power structures and challenge the invitation cycle that perpetuates the privilege he described. His own experiences have driven him to advocate for these changes in our profession’s leadership.

Charlotte – The “Torch Bearer”

Charlotte grew up in a family of teachers; her sister, father, and aunt were all educators. Once she began playing saxophone in grade school, she knew she had found her calling. When deciding what she wanted to choose as a career, she said of playing saxophone, “I don’t want to not be doing this.” (Interview 1) While she went into her undergraduate music education degree thinking that she would learn to be a private lessons instructor, she eventually adapted to the idea of being a band director. After teaching elementary and middle school band at a rural school for several years, she completed a Master’s degree and an educational certificate, during which she had the opportunity to work as a Teaching Assistant (TA). Her experience as a TA illuminated a passion for working with undergraduate students, so she decided to complete her doctorate as well. Upon completion of her degree, she moved into a higher education position where she taught undergraduate and graduate music education courses. At the time of our conversations, she was still teaching at this institution and had been in the music education profession for 32 years.
Charlotte had a number of influences early in her life that contributed to the development of her leadership identity.

I never felt like I was a follower so much; I wouldn’t say I was a leader, but I was one of the brighter students in class, one of the tallest people in class, and my dad was a high school math teacher and by the time I was going through, a lot of people’s parents had had him in class, so there was a certain amount of – I don’t want to say unearned – but a natural sort of respect that was given to me by my peers in a sense because I got good grades and I worked hard in school and all of those sorts of things. So I never felt like I couldn’t be a leader; I think that is probably the best way to say it. I’ve always sort of felt like people turned to me. (Interview 1)

Though the external validation of her peers and her natural leadership dispositions and aptitude resulted in many early leadership roles, both in and out of music, Charlotte still made a distinction between true leadership and holding a positional role. It wasn’t until she was Drum Major that she truly felt like a leader.

I think probably the first time I really felt like a leader was when I became drum major of the marching band in college and I felt a lot of responsibility. I loved the band and I loved the people in it. This was so important to me and I felt like I had to uphold the group. I felt people were relying on me in a way that they hadn’t before and I felt like I wanted to give back as much as I had been given… I think that’s the first time I really felt that responsibility that comes with leadership that was greater than just taking attendance; of course that matters, too, but this just felt like more than that. (Interview 1)

Charlotte’s desire to work and lead in social environments where she can directly interact with colleagues and other stakeholders manifested later in her career in a tough decision she had
to make between two potential leadership opportunities. When choosing whether to be on the editorial board for a national academic journal or a leadership board for a national professional organization, her mentor helped her reflect on the type of leadership role that she enjoyed most.

I was like “oh I don’t know what to choose.” I mean, being on the [editorial board] is a prestigious honor, but so is the [national leadership] board, and I’ve been on that before and I liked it, so I didn’t know what to do. I was wrestling with it and [my mentor] called me back like a week later… and I said “I just don’t know what to do.” He said to me, “Well when I think of you, I think of you being more someone who would want to be part of a board, making decisions, being involved with planning things and interacting with people as opposed to sitting alone in your office reviewing articles.” I was like, “Okay that seems good.” So I decided to do the [national board]. Then once I was in meetings and a part of things it was the most fulfilling board that I had been on; it was the most fun and engaging and interesting and thoughtful. (Interview 1)

Her decision at this pivotal moment in her leadership led her on the path to being a prominent national leader in that organization, which is where she was serving when we had our conversations.

Charlotte did not have any formal leadership education or training other than a brief logistical training before taking on her current national role. Instead, her leadership development had been a result of interactions with mentors and on-the-job learning, especially when faced with difficult decisions. However, she finds the lack of formal education or training frustrating.

The lack of training, the lack of a clear path, the lack of any kind of preparation not only is a little frustrating for people who are put in leadership positions and then try to figure it out on-the-job, but I think it also leads to a lack of representation, it leads to a lack of
intentionality on the part of the person who has those interests, and it all concerns me actually a lot. (Interview 3)

As a result of these concerns, Charlotte is working to be more transparent about her organization’s leadership nomination process. She is also trying to break the invitation cycle and implement a self-nomination approach to leadership.

Charlotte’s experiences have led her to adopt a relational and servant leadership style. She summarized her approach to leadership as being a “torch bearer,” (Interview 3) a concept she attributed to Tim Brophy. As the torch bearer of her organization, Charlotte leads from among the people and always shines a light on those with whom she is working.

**Connor – The “Reluctant Leader”**

Throughout his early career, Connor found himself drawn to music education despite his original intentions being quite different. After positive experiences as a middle and high school band student, he decided to major in music performance for his undergraduate degree. However, emersion in an education-focused institution motivated him to complete his undergraduate degree in music education instead. After teaching middle and high school band for three years, he decided to return to graduate school to study conducting. However, in a “stroke of luck,” the university where he completed his doctorate did not have a DMA degree in conducting; it had an Ed.D. in Music Education instead. It was during his doctoral degree program that Connor discovered a passion and aptitude for music education research and became “socialized into that world.” (Interview 1) Since graduating, he has worked in higher education primarily teaching music education classes. At the time of our conversations, he had been in the music education profession for 21 years and was currently teaching graduate coursework, researching, and
serving in an administrative role at his university. He was also serving as a prominent leader in a national music education professional organization.

Connor called himself a “reluctant leader” because he did not actively seek out leadership; like his path to music education, leadership found its way to him.

I think I identify as a reluctant leader; that’s what I describe myself as. Now, if that’s really, objectively true and if other people would perceive that, I’m not sure. But I feel that the leadership positions that I’ve gotten mostly just sort of happened… I don’t remember at any time, like, gunning for them or trying to get them, or dreaming about, “Oh, someday I want to be a Department Chair. Someday I want to be the Chair of [a national organization].” You know, I never had those thoughts. I never think that way.

(Interview 2)

Similarly, he does not actively seek out leadership education or training.

I don’t read leadership books and I don’t go to workshops about it. I don’t really think about it that much (laughs)… I guess I feel like I respect people who are in leadership positions who are doing it from a stance of service to people rather than something they just want as the person’s niche of the position or they want to be in control of things. So, I guess I try to approach it that way. But I don’t really consciously think about it like that most of the time. (Interview 2)

When we explored this idea further in the third interview, he said that, while he doesn’t think about leadership strategies or read leadership literature, he does actively self-reflect on his own experiences in an effort to become a better leader.

While he served as a section leader in his high school and college ensembles, Connor’s professional leadership experience began in earnest when he took his first higher education job.
In that position, along with his other duties, he served as Coordinator of Music Education. Similarly, when he moved to another university, he immediately stepped into the role of Coordinator of the Master’s program as well. It was through these administrative positions, as well as the service he was providing in music education professional organizations, that he found himself forced to learn how to lead while on the job.

When I started my career, it was just me… I was by myself and I was the Coordinator of Music Ed from day one. That was another situation I just got into totally by accident; I wasn’t looking for it and it wasn’t expected. I don’t think when they hired me they expected me to be the Coordinator until a couple of months later when that person announced that they were leaving, so it was just on-the-job learning. (Interview 1)

He also gave an example of an on-the-job learning experience early in his career when he facilitated a strategic planning group.

The first time I [led the group], we had a little meeting [with the other group leaders] beforehand and they said, “You really should have three concrete goals at the end of the conference that you can report to us.” …So at first I went in there really gung-ho, saying, “Yeah, we’re supposed to have three goals. Does anybody have a goal? What should we do? Let’s be concrete.” And I think people were just not in the mindset to really be that rigorous right off the bat. They wanted a little more space to just think out in the open and talk about ideas. So, I had to realize, okay, I need to open that up a little bit. It was hard to not be too pushy because I was told I needed three goals… And, you know, I was really early-career in higher ed and one of the youngest people in the room, so that was a little bit intimidating. Can I tell these folks what they need to be doing? …I think
everyone in the room was supportive and understood that I was tasked with doing that and were trying to help me out. So, it was positive overall. (Interview 2)

Connor’s leadership skills continued to develop through reflection on these formative, early leadership experiences. While he had very little formal leadership education, he did attend one weekend leadership retreat for Chairs and Deans at his university; however, the experience was not helpful for him.

Two years ago, there was a leadership retreat. We went to this place off campus, out of town, on a ranch. It was two days of, like, exploring yourself and sitting in circles and sharing and doing exercises and activities. It was very new-ägey; lots of “close your eyes and imagine these things.” They had us do several different strategies for meetings and getting teams involved and encouraging participation among your faculty members, and not all of it was a bad idea. I tried some of it, but I feel like we spent all that time and I don’t hear anyone ever mentioning anything we did at that workshop. I almost forgot that we did it. And honestly, I wasn’t going in totally cynical. I would be very open to ideas about new ways to run meetings or to involve people… But I feel like no one’s adopted anything that we did in that retreat. (Interview 2)

Upon further reflection on this experience, Connor said that he believes one of the reasons this particular workshop was ineffective was because it was a “one-off” experience; he thinks that revisiting the concepts again later may have helped them “develop over time.”

Connor’s leadership development was almost entirely informal and experiential. It was driven by both invitation from others already in leadership and situations where he had to “step in when there were no other leaders.” (Interview 3) His early leadership experiences led to the development of his leadership philosophy, which included a “holistic approach” for the “benefit
of everyone” (Interview 1). The repetition of leadership experiences then gave him the opportunity to actualize his philosophy and further refine his skills. Additionally, his identity as a “reluctant leader” allowed him to approach leadership from a service perspective aimed at bettering the universities and organizations he led.

### Samantha – “Authentically Yourself”

Samantha grew up around education and music. Both of her parents were special education teachers and musicians.

My dad was also a jazz musician… he gigged around quite a bit, so I always grew up with him playing trumpet in the house. From a really early age I would just grab the mouthpiece and run around the house tooting on the mouthpiece. My mom was musical, too; we had an electric organ in the house that we would get to play around on. So, I was surrounded by music from a pretty early age. (Interview 1)

When she played trumpet in her middle school band, her teacher said to her, “I think you’re going to be a band director.” (Interview 1) This comment made a strong impression on Samantha, especially because her teacher was a female band director. Upon graduating from college with a degree in music education, she took a small town teaching job where she taught 5th – 12th grade band, music history, music theory, theatre, and elementary general music. After several years, Samantha moved to a large, high school band program before eventually going back to graduate school. Upon finishing her second Master’s degree, she took a higher education job while she completed her doctoral program. When we began our conversations, Samantha had been a music educator for 16 years and was currently serving as President of her state’s MEA.

Samantha has held leadership positions in many different contexts since she was in grade school, both in and out of music. Whether it was serving on her school’s student council, leading
as a cantor at her church, being Drum Major in high school, Samantha kept herself busy. When she got to college, she also served as a section leader and President of the band council. Some of her most impactful early leadership experiences came from assisting with honors band and festivals that her college hosted.

The way that [my college] was set up was that all of their honor band festivals or jazz festivals, everything like that was student-run. We really got an opportunity to be in some leadership positions, running these festivals, and that helped us also network with other people that were currently in the profession, which was really great… At first, I just started off on different committees helping, but by the time I was a junior and senior I would Chair these festivals. That really helped to give me a greater insight into the profession and give me some skills that I would go on to need later in the profession as I would host my own events and things like that. (Interview 1)

Her experiences with leadership as a high school and college student gave Samantha a desire to provide leadership opportunities for her own students when she started teaching. She founded a Tri-M music society chapter at her school, which coincidentally opened the door for her to get involved in state-level leadership as state Tri-M Chair.

Though she provides her students with formal leadership education opportunities, Samantha has not had any formal leadership education herself. Instead, her leadership identity has primarily been influenced by her mentors. She struggled with impostor feelings early in her career, but her mentors helped her work through them.

I would talk about it with my advisor, and he would share with me privately, “hey, I feel this way every time I premiere a new piece” you know? So, then it was almost like, for him, too, it’s like once he realized how sharing that was helping me then he was very
open to “why don’t we talk about this? We all are experiencing this, why don’t we talk about it?” (Interview 2)

Her impostor feelings were sometimes exacerbated by the fact that she was a woman and also a young leader.

*Samantha:* The other side of that, too, was just that I was young and I was literally the only female (laughs). So, at that time, there was only, like, 6% of the high school band directors in the state that were female. And I was one of them, you know, so there was a little bit of that gender dynamic going on too.

*Nicole:* Can you elaborate on that a bit? How did those experiences feel to you?

*Samantha:* I didn’t know the word back then, but it was just a lot of “mansplaining” (laughs)… just kind of being talked down to. And I was so young, so people who didn’t know me yet would walk up to me, like other directors, and they’d be like “um, excuse me, who’s running this event?” And I’d be like “yeah, that’s me.” (Interview 2)

Interactions with mentors that also had experienced impostor feelings, as well as her connection to strong, female role models, helped her to overcome her fears. She also read Brené Brown’s research on vulnerability, which led her to adopt a more relational approach to leadership with shared governance.

The strong influence of mentors in Samantha’s leadership trajectory have instilled in her a desire to mentor others.

I know I’ve talked a lot about my mentors, and now [my state] has a formal mentorship program through the Department of Education… But that program hadn’t been formalized for a while, so we had been trying to do things through [my state’s MEA] and different organizations for informal mentoring. Now that it’s formalized through the
State, that’s probably just one other small facet of leadership that I’m really happy to be involved in, because I don’t think I’d be where I am without mentors. So it’s important that I give back. (Interview 1)

After years of learning from them, Samantha is now able to be a strong female role model for the next generation of leaders in the profession. She believes that being “authentically [her]self” has made her a more confident and effective leader.

Olivia – “Why Me?”

Olivia came from a family of musicians; her brother was a cellist, and her mother was a music teacher and her primary professional mentor. Olivia was very close with her mother.

I’ve been super-blessed, super-lucky to have my mom and to have been guided in this profession where she didn’t have that. Her parents, my grandparents, are all immigrants from Italy, and they didn’t have that kind of leg-up in their professional careers. (Interview 1)

Not only was Olivia’s mother her music teacher in grade school, but she would also bring Olivia along to music education conferences in their state. This early socialization within the profession aided in her eventual decision to become a music teacher. Throughout college and her early career, Olivia’s mother continued to serve as an important mentor with whom she discussed music teaching, career plans, and collaborated on professional projects. Her mother and her undergraduate string education professor were large influences on her early, formative years, and both also modelled professional leadership by being actively involved in their professional organizations.

I showed up and I went to conference every year… In my undergrad time, one of the things my professor said stuck with me; “You have to put your money where your values
are, and continuing your professional development should be one of your values as a teacher.” So, I definitely invest in professional development and always have. I think showing up all the time, people see you and they get to know you and they feel comfortable with you. I think because I went to [college] with [that professor], people also saw me because he was a leader in that environment… Back then the nominations were a little bit different. There was a committee and I think they kind of had to know you in order to nominate you. So, if you keep showing up, people know you. It wasn’t that I was seeking the positions, but I was well known. (Interview 1)

Olivia began serving the profession through leadership at a relatively young age. She assisted her mother in class as a section leader and a mentor for younger students. In her years in her undergraduate program, she served as the founding President of her school’s collegiate chapter of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA). Upon entering the teaching profession, she held several state-level positions in three different music education professional organizations. After several years of teaching, she decided to go into higher education because she had a desire to increase the quantity and quality of the string specialists in the profession. At the time of our conversations, she had been a music educator for 20 years and was currently serving as a prominent leader in a national professional organization.

Prior to her national leadership role, Olivia had not received any formal leadership education or training, other than some mentoring structured into that role. In fact, when she was first elected for that position, she encountered some debilitating fears and impostor feelings.

When I ended up being elected, it sent me on a weird journey of asking “why me?” and I started doubting everything. I felt really insecure, and it seems like it should have done the opposite. I don’t know that I’ve had that experience at other times in my life… I
definitely went through a lot of wondering – why am I in this position? What is my role? What does this mean? (Interview 3)

While she reflected on these feelings with her mother and her students, it wasn’t until she was sent to a leadership workshop as part of her preparation for that role that she was finally able to move past them.

I know it had to do with going to this [leadership workshop]. When I started learning about leadership styles and what it takes to be a good leader, I finally started to understand why maybe my name had come up. Part of this [workshop] is that you find time to talk with your [co-leaders] and get on the same page and you really invest in the conversation. Then I realized I was bringing something to the table… and could bring clarity to things, and I was like, well that’s why I’m here… I felt like, okay, I have a role, I’m adding something more than just spending my time. It took me a while to realize what is special about me that I can bring to this. (Interview 3)

This formal leadership education experience had a big impact on Olivia; she said it was “pivotal” (Interview 3) and a “turning point” (Interview 2) in understanding her identity as a leader. Throughout the workshop, in addition to the presentations, she and her co-leaders had opportunities to work alone, to work with each other, and to work with leaders from other organizations in building their strategies and finding their roles. Olivia was one of the only participants in this study to have formal leadership education experience, especially one so poignant and transformational. She planned on attending this leadership workshop again in the future. Her formal leadership education, interactions with family and mentors, leadership and professional development experiences, and battle with overcoming impostor feelings have shaped Olivia into the successful and relational leader that she is today.
Natalie – “Wandering Around on an Intuitive Path”

Natalie grew up in a small town where she discovered a love of music from a young age. While she took violin lessons as a child, her schools did not have string programs. Instead, she participated in the school choir and band programs to continue her music education. When it came time to choose a career, Natalie struggled with a choice between two of her interests: music and science. Music “made [her] feel,” (Interview 1), but the lack of string programs in her schools caused frustration that became a “driving force” (Email communication) behind her desire to be a string educator. During her years as an undergraduate student, she almost switched to choral music education instead of strings. She wasn’t yet entirely confident in her skills on the violin, and she hadn’t had many string education role models. However, her violin instructor gave her the assurance and support she needed to succeed as both a violinist and a string teacher.

After a year of teaching middle school orchestra and general music, Natalie moved into a position where she taught 4th – 12th grade orchestra. As she began to consider graduate school, she realized she could have an even larger impact by going into higher education. She said, “I just had such a passion for the idea of increasing access to string education.” (Interview 1) Coming from a rural area with no orchestra program, Natalie hoped she may be able to expand access and train high quality string teachers. When we began our conversations, Natalie had been in the music education profession for 25 years and was working at a university where she taught undergraduate and graduate music education courses. She was also serving as a prominent leader in a national music education professional organization.

Natalie described much of her career path and leadership trajectory as being “self-guided.” (Interview 1) Especially early in her career, she actively sought out experiences and
mentors to help continue her growth. She had the unique experience of hosting All-County Orchestra in her first year of teaching.

I realize now that that seems like a lot for a first-year teacher. And I remember the other teachers being like “Why’d she do this to you?” But me, at the time, I’m like “I can do it,” you know (laughs). (Interview 1)

Following the success of that event, Natalie went on to host other events during her time as a K-12 teacher. She was also selected to be Chair of the music education department at her school, but that experience was both positive and negative for her.

[I was Chair] starting in my third year of teaching. I did a lot in that role. That was hard as a young female, too. I don’t know that I was very successful doing that. Everybody in the Music Department was a much, much older male, all in their 60’s and nearing retirement. They were pretty angry when I was the one chosen to be the Chair. I was a third-year teacher, I was a female… I wasn’t very successful at leading them. And I don’t think anybody was going to be. I was successful completing paperwork, though. I was successful in hiring new faculty members and I was very successful in growing the size of our music program. (Interview 1)

She also felt the impact of her identity as a young female in leadership when chairing a task force in a national music education professional organization.

*Natalie: There were so many prior Presidents, Associate Deans, and Deans [on this committee], people that run meetings like this all the time.

*Nicole: How did those interactions impact your experience on that Committee?

*Natalie: [Pause] I mean, I think I blocked it out. Because I remember it was very difficult. I do remember… that there were a couple men who, I know they love me. I
know they chose me for this job. But I also know that they didn’t even notice how
difficult they were sometimes making it. Or, you know, somebody said to me afterwards,
“Why was so-and-so so condescending to you at the end? It seemed very patronizing the
way he spoke to you. I had another man say to me “What was that all about?” And I’m
like “Oh, I think that was an attempt at mentoring me and supporting me.” …The other
thing that happened was that I had people explain to me how you write research. I don’t
know what that was about because I have written a ton of research. I don’t know why
they were explaining to me how you make sure to cite your sources. That made me crazy.

(Interview 2)

Despite these negative interactions, Natalie’s experience leading this committee was pivotal for
her leadership identity development. This was her first experience leading a group of other
leaders, especially in a position where consensus-building was important. Prior to this role, she
said she “didn’t really know what kind of a leader [she] was.” (Interview 1) However, working
with others in this capacity allowed her to further develop her leadership philosophy, which
focuses on “supporting, guiding, facilitating, and collaborating.” (Interview 1)

Natalie had some experiences with formal leadership education, mostly embedded within
her music education coursework. She also attended a summer music camp focused on leadership
in marching band. However, aside from these experiences, she had not received any other formal
leadership education or training. She was supposed to attend a leadership workshop before
stepping into her current national leadership role but was unable to attend because of the Covid-
19 pandemic. Instead, she described her leadership development as “wandering around on an
intuitive path” (Interview 2) because of her lack of training. Her recent leadership experiences
have motivated her to seek out additional resources to improve her leadership. She also planned to attend a leadership workshop later in the year.

Natalie was a hard-working, relational leader driven by a desire for collaboration and consensus-building. Mentors, leadership experiences, and self-reflection contributed to her primarily self-guided leadership identity development. While her past experiences weren’t always positive, she learned and grew from each one. She successfully navigated tricky leadership situations during an unprecedented pandemic. Natalie was clearly committed to continued growth and building her leadership knowledge and skills.

Kevin – “Learning From People”

Kevin was a self-proclaimed “band kid” from a young age. He played clarinet in his middle and high school band, where he served as both a section leader and drum major. These early, formative leadership experiences helped develop both his leader and teacher identities.

Leadership experiences in high school, especially for music students, tend to have a lot of overlap with teaching identity and teacher-type experiences. So, I was like, oh, I’m going to be in this leadership experience, but really what I was getting put into was a lot of teaching roles where I would be instructing a group. So those kinds of high school experiences were some of my earliest memories of really feeling like a leader.

(Interview 1)

He later added that “there is just so much overlap [between leadership and] teaching that it’s hard to ignore.” (Interview 3) As a student leader, Kevin got to attend annual sleep-away camps with other high school drum majors that served as an important formal leadership education experience. In these camps, the student leaders had opportunities for both skill building (such as
conducting and marching techniques) and leadership development. Of the leadership development component, Kevin said,

[They asked us] what does it mean to be a leader? What does it mean to be involved with leading among your peers and having to make decisions and having to be within a leadership structure where you’re reporting to a band director, but you’re also then delegated to do these things where you have to lead your peers? That was formative for me in learning from people. (Interview 2)

The connections he made at these camps went beyond just the experience in the moment; he gained mentors with whom he could discuss and ask questions later.

The leadership knowledge and skills that Kevin gained through his formal leadership education in middle and high school gave him the confidence he needed to get involved with leadership early in his career as a music educator. He was invited to leadership roles within his state’s MEA in his first year of teaching. He also hosted All-Area Honors Band in his first year, which subsequently led to a role as Coordinator of the solo and ensemble festival.

During coursework for his Master’s degree, which he completed while he was still teaching high school, he discovered a passion for music education research. He decided to return to school full-time to complete his doctorate, after which he entered higher education. His first higher education position included an administrative component. As Director of Music Education at that institution, Kevin found himself in a position as a young leader learning on-the-job.

One thing that’s challenging, especially as a young leader, when you’re in a new role, whether it’s new to you or you are maybe a little bit young for the role, at least compared to other people that you’re leading, you have these moments where you get in there and
you’re like, “Okay so we’ve got to make a decision on this. Oh wait, that means me; I have to make the decision on this.” I’ve experienced this in positions like Chair [of my organization] or being a Department Chair at my university… That can be a little bit challenging and a bit daunting sometimes because you’re never quite sure. Is this the right decision, or are people going to freak out when we do this? There is a little bit of a gut-check moment when you make those decisions, like is this going to work out the way I hope it will? That is a kind of challenge when you’re young and you’re new in a leader role. (Interview 2)

In addition to his administrative duties, Kevin also got involved in professional organizations and action groups right away. His active engagement in these activities grew his professional network and resulted in invitations to other leadership roles.

I tend to get into leadership roles because I had that strong relationship with people who were doing it and then perhaps get invited to them. Like, “Hey, why don’t you try this next?” So having that relationship helps with continuity, but it also helps me with those kinds of challenges to be able to say, alright, how did this person deal with this? Let me ask them some questions. I might not come up with the same answers, but I can draw on them as a resource and that’s incredibly helpful. I think that’s an important part of how I approach leadership. (Interview 2)

These roles came with increasing levels of responsibility until he was eventually leading a national music education professional organization.

Kevin had more formal leadership education than most other participants in this study. In addition to the drum major camps in middle and high school, he also attended workshops at his university that were available for anyone in administrative or leadership roles. In these
workshops, they discussed “conflict resolution strategies, collaborating with peers, collaborating with other leaders, and working with administrative structures.” (Interview 2) These were optional leadership education experiences, but Kevin took advantage of them and found them to be helpful.

In our second interview, Kevin reflected on the meaning behind his on-the-job learning experiences.

It’s got me reflecting now - do I have an idea of leadership that I bring that to the roles that I’ve had, or have the different roles that I’ve had shaped my idea of what it means to be a leader? (Interview 2)

Upon further reflection, he decided that the latter was true for him; his experiences have shaped his leadership philosophy. He said, “I think it probably did shape my ideas of like, okay, leadership is not all about just going in there and power-tripping. For some people it might be, but that was an experience that I did learn young.” (Interview 2)

Kevin’s on-the-job learning, which has been a result of his own proactivity as well as his experiences with leadership at a young age and early in his career, allowed him to form his leadership philosophy and practices. His formal leadership education experiences, informal interactions with mentors and role models, and his evolving leadership philosophy are the driving forces behind Kevin’s leadership identity development.

**Summary**

The portraits in this chapter provide a glimpse into each participant’s background, leadership experiences, and leadership identity development. While each person’s story was shaped by their own unique perspectives, several common themes emerged from their
experiences. In Chapter Five, I discuss these themes and the implications of the themes for the music education profession.
CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS’ LID

Introduction

While each participant’s journey toward becoming a teacher-leader in music education was unique and influenced by their own personal and professional backgrounds and experiences, common themes emerged from my conversations with all participants that help illuminate the essence of their leadership identity development (LID). Through this research, I sought to answer the following four research questions: (a) How do successful teacher-leaders in the music education profession experience leadership identity development? (b) How do music teachers’ leadership experiences relate to their teaching experiences? (c) How, if at all, do music educators experience formal leadership education or training? and (d) How, if at all, do music educators experience informal leadership education or training?

While some participants had experienced formal leadership education (with varying levels of effectiveness), informal, on-the-job learning and interactions with mentors were pivotal in these participants’ leadership identity development. Parents modelling leadership behaviors during primary socialization also influenced some participants’ leadership philosophies and identities. Participants’ personal identities impacted their experiences with LID, especially those related to interactions with followers. Their leadership identities were often so intertwined with their music teacher identities that the two concepts were inseparable; sometimes participants would answer a leadership question with a teaching example and vice versa. Development of these two aspects of professional identity, while distinct, shared parallels as well. Once participants felt agency in their leadership and clarified their leadership values and philosophies, they were able to overcome any feelings of inadequacy brought on by any lack of training. Many
participants expressed their desire to mentor future leaders, indicating a high level of leadership identity according to the Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives et al., 2006).

**Family Influence and Primary Socialization**

Many participants’ earliest leadership models and mentors were their own parents. Laura, Abigail, Sophia, Olivia, Thomas, and Charlotte all shared their experiences of watching their parents and siblings lead in their professions and communities. Abigail shared,

I saw my parents participate in a lot of organizations and they were in a lot of leadership positions in their community activities… I look at my parents’ example. My brother was also a school principal and now he’s a second career pastor so he’s always had leadership roles. I guess that’s just been expected. (Interview 2)

Thomas’ father played a similar role in his early understanding of leadership.

My dad had these three things that he would tell me all the time, anytime we were talking about leadership. Work hard, do your best, and be humble. Way back when my dad started preaching that to me, probably playing little league or something, I don’t even remember how it came out. But it has just stuck with me… it’s in my DNA. (Interview 1)

Some participants’ families influenced their leadership identities later in their lives. Olivia’s mother was her primary professional mentor and would bring her along to professional conferences. She was “charismatic” and could “talk people into things that they didn’t necessarily want to be doing and then were totally supportive thereafter.” (Interview 2)

Similarly, Charlotte mentioned that it was “very influential” to see her dad leading within the teaching profession. It gave her the perspective that leadership is something that teachers should do. Sophia often discussed leadership strategies with her sister who was a leader in the banking industry. She said, “our worlds are vastly different but, in many ways, we run into the same
kinds of problems with employees and motivating people to accomplish large tasks or immediate tasks or things like that.” (Interview 2)

Families are the primary source of socialization early in life. In these participants’ experiences, parents and siblings modelling leadership and regularly discussing it instilled leadership values that have continued into adulthood. Family support also impacted their ability to get involved with leadership in the profession later in their careers.

I have a husband who… is my teammate. He really supports me, and there are things I support him in, too. Between him and my mother-in-law keeping my kids has made a lot of difference in what I’ve been able to accomplish in my life. (Laura, Interview 1)

Thomas described similar support from his wife.

My wife – I’ll never forget, it still brings a tear to my eye – when I said to her that I was nominated for [my first regional leadership role], I said, now, this involves travel. This is thirteen states, Europe; there’s a big amount of travel involved, and my daughter was in upper-elementary school. I said, “if you or [our daughter] don’t want me to do this, I promise, no regrets, I will not be upset. It’s okay.” She said, “you have so much to offer, how can you say no?” That just meant the world to me that she believed in me that much to be able to support that. (Interview 1)

As with other aspects of identity, the influence some participants’ families had on their leadership values, behaviors, and identities was evident throughout our discussions. Because leadership is an inherently interpersonal endeavor, all interactions may influence one’s approach to and understanding of leadership. Families that model and support leadership activity are likely to foster the development of successful leaders (Anderson, 1943, in Bass & Bass, 2008; Keller, 1999).
Informal Leadership Education Experiences

Informal leadership education experiences accounted for the vast majority of participants’ leadership identity development. This is consistent with literature that indicates the important role of informal experiences in leadership development (Bass & Bass, 2008; Day, 2012). These participants’ informal leadership education involved on-the-job learning experiences and interactions with mentors and role models. Most participants experienced early leadership opportunities in middle and high school that ignited a passion for and understanding of leadership within the profession. Experiential learning cycles continued throughout their careers, fueled by their ongoing leadership efforts. Interactions with their mentors and role models motivated their continued development, and many assumed leadership roles because they were invited to do so by those already in leadership.

On-the-job Learning

Many participants went into their first professional leadership roles with no formal leadership education. Instead, they were required to learn as they led and reflect on their experiences to further their own development. For most participants, early leadership experiences in their K-12 music programs paved the way for future success. Others accepted leadership roles much later in their careers.

K-12 and Collegiate Leadership Experiences

Student leadership structures in secondary large-ensemble music classrooms served as poignant early leadership opportunities for most participants. Some participants were officers in their music programs (Laura, Charlotte), drum majors (Samantha, Kevin, Evan, Thomas, Charlotte), section leaders (Olivia, Evan, Nathan, Thomas, Connor), and peer mentors (Olivia,
Kevin, Nathan, Patrice). Those that took these positions earlier in high school often experienced a learning curve through which they built the foundation of their leadership skills and behaviors.

I auditioned and very surprisingly was selected to be drum major starting my sophomore year, which was pretty young. I knew that I was young for that [position], and I remember being offered some advice at that time – “hey, we believe that you can do this and you’re showing us you can do this, but you also have things to learn.” I remember that sticking with me. (Kevin, Interview 2)

Samantha’s experience as a drum major helped her get over an early fear of leadership.

Once I became the drum major, I realized that it wasn’t quite as scary as I had built it up to be in my head. It was a lot of fun! I realized that a lot of leadership is example – the example that you set [for others]. (Interview 1)

For many, their leadership in these positions led to a very early leadership identity.

That freshman year, as I was lining [the students] up for the parade, they were looking to me with all their nerves and I just said, “you’ve got this. It’s all good.” I loved that feeling. That feeling of leading. That was the first time and that’s probably what set me on the path to wanting to do this. (Patrice, Interview 1)

Thomas described his high school band programs as having a “culture of leadership” (Interview 1) in which students were both able and expected to lead their peers. He has since established a similar program culture in his own teaching.

Some participants also had K-12 leadership experiences outside of music education, such as student council (Samantha), officer positions in various school clubs (Abigail, Charlotte), cheerleading captain (Abigail), youth group (Thomas), and Girl’s State (Abigail). Abigail said, “those really early high school experiences helped me feel like I was a leader and unafraid to
speak-up.” (Interview 1) Her developing leadership identity, fueled by these leadership experiences, gave her the confidence to successfully petition her school to allow girls the option to wear pants as part of the dress code, which at the time only allowed skirts and dresses. Like the leadership opportunities within music programs, these leadership opportunities in other areas of the school and community contributed to participants’ understandings of themselves and their skills as leaders.

While several participants mentioned involvement in music education professional organizations during their collegiate years, fewer described leadership experiences during that time in their careers. Samantha was an exception; her undergraduate program included formally structured leadership experiences for students through involvement with hosting events.

The way that [my college] was set-up was that all of their honor band festivals or jazz festivals, everything like that was student-run, and we got an opportunity to be in some leadership positions, running these festivals. That helped us also to network with other people that were currently in the profession, which was really great. (Interview 1)

Samantha began as a student volunteer for the festivals, but by her junior year, she would Chair the festivals.

That really helped to give me greater insight into the profession and give me some skills that I would go on to later need in the profession as I would host my own events… it required a lot of coordination and leadership and communication. (Interview 1)

As described in his portrait, Thomas also had an impactful collegiate leadership experience when he founded a chapter of a music fraternity at his university. His friends asked him to be the founding President because of the leadership he demonstrated while establishing the chapter. For
many participants, these early leadership roles in their K-12 and collegiate years set them on a path toward leadership as music teachers.

*Experiences as Teacher-Leaders*

Upon entering the music teaching profession, participants’ continued leadership experiences shaped their developing leadership identities. Interactions with followers and other leaders challenged their beliefs about and approaches to leadership.

I used to think that I had to have all the answers all the time. It was all on my shoulders. I felt that because I held that role and people expected me to have these answers. But I’ve gotten a lot better at facilitating and collaborating and delegating and just being able to say, “hey, I have never thought about that, that’s really great” or “let’s investigate that.” I feel like I’ve gotten a bit more comfortable in my own skin. I think my style has flipped from feeling like I have to hold it all myself to feeling like, wow, I have this amazing Board of Directors that contains all this knowledge. I can lean on them. They have a lot of expertise – let’s tap into that. (Samantha, Interview 2)

Samantha’s statements here reflect the broader shift in leadership philosophy away from autocratic leadership toward a more relational approach (Bass & Bass, 2008). Through her interactions with her fellow leaders, she realized that leaders best serve their organizations when tapping into each other’s strengths rather than a single positional leader needing to hold all of the answers. When I asked her what specifically motivated this change for her, she simply said, “a lot of experience.” She said she feels like she has had to “trust [her] intuition” and do what feels like the right thing in a particular situation. This was similar to Natalie’s description of her leadership development as “wandering around on an intuitive path.” (Interview 2) She gave an
example from an early experience in the organization for which she currently serves as a prominent national leader.

One of the things that my organization said at the very beginning was “you have to build consensus. Lead this group of people and build some consensus, go!” And I was like, “how do you build consensus? What does that mean?” I was encouraged not to say, “okay, we’re having a committee, here’s what needs accomplished, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, go.” Instead, that has to be drawn out from them. My first go-around at that was very – a lot of people seemed to want me to tell them what to do. And then other people, it was like leading a classroom, right? Some people were so outspoken. Other people weren’t outspoken. I didn’t want people to be disenfranchised by not having a voice. It just took me a little while to figure out how to be a facilitator and come to whatever this consensus was. (Interview 2)

While she had little guidance on how to build consensus prior to taking the leadership role she described here, consensus-building has since become a primary leadership value for Natalie. She described a similar experience the first time she was asked to write a vision statement for a different task force and in her current role as a national leader, which she had just assumed when our discussions began. She said she felt like she was “blundering through what it is to be a leader.” (Interview 2) Though she expressed a desire for earlier guidance before taking on these leadership responsibilities, she was able to learn these skills on the job and now seeks out further leadership education opportunities. Charlotte described a similar progression.

Everyone seemed to need something different when we needed to make a decision. There was one person who wanted a lot of time so they could reflect, there was a person who didn’t want to take the time in advance and would rather just make the decision on the
spot. And there’s a person that likes to see things all organized on a spreadsheet, and my preference is not to do that but rather to have it more of a narrative. So, trying to figure out what they need and how I can balance all these differing and sometimes contradictory requests and needs in a way that can still help us move forward. Because I was finding that I would do things one way and then this voice would be lost, and I do things this way and another voice would be lost… I feel like I’m still really learning how to accommodate everyone’s voice and support everyone’s voice and figure out ways to encourage everyone’s voice. (Interview 2)

Kevin expressed the impact that his various leadership roles have had on the development of his leadership approach, philosophy, and identity. As mentioned in his portrait, the types of leadership with which he has engaged have shaped him into a more relational leader.

I’ve never been in a kind of leadership role where I had the power-trappings of leadership, like a CEO who can just fire people and say, “we’re going to take our entire millions of dollars of budget and put it on this.” I’ve never really had those kinds of roles. Most of the leadership roles I’ve had have depended a lot more on consensus and support from other qualified professionals, so my perception of leadership tends to revolve around that idea of consensus-building. (Interview 2)

Through experience in her current leadership position, Patrice learned to consider the “entire picture” rather than getting caught up in smaller details.

I have a tendency, when I see something or do something, I want to fix it right now and here’s what we’re going to do. Instead of taking time to really think about the entire picture. I think being the leader of this organization has really taught me that. It’s really
taken, okay, take a step back and let’s see why they did this and why maybe it’s the best way to do something or handle something. (Interview 2)

She says she “learn[s] from the success that’s come before, or failure for that matter. [Failure] is important too.” (Interview 3) Moments of failure often caused participants to experience cognitive dissonance that led to growth as a leader. However, moments of leadership success and external validation from followers, fellow leaders, or mentors provided motivation to continue that growth.

**Interactions with Mentors and Role Models**

In addition to on-the-job learning experiences, participants’ leadership identities were often influenced by their interactions with mentors and role models. In this section, I will use the term “role model” when speaking about a person a participant observed or admired from afar and a “mentor” as someone with whom a participant interacted more regularly. All participants experienced semi-structured mentoring as part of the onboarding for their current roles in the form of Presidents-elect, Presidents, and Immediate Past-Presidents. These roles served as built-in mentoring, with the Past-Presidents serving as mentors for the Presidents, and Presidents serving as mentors for the Presidents-elect. While the structure of this mentoring was formalized through their organizations, their interactions with each other were informal and often occurred as questions arose.

When asked to describe their leadership backgrounds, every participant mentioned specific mentors that had played pivotal roles in their development. Laura, Kevin, and Olivia had secondary music teachers who modelled professional leadership. As mentioned in her portrait, Laura’s high school choir teacher was also a state MEA leader at the time and involved her students in tasks related to that role. This teacher became a lifelong mentor for Laura, who
mentioned that she was “proud of [her]; I wanted to emulate [her].” (Interview 3) She later studied with a choral director during her undergraduate degree who held leadership roles within the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and noted that this mentor was the reason she even knew that ACDA (and its associated professional development conferences) existed. Olivia’s mother (who was also a music teacher) would bring her along to music education conferences and meetings. Kevin’s cooperating teacher during student teaching also served as a teacher-leader.

My student teaching cooperating teacher was definitely a role model in that way. Here is somebody who is very successful in music and band programs and was also the area Chair, and he’d done all these kinds of [leadership] roles… That kind of package was something I wanted to try to emulate. (Interview 2)

Kevin also had a music education professor and important mentor in his undergrad that modelled teacher-leadership at the higher education level. He was especially drawn to leaders that demonstrated success in both the classroom and in leadership.

For others, mentors and role models came later in their careers. These mentors encouraged the participants’ development and helped them with skill-building.

I’ve been fortunate throughout my life to have really good mentors that could push me out of my introvert box (laughs) and help me understand that I can do this. They’ve helped me break down those big tasks that seem really huge into smaller, manageable chunks. (Samantha, Interview 2)

Mentors also served as sounding boards for participants, sharing ideas and resources. Samantha said of one of her mentors, “she’s been awesome, especially since I assumed the Presidency, of mentoring me, sharing resources. We have a shared Google Doc of everything that we need to
know that we just keep adding to.” (Interview 2) This is especially true of mentors who previously held the participant’s current position.

I do feel like one thing that I’ve learned to do is to lean on the previous leaders, past people who are mentors. I’m regularly in touch with other people who have been the Department Chair before me. I’ve called and I say “hey, did you have to deal with this? Can you give me some advice here on something I’m thinking about?” So, not being afraid to ask for advice and checking in with people who have done that kind of a gig is an important thing that I’ve committed to when I’ve been in these kinds of roles. (Kevin, Interview 2)

Some mentors within the same organization provided live support for participants during meetings.

I kept private messaging [another leader in the group] who had more experience than me. Once or twice in the meeting, I said, “I think I’m going to need some help here” and she would step in and get them re-aligned for me. (Natalie, Interview 2)

Informal conversations with role models and mentors at conferences, between meetings, or over meals sometimes provided the most authentic feedback for participants.

A lot of these onboarding things have been less formal, like “hey, let’s go grab a coffee,” or, “let’s get lunch and talk about what this role is and what’s going to be involved with it”… Just sitting down with people and having these person-to-person conversations about what advice they can offer. I find that really valuable. Sometimes that can be even more valuable than more formal onboarding things where you have to sit through a bunch of meetings. (Kevin, Interview 2)
Some participants intentionally observed other leaders and reflected on what they liked and did not like about that leader’s approach. Abigail described one such experience. “I shadowed the All-State Chair that whole year, went to all the meetings, and followed her around at All State trying to figure out what she was doing.” (Interview 2) Sophia observed a role model from her first state MEA committee work, attributing her ability to run a meeting to that observation. Evan described the experience of observing a leader who led in a very different way than he expected.

She’s not somebody that talks and everybody’s like “oh my God, I’m so inspired to move mountains!” That’s not her style. As a matter of fact, she probably doesn’t inspire youth. But to adults who’ve been in the profession, you listen to her talk and you’re like, “Yes. To everything. Wow, that’s so concise.” …Even small interactions [can be impactful]. I was only in the room with her for 45 minutes, and I was like, “wow, I really like you.” So, it’s even stuff like that - it doesn’t need to be something that’s happened over years and years. It can just be like those small interactions where you think, “man, I want to talk as intentionally as you.” (Interview 2)

Despite her different leadership approach, Evan found himself drawn to this role model’s leadership. The experience challenged his ideas of what good leadership can be.

Whether observing from afar or working directly with a mentor, participants each pointed to the important role that these interactions played in their leadership identity development. Mentors were especially important in helping participants navigate their early leadership roles and overcome their lack of formal leadership education or training.

The Invitation Cycle

Working with mentors often led to those in leadership inviting or nominating participants to particular roles and encouraging them to get involved with professional leadership. Apart from
Natalie, every participant described such an experience at least once. For many, the invitations were the only reason they chose to get involved in professional leadership at all. This was especially true for those who described themselves as reluctant leaders (Connor, Nathan, and Olivia), those who described themselves as introverts (Samantha, Olivia, and Nathan), and those who experienced impostor feelings in leadership (Laura, Samantha, Olivia, Abigail, Sophia, and Patrice).

I was on the high school board and someone asked me to run for Chair of the high school music section. I felt inadequate, but I also felt a little boost of confidence that somebody believed in me enough to do that role. (Laura, Interview 1)

When describing her entire leadership trajectory, Laura said “for the most part it’s because somebody saw something in me and said, ‘you should do this,’ or they volun-told me.” (Interview 1) When asked how she first got involved with leadership, Samantha replied,

I was encouraged. I always had maybe a little bit too much self-doubt; I always had that idea of, like, surely there is somebody more qualified than me to do this. So even back then I needed that extra nudge to just give it a shot. I was encouraged by my band director; he said, “you know, if you’re looking at going into music ed, you should really explore some of these [leadership positions]; they’d be great for you. (Interview 1)

Abigail mused that, “I don’t necessarily feel like I sought [leadership] out as much as it was sort of thrust upon me.” (Interview 2) Kevin connected leadership invitations he received to his overall leadership approach.

You know, I tend to get into leadership roles because I had a strong relationship with people who were doing it [before me], and then get invited, like, “hey, why don’t you try this next?” So having that relationship helps with continuity but it also helps me with
challenges to be able to say, alright, how did this person deal with this and let me ask them some questions. I might not come up with the same answers, but I can draw on them as a resource and that’s incredibly helpful. I think that’s an important part of how I approach leadership. (Interview 2)

Patrice, who didn’t get involved in leadership until much later in her career, received an invitation after her band performed at a state conference.

I’m not kidding you, those twenty minutes on that stage changed my life. Up to that point, I had never served in a district office – I’d never served on anything because I didn’t think that anybody cared what I had to think, teaching in such a small school. And that led to me being asked to run for our Band Vice Presidency of our state and I won that. And then, after serving on that for two years, I was asked to run for President and here I am. (Interview 1)

Patrice’s experience with the invitation cycle as a barrier to her own leadership as a previously lesser-known teacher from a small school indicates a need to critique this aspect of professional leadership in music education. I discuss this further in the Implications section.

Most participants in this study experienced a moment where someone they admired noted their leadership potential and invited them to get involved. This external validation was crucial to most of the participants’ decisions to assume professional leadership positions, especially for those who struggled to see themselves as leaders.

**Impact of External Validation and Feelings of Success**

Participants drew inspiration and motivation from their successful leadership experiences. In many cases, leadership success was the reason participants kept leading. When describing a time she felt successful as a leader, Laura told a story about planning a virtual conference for her
organization. The board member who normally planned the annual conference was struggling with moving the conference to a virtual setting.

I thought, screw Covid, we’ve got to get something going on. I came into a Board meeting saying, “I woke up in the middle of the night and thought, this is helpful.” I made this chart to show everybody so the section Chairs could think through the schedule. So, I think I’m a problem-solver. I enjoyed that. (Interview 2)

The success she felt in getting the conference planning off the ground motivated her and the other leaders around her. She later said that feeling successful made her feel like a leader. When I asked her why that was, she said, “Because I solved an issue. Solved a problem, you know?” (Interview 2) Natalie described a similar feeling; after a successful effort to lead her organization through the initial COVID-19 shutdown, she said, “after ultimately being successful with that, I think one of the reasons I felt like a leader was that the people around me clearly went from not trusting to trusting me.” (Interview 1) Nathan mentioned that, while he approaches leadership roles “with trepidation,” successfully leading events has been an aspect of leadership that he enjoys. Participants sometimes looked to mentors and past leaders for external validation to better understand if their leadership was successful.

It made me feel good because I had in my mind what I wanted to do, how I wanted to handle the situation, and when I talked to each one of [the former presidents], each one of them would’ve handled it the exact same way that I was going to. So, that made me feel better knowing that yes, I was handling it the way I should. (Patrice, Interview 3)

The need for external validation was particularly noticeable in stories that participants told about their early professional leadership roles.
Leadership success and external validation of that success worked in tandem to influence participants’ leadership identities. In some cases, the positive and validating interactions were even more impactful than the success itself. Leadership is an inherently interpersonal endeavor; therefore, interactions play a key role in all categories and stages of leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005).

**Formal Leadership Education Experiences**

Participants’ experiences with formal leadership education varied greatly. Most participants had little to no formal experiences with leadership education; Abigail, Sophia, Evan, Nathan, Patrice, and Charlotte had none, while Laura, Connor, Samantha, and Natalie had very little. Only Thomas, Olivia, and Kevin had experienced substantial formalized leadership education, and these experiences were pivotal in each of their leadership journeys.

**Workshops, Seminars, and Coursework**

As a band student and then teacher, Thomas attended Tim Lautzenheiser’s student leadership workshops. He attended other professional development sessions geared toward leadership as well, but they were focused primarily on building student leadership as opposed to the development of teacher-leaders or professional or organizational leadership.

I’ve gone to workshops and things, usually specific to Music Education… As a student and as a teacher I’ve gone to professional development workshops at conferences and that sort of thing… There are a lot of folks, in the band world especially, that do this leadership thing. I’m thinking of marching band and students and student leaders and that sort of thing. So, I’ve gotten a lot of that over the years, both as a student and as a teacher. (Interview 2)
Samantha, who also came from a marching band background, noted the dichotomy between the availability of formal leadership education opportunities for music students while very little exists for music teachers.

I think a lot of times our professional development is really classroom-focused or really content-focused. You don’t see a ton of stuff, at least not in my experience in the band and orchestra world, specifically on leadership. I think there is a huge opportunity for growth… All these leadership camps, drum major academies, Dr. Tim’s Leadership Academy. We do that for students, but we don’t do that for ourselves in our profession. (Interview 3)

As discussed in his portrait, drum major camps were also pivotal for Kevin’s early leadership identity development. Much later in his career, after he entered higher education, he had the opportunity to attend leadership workshops offered through his university. One was particularly impactful for him.

It was a two-day workshop specifically focused on leadership and on the kinds of leadership you might need to be a Department Chair. So, you’re looking at conflict resolution strategies, collaborating with peers, collaborating with other leaders, working with administrative structures, and that was really cool. They focused a lot on conflict resolutions through interest-based negotiations rather than positional bargaining and that’s really stuck with me a lot. I’ve actually still got their materials in one of these filing cabinets behind me here. (Interview 2)

Olivia also had an impactful formal leadership education experience at a workshop outside of music education. She first attended this leadership workshop as a new national leader in her organization.
One of the things in this leadership workshop that really resonated with me… was really understanding who you are and what your tendencies are, while understanding that other people have different tendencies, and what those perspectives are. Getting it out there so that we don’t misunderstand each other. One of the things is that we have to give people many different ways to communicate and contribute. (Interview 2)

Olivia also experienced an actualization of her own leadership values at this workshop that helped her overcome some debilitating impostor feelings. Olivia’s experience at this workshop was so meaningful that she has since attended it two more times.

While each of the formal leadership experiences described so far contributed to participants’ LID in a positive way, Connor had an experience with a leadership workshop (outside of music education) that he did not find helpful or informative. As described in his individual portrait in Chapter 4, the workshop activities were too vague and too far removed from his own leadership context to be helpful.

A few participants mentioned that there was probably some leadership education embedded in their undergraduate methods courses; however, no one was able to describe any specific examples or meaningful lessons. Laura took a few graduate courses in her institution’s educational leadership department while completing her Master’s degree, but again, she was not able to indicate any lasting lessons or impressions that she got from these classes.

**Seeking Leadership Education Outside of Music Education**

It is notable that, of the three participants who had substantial formal leadership education experiences, all of Olivia’s formal leadership education and some of Kevin’s took place outside of the music education profession. Similarly, other participants that had not received much formal leadership education or training sought it out from other fields where
formal leadership education is more commonplace. Samantha, Natalie, Thomas, and Sophia all noted that they read leadership literature to learn more and expand their understanding of leadership philosophies and practices, and Evan mentioned that, while he doesn’t read leadership literature, he does discuss leadership with colleagues from across the country. As mentioned in the Family Influence section, Sophia asked for leadership advice from her sister who is in banking.

She’s had way more formal leadership training than I have because she has an MBA, so I know she had some of that kind of coursework in her Masters Degree. And in the bank that she has worked for she’s had a lot more formal corporate leadership development than I have. (Sophia, Interview 2)

Because leadership itself is contextually situated (Bass & Bass, 2008) and leadership development is most effective when it takes place within the intended leadership context (Peters & Baum, 2007), formal leadership education situated within a music education context may be even more impactful for those wishing to better understand leadership. The limited availability of evidence-based organizational leadership education, training, and research in music education, along with many participants’ desire to learn more, indicates a need for our profession to examine and address this deficiency.

**Intersection of Leadership and Personal Identities**

Many aspects of personal identity play a pivotal role in leadership identity development (Komives, et al., 2005). Participants in this study, particularly the female participants and participants who took on positional leadership roles early in their careers as young or beginning teachers, described how those aspects of their identity shaped their leadership experiences.
Being a Female Leader

Every female participant in this study brought up struggles or other impacts of being a woman in music education leadership. As members of a historically underrepresented group in leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008; Chin, 2007), several women in this study noted the importance of other female leader mentors. Olivia had a female mentor that encouraged her to get involved in leadership so that she could be that role model for someone else.

When I became President-elect, I was kind of a reluctant leader. When I was asked if I would run by the Nominating Committee… I was like “no, I’m not considering that, no” (laughs). Then [my colleague] asked if I would talk to her on the phone. I said “of course I’ll talk to you on the phone, but my answer is not going to change. But yes, let’s have a meeting.” So, we did, and the fact that I’m saying “she” was actually very important – there haven’t been that many female Presidents of our organization. There have been some, but not that many, and she brought that up… She said that it’s been important for her students to see her in this leadership position – to see another female do this is going to be really important to continue. So, deciding that I was a female representing became part of [my decision] and I did agree. (Interview 2)

Similarly, speaking of her concerns going into her first national leadership role, Natalie said, “I didn’t know what a female leader was supposed to look like.” (Interview 1)

Female participants also described how certain aspects of their identities, such as their names, voices, and appearances, impacted how they were treated in leadership. Olivia shared a story about a previous male mentor who told her that she should seek speech therapy if she was to be taken seriously as a teacher or leader in the profession.
[He told me] I really should think about going to a speech therapist (laughs). It was pretty strong – he said, “you have a lot of great ideas and thoughts, and I wouldn’t want this to hold you back.” So I went to [another mentor] and spoke with him about that. I’m not quite sure what he was referring to… it could’ve been my accent. It could’ve been the pitch of my voice. But it definitely freaked me out. When I was younger, I spoke in a very low voice and my dad had this thing and he wanted me to always speak in a higher voice. So, I already had this awareness growing up. But [my other mentor] said, “you’re gonna be fine, Olivia, don’t worry about it. Don’t think about it again.” Which was lovely, except it didn’t erase it. It made me feel better, but it didn’t erase it for me.

(Interview 2)

She also reflected on conversations she has had with other female leaders who have experienced similar advice.

When I made a recording [for my organization], I purposely spoke a little lower, I projected, I tried to be more resonant. One of my [female] colleagues said, “oh my gosh your voice was so lovely… I have issues with my voice.” So, we’re all talking about this stuff – I think it’s a concern for many women. Not all women, but I think many women do think about that. (Interview 2)

Patrice, who often goes by her middle name, Avery [pseudonym], mentioned that people who have only interacted with her over email will often use a “Mr.” title in their emails. She said, “it is kind of interesting, because they just assume that because you’re in a position of leadership that you’re male.” (Interview 1) Patrice experienced this assumption in person, too.

When I took over, less than three hours after I had taken the position, there was a group that was performing at our conference. The way our conference is set up, one group
performs here and then there’s another stage set here and they rotate for our All-State performance. So, there [was a group] trying to get ready for the next performance while another group was performing and it was very distracting. I made my way behind the shells and said, “is there something I can help you guys with?” [The teacher] said, “well, they’re going to run over and we’re trying to get ready for our next performance.” I was really nice at first, I said, “this doesn’t need to take place right now.” He said, “well, they’re going to run over,” and I said, “this is not going to happen.” Then he’s like, “well, my name is blah, blah, blah and I am Past-President of blah blah blah, just who are you?” And of course, he’s about 6’4” and I look up at him, I’m 5’1”. I looked straight up at him and said “well, I’m the President of this organization and this isn’t going to happen right now. So, what do we need to do to make this work?” He started back peddling, and the other guy who knew me was like “well don’t you know [her]?” and he was trying to smooth it over. I’m not gonna lie, it was pretty gratifying being able to say that (laughs).

(Interview 1)

Similarly, Natalie mentioned that “being female and looking young” (Interview 1) had a big impact on how she felt about herself as a leader, especially earlier in her career. She told a poignant story about how she navigated being a female Department Chair in her K-12 teaching job. She was the only female in a department of older men that were nearing retirement.

One of the men pulled me aside and said, “they think you’re a bitch. You have to go about this more gently.” You know, that standard thing… I didn’t really know that I’d learned to do this, but I learned to navigate a lot of men in power positions by asking them to mentor me, or by giving them my approval that would just make them have a
generalized positive feeling about me and then help me rather than getting in my way.

(Interview 2)

Several women in this study had adapted their interactions in an attempt to navigate male colleagues’ assumptions and biases. Abigail described an experience of being ignored by a male principal in leadership meetings.

There was this one principal and there were a couple of women and I who would have these good ideas, but he would just be like, “oh no, we can’t do that.” Then some guy would say it ten minutes later and it would be like “well, that was a genius idea! How come no one thought of that?” We finally would just give our ideas to that guy and be like, “you just say it, it will save time.” (Interview 3)

When Sophia decided to pursue her Ph.D., in addition to taking on a tenure-track higher education position and having three young children, her Dean “patted my hand very condescendingly and said, ‘oh hon, do you really think you can do this?’” (Interview 1) Despite feeling unsupported by that Dean, Sophia managed to complete her degree and continue in the position while raising her children. However, her interactions with him left a lasting impact.

He was the reason I went back after teaching and did not want to be an administrator anymore because I did not feel valued or equal as a leader with my male colleagues by him. That was intolerable for me. (Interview 1)

The struggles of female band directors are well documented (Sears, 2018; Sheldon & Hartley, 2012). Female participants in this study who served in leadership while teaching band faced many of the same struggles.

When I first started, I only knew one female band director. She was at a school not very far from me and she was my idol. Even though she taught at a tiny school, I think there
were probably 300 students in the high school and 278 of them were in band. That’s how powerful she was in her school. She was a good role model for me because I didn’t know a female band director in our profession that is typically male dominated. Since 1938, I’m only the 2nd woman that’s ever led this organization. (Patrice, Interview 2)

Samantha described similar experiences as a female band director in leadership.

_Samantha:_ I was literally the only female (laughs). At that time, only 6% of the high school band directors in the state were female. And I was one of them, so there was a little bit of that gender dynamic going on too.

_Nicole:_ Could you elaborate on that a bit? How did those experiences or interactions feel for you?

_Samantha:_ I didn’t know the word back then, but it was just a lot of mansplaining (laughs). Being talked down to, and I was so young, so people who didn’t know me yet, other band directors, would walk up to me, and they’d say, “um, excuse me, who is running this event?” and I’d say, “yeah, that’s me.” …it was just a lot of the “oh, you’re the one in charge? Oh.” (Interview 2)

It was clear in my conversations with the female participants in this study that being a woman had deeply impacted their experiences as leaders. It shaped their interactions with followers, other leaders, mentors, and employers. Some had to develop coping strategies that helped them navigate leadership, especially regarding interactions with their older, male colleagues. It was also interesting to note that only the female participants in this study mentioned having impostor feelings or fearing others’ perceptions of unearned success in their leadership roles.
Impostor Feelings

Impostor feelings were a notable barrier for participants who experienced them. Many female participants feared either that they were faking their way toward leadership recognition, or that their followers or fellow leaders perceived their success as unearned. These phenomena are common across women in leadership from all areas and are often the product of their historical underrepresentation and marginalization in leadership (Heilman & Alcott, 2001; Singer, 1994).

As discussed in more detail in her portrait, Olivia experienced debilitating impostor feelings when she was elected to her first national music education leadership role. She struggled with the question, “why me?”, which she eventually overcame by acknowledging what she was able to bring to her organization. Laura encountered similarly debilitating impostor feelings.

It was impostor syndrome; I felt like I don’t belong here. Even when I had an opinion, I felt like maybe I shouldn’t speak up… I think [I needed] confidence in my thinking and learning that what I had to offer was insightful. (Interview 2)

When I asked if she still struggled with these feelings, Laura said,

I think that those impostor feelings have not gone totally away, but it’s a lot less now than it was thirty years ago. Now, when somebody asks me to be a leader, I definitely do not go to them and say “no, I don’t want to do that.” If somebody asks me to do something, it’s “Ah, well, I might want to do that but let me think about this. How this is going to affect my life?” So, the imposter syndrome is still there, but it is not as pronounced as it was thirty years ago.

Samantha mentioned that her mentors helped her overcome the impostor feelings she experienced.
I always had a little bit too much self-doubt; I always had that idea that surely there is somebody more qualified than me to do this. Even back then I needed that extra nudge to just give it a shot. (Interview 1)

Patrice even said that being invited to be a part of this study initially made her experience impostor feelings; “I appreciate the opportunity to do this. It’s like I said when I was talking about my mentors, I think, ‘why does anyone care what I have to say?’ (Laughs) So, it’s been nice [to be asked].” (Interview 1) While each participant that brought up impostor feelings had found ways to overcome them, it took time and experience to break through the tendency to question their identity as a leader.

**Being a Young Leader**

Participants’ ages at the time of their leadership also impacted their interactions with followers and fellow leaders. Each participant in this study got involved in professional leadership early in their careers, and many mentioned struggles they faced as young leaders in the profession. Many felt hesitant to speak up, especially when others in the room were veteran teachers.

I had one fairly big challenge as State President when I was younger. There was a group of folks being led by a former legislature in the state who was looking to create a group of folks that were going to advocate on behalf of arts ed… We were not getting a seat at the table for this new committee. One of our members really pushed me. His philosophy was that you just keep beating down the door until they let you in, and that’s just not my personality. But this gentleman was certainly older than me and was a well-respected program leader in one of the big school districts in the state, and he did not feel I was being aggressive enough as President because I was younger. (Thomas, Interview 1)
Though Natalie has been in the music education profession for 25 years at the time of this study, she still experienced condescending comments about her age.

Somebody just the other day said, “Natalie is the baby among us,” and I thought, “I’m really not, I’m actually 46.” …That’s a weird thing to say to someone in leadership, that you’re a baby (laughs)… So, I just think that’s a big piece of [my experience], too. A lot of my leadership experiences leading up to this point have been from the perspective of being young and being a female and having people often not listen to me. I’ve gotten really stubborn; that was sort of how I dealt with it. Quietly stubborn, or passively stubborn… that’s how I survived it. (Interview 1)

Kevin mentioned feeling intimidated by the level of responsibility in his leadership roles earlier in his career.

One thing that’s challenging, especially as a young leader, that I’ve experienced is when you’re in a new role, whether it’s new to you or maybe you are a little bit young for the role, at least compared to other people that you’re leading, you have these moments where you get in there and think, “okay so we’ve got to make a decision on this. Oh wait, that means me; I have to make the decision on this.” That can be really challenging sometimes. Wow, it’s been delegated to me to make this decision and people are trusting me. (Interview 2)

Samantha connected her impostor feelings to being a young teacher as well.

I was young, I was only in my mid-twenties, and I was communicating with teachers who were a lot more experienced than I was. I think because of that I really felt like I had to be on my A-game. I had to have everything really organized. I had to be very timely with my communications, very clear. So, I think for me, the most challenging thing was just
feeling like I had to prove myself. It’s that impostor syndrome, they’re all going to figure out that you’re a fake (laughs). (Interview 2)

Interestingly, Evan mentioned that he had to check his own biases against younger teachers now that he is a more experienced teacher.

The old guard is nasty, and I freely admit that at times I catch myself thinking like the old guard. Seeing a 4-year, 5-year teacher that just got invited or accepted [to leadership] and going, “oh, but what do they really know?” and then going, “God, what an asshole thing to say.” They’re probably really good. Why don’t you reach out and say “hi, glad you’re in our state.” As a young leader, especially if you want to bring about any amount of change to the status quo, it’s so intimidating. (Interview 3)

Participants discussed feeling intimidated as young leaders, but also pointed to those first professional leadership roles as pivotal in setting them on the leadership path that led them to their state and national positions at the time of this research.

**Intersection of Leadership and Music Teacher Identities**

As both music teacher identity development and leadership identity development incorporate aspects of personal identity construction and an evolving view of the profession through experience and interaction (Draves, 2019; Kastner, 2018; Komives et al., 2005; Olsen, 2008 Russell, 2012), it is logical that these two aspects of professional identity should have similarities in their developmental processes. While I did not approach this study using music teacher identity development as a lens or framework for investigating participants’ experiences with leadership identity development, the connection between the two became apparent throughout data collection and analysis.
Connections Between Teaching and Leading Experiences

Most participants’ earliest leadership experiences were examples of classroom leadership, often in the form of section leaders (Olivia, Evan, Nathan, Thomas, Connor) or drum majors (Samantha, Kevin, Evan, Thomas, Charlotte). Participants shifted fluidly between teaching and leading rhetoric when discussing these experiences.

I was selected as drum major my sophomore year, junior year and senior year, and that started growing [my identity] a lot by having a leadership position in the marching band. I started being asked to do a lot more outside of marching band. Like, “oh, Kevin, can you help with the Pep Band?” Or, if the teacher was out, running this rehearsal. So, I was just getting a lot of experiences being put in a teaching role without really realizing it.

(Kevin, Interview 1)

The experiences Kevin described in this quote involve both peer leadership as well as teaching responsibility, and he discussed both in context of his early leadership. He also made a connection between his teaching and leading experiences.

Leadership experiences in high school, especially for music students, tend to have a lot of overlap with teaching identity and teacher type experiences. So, I thought, “oh, I’m going to be in this leadership experience,” but really what I was getting put into was a lot of teaching roles where I would be instructing a group. Those kinds of high school experiences were some of my earliest memories of really feeling like a leader.

(Interview 1)

Samantha also drew a connection between her music teacher and leader identities explicitly. “I think there are a lot of tie-ins to finding your voice as an educator. Once you’ve found that, I feel like maybe your confidence in your leadership grows alongside of that.” (Interview 3)
Abigail, and Natalie all made connections between their experiences as large ensemble leaders and their overall leadership development as well.

There are people like me that are in organizational leadership, but I think every person that stands in front of a choir, a band, or an orchestra has to be a leader; I mean, they just have to! I think sometimes administrators look to the music teachers because they know that they can get in front of a group of people and get them to do stuff. (Abigail, Interview 3)

Sophia specifically connected teaching skills to the skills needed to be a good leader.

Teaching itself is such a complex, multilevel task that I think the nature of the becoming an effective teacher builds many of the skills that you need to be an effective leader. A teacher is a leader in his or her classroom. Many of the same skills that I use every day in my academic leadership position are things that I employed when I was teaching middle school choir. (Interview 3)

As discussed in more detail in his portrait, Evan experienced a sizable shift in his music teaching philosophy early in his career that led to some unanticipated leadership opportunities. As his understanding of “good” music education shifted to be more inclusive of a wider variety of musics and musical practices, he and a colleague founded a new music festival through his state MEA that was more inclusive and interactive for participating students. His successful leadership of that festival led to his other state leadership roles, to which he brought his focus on diversifying and increasing access to music education.

Though participants noted explicit and impactful connections between their leadership identity development and their music teacher identity development, there was a distinct difference between participants’ experiences with classroom and music program leadership and
their experiences with professional and organizational leadership. As discussed previously, most participants faced a steep learning curve when entering their first professional leadership roles and felt they had to learn on the job with little guidance. Many participants also expressed a desire for more organizational leadership education and training. While the classroom leadership abilities that they developed as music teachers certainly helped with their ability to organize, manage, coordinate, and inspire, many still struggled with their leadership identities in the professional leadership context.

**Being a Leader from a Small or Rural School**

It was interesting to note that several participants that taught in small or rural schools mentioned the impact of their experiences in that setting on their leadership identity development. Patrice and Abigail discussed how important their small school perspectives were in their respective leadership settings, while Evan’s experience teaching at a small, rural school was what fundamentally changed his teaching philosophy, leading to his own leadership initiatives (as discussed in the previous section and in his portrait).

When a colleague asked Abigail if she would be the All-State Chorus Chair for the state MEA, she was initially hesitant to accept the position. However, her colleague asked her to lunch to discuss the importance of her unique perspective on the All-State festival. She said, “they wanted someone with more of a small school perspective.” (Interview 2) Their festival was sometimes dominated by larger, suburban schools, and the leadership wanted to maintain the limit to the number of students a school could bring so as to not lose participation of the smaller schools. Patrice described a similar scenario that impacted her view of herself as a leader. Described in more detail in her portrait, her experience of being elected as President of her
state’s MEA shocked her because she was the first ever President from a small school where the music teacher teaches everything within K-12 music.

While these teachers from small, rural schools had unique and important perspective to add, they often thought they would not be selected for leadership if they ran. Fortunately, these participants had engaged mentors that encouraged them to get involved and supported their leadership efforts.

“Finding My Voice”

The essence of each participant’s leadership identity development can be described as a journey to finding their voice. Prior to finding their voice, they struggled to define and actualize their leadership identity. For Samantha, “finding my voice” (Interview 2) meant having the confidence to stand up to and lead the veteran teachers in her organization. For Olivia, leadership identity was the last part of her professional identity to feel comfortable.

I started to bring in my identity and mission to this role. I understood how it works for teaching; I’ve got that. I understood how that works being a musician, I have that too.

But I didn’t really understand how all of that could work with this aspect of being a leader, and until I did, I was not comfortable at all. (Interview 3)

Olivia’s clarity came from an impactful formal leadership education workshop that helped her better understand how her particular skill set and vision could benefit her organization. For some participants, the clarity came from leadership experiences. For others, it came from interactions with mentors and validation they received from followers and other leaders. Some were still struggling with seeing themselves as leaders at the time of this study. Just as personal development never concludes, leadership identity development is a lifelong process that continues to evolve with further learning, experience, and interaction (Komives et al., 2005).
However, the participants in this study showed a high level of leadership identity development in the actualization of those identities as a result of their formal and informal leadership education experiences.

**Connecting Leadership Identity to Action**

As participants’ leadership identities changed, their actions within their organizations changed as well. Some made a conscious effort to recruit and mentor future leaders.

I think now more than ever, I realize the necessity of being intentional as we reach out to teacher-leaders in a diverse population or reaching out to marginalized groups. As a female, I’ve always been aware of that myself, but in leading [my organization], when I look around, I’m trying to ensure that when we are holding elections, we have people of color represented as well.” (Sophia, Interview 3)

Laura strove to help younger leaders overcome their impostor feelings.

My job as an older leader who had impostor feelings is to make sure the younger leaders know that I had impostor feelings – I feel the way you did – and communicate with them. Make sure that, if there’s a young person in that position, that you compliment them and tell them, “that is so inventive!” and, “I love having you on this team because you bring the other side,” Just complimenting what they’re doing to help them fight off those impostor feelings. That’s our responsibility, to help young people who are in leadership positions to get over these feelings that we all have. (Interview 3)

Samantha mentioned that the “mentoring comes in when we say ‘hey, we see you, you’re already doing this; you’re capable of doing this at a little bit broader level.’” (Interview 3) Since taking a state leadership role, she has purposefully made an effort to get her students more involved in professional organizations. Laura provided opportunities for her high school students to lead and
now models professional leadership for them just as her high school teacher modeled for her.

“The grooming of leadership that I’ve talked about has spilled over in my classroom. I think, over the years, I’ve delegated more and more responsibility to those leaders in my classroom to encourage those skills even more.” (Interview 3) Sophia strove to mentor and foster other female leaders.

At this point in my career, I am very aware of trying to explicitly develop leadership in young women and to be a role model or a mentor or a sounding board, even though times are different and challenges are different. Many of them are still the same, and I think it’s important for young, female teachers to recognize that there are people that have been there and done that and they can ask. That they can see what’s possible. (Interview 2)

Evan also recruited students to leadership who show potential, even if they could not yet see it in themselves.

Usually a lot of the kids that become drum majors [in my program] are kids that, like my high school band director did with me, I had to say, “you’re incredible and people follow you and I don’t think that you know the extent that people follow you. You make people feel welcome, accepted, motivated. Have you ever thought about doing x, y, z?” All of a sudden, they’re going, “what? Wait, me?” “Yes, you!” (Interview 1)

Thomas coordinated a Leadership Academy for teachers in his state. Patrice expanded a mentoring program for teachers offered through her organization. While some participants in this study mentioned concerns about the time that their leadership activities take away from their students, each felt their work was important and ultimately benefitted students throughout the music education profession.
Answers to Research Questions

My first research question was: How do successful teacher-leaders in the music education profession experience leadership identity development? While some participants had experiences with formal leadership education that contributed to their LID, most of participants’ experiences were informal. LID began from a young age, often influenced by families as part of primary socialization. Participants constructed their leadership identities through reflections on their on-the-job experiences and interactions with mentors and role models. Mentor interactions often resulted in invitations to leadership roles, which created an invitation cycle with those in leadership inviting others to become involved. Some participants, particularly those from historically underrepresented populations and those who began their professional leadership journeys early in their careers, struggled to accept their leadership identities. Participants from these populations had to navigate biases and negative interactions that impacted their ability to see themselves as leaders.

My second research question was: How do music teachers’ leadership experiences relate to their teaching experiences? LID was intimately connected to participants’ music teacher identity development, with the latter often impacting the former. However, professional and organizational leadership provided distinct differences for participants, resulting in a steep learning curve for those who had no formal leadership education or training. Participants both consciously and subconsciously drew connections between their teaching and leadership experiences, often providing teaching examples when asked about leadership. While participants were concerned about time spent away from their students for leadership activities, they ultimately believed that they were able to have a positive impact on the profession through these activities.
My third research question was: How, if at all, do music educators experience formal leadership education or training? Very few participants had much formal leadership education. Of the 13 participants, seven had experienced formal leadership education, and of those seven, only three participants described substantial formal leadership education experiences beyond a workshop or two. For those three, however, their formal leadership education experiences were pivotal for their development, especially as it related to their understanding of their role and priorities within their organizations. These experiences helped them actualize their leadership identity and philosophy and increased their confidence. Many participants mentioned a desire for more formal leadership education, with some seeking it from fields outside of music education where leadership education is more prevalent.

My fourth research question was: How, if at all, do music educators experience informal leadership education or training? Informal leadership education accounted for the vast majority of participants' meaningful LID experiences. Many participants described their experiences as “wandering around” or “unguided,” taking leadership roles and then having to learn on-the-job and through interactions with mentors.

Implications

The participants in this study, who represented many different states, regions of the country, and areas of specialization in music education, consistently recognized the lack of formal leadership education opportunities in music education. Along with the relatively small body of literature on professional and organizational leadership development in music education, especially compared to other fields, these participants’ experiences may indicate an area in need of improvement in our profession. Professional organizations play an important role in the profession, including advocacy efforts, curriculum design, research review and dissemination,
and professional development for preservice and inservice music educators. Therefore, it is important that these organizations’ leaders acquire the skills and knowledge they need to lead, as well as a developed leadership philosophy and identity to guide their actions and decision-making. A music educator’s leadership identity can be impacted by both formal and informal leadership education and interactions with family, peers, and mentors.

While primary socialization, especially the impact of families, peers, and teachers modelling leadership during the K-12 years, played an important role in many of these participants’ leadership identity development, it also raised questions of access in music education leadership. Music education programs at both the K-12 and postsecondary level are still populated primarily by white and upper middle-class students and teachers. Similarly, although the majority of K-12 music teachers are women (except in secondary band programs where they are in the minority), they are still historically underrepresented in music education leadership. If students from marginalized populations do not see themselves reflected in their leaders during primary socialization, they are more likely to struggle to view themselves as leaders, which can slow the leadership identity development process and discourage them from becoming involved in leadership. The participants in this study who were women, who were from small, lesser-known, or rural schools, or who became involved in professional leadership early in their careers all described interactions relating to these aspects of their personal and professional identities that frustrated or discouraged them in leadership.

Likewise, when left unchecked, the invitation cycle described by most participants in this study also has the potential to act as a barrier to historically underrepresented populations by perpetuating the selection of like-minded individuals for leadership roles. Charlotte articulated concerns about issues of access and representation in music education leadership.
The lack of training, the lack of a clear path, the lack of any kind of preparation not only is a little frustrating for people who are put in leadership positions and then try to figure it out on-the-job, but I think it also leads to a lack of representation... it actually concerns me a lot. (Charlotte, Interview 3)

When used intentionally, such as Abigail and Patrice’s recruitment to leadership because they were from small, rural schools, or Abigail and Olivia’s recruitment to leadership as strong, female role models, the invitation cycle can be used to increase diversity in leadership. However, most participants described their experiences with this phenomenon as being influenced primarily by social connections and professional networking rather than an effort to recruit leaders with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

While increased access to formal leadership education within the music education profession may benefit all stakeholders, the importance of experiential, on-the-job learning should not be understated. Just as teachers learn to teach by teaching, leaders learn to lead by leading. Opportunities to reflect on leadership experiences with mentors and colleagues help teacher-leaders to better understand their roles within their organizations.

Limitations

Because leadership is so intimately connected to context, leadership researchers should also acknowledge the context within which their participants are leading (Shamir, 2012). “Suggesting that a leadership theory or model applies equally in different contexts greatly simplifies the phenomenon of leadership not only theoretically but also practically.” (Shamir, 2012, p. 347). While theory development was not a goal of this research, it should still be noted that the research was framed from the perspectives of teacher-leaders serving in music education professional organizations. Therefore, readers should not assume transferability of findings to
other leadership contexts, such as music classroom or program leadership. Similarly, as this was a qualitative, phenomenological inquiry of 13 participants, generalizability to an entire population was not a goal of this research. Instead, I strove to increase transferability of findings by selecting participants who represented a variety of demographics, geographical regions, and personal and professional backgrounds. I provided a thick, rich description of each participant to aid in the reader’s transfer to their own setting.

The lack of racial diversity in the participants is a limitation of this research. Though multiple rounds of recruitment materials were sent to a national pool of potential participants from a variety of state and national organizations, all respondents who were currently teaching and also serving in leadership (therefore meeting the teacher-leader criterion for selection) were White. People of color face underrepresentation and marginalization in the music education profession (Talbot, 2018); therefore, teacher-leaders of color are likely to have perspectives not represented here. Future research should investigate the potential underrepresentation of people of color in music education professional leadership and explore their perspectives and experiences with leadership.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based on this research, I offer the following recommendations to music teacher educators, music education professional organization leadership, and preservice and inservice music teachers. Music teacher educators should consider including leadership education as an intentional part of their undergraduate and graduate curricula. Undergraduate curricula should include basic instruction on leadership approaches and allow students opportunities to develop their own leadership philosophy. Such instruction could be purposefully embedded into music education methods courses or provided as a separate course specifically focusing on leadership.
Along with formal instruction, undergraduate students should be provided with opportunities to actualize their leadership philosophies through scaffolded leadership experiences and then guided through reflection with peers and mentors. Leadership experiences may include involvement in collegiate chapters of professional organizations, holding collegiate leadership roles at the site or state level, assisting with events and clinics hosted at the school, or partnering with local teachers or leadership programs for practicum-like leadership experience. Music teacher educators should keep in mind that both formal and informal leadership experiences and education are important for preservice teachers’ leadership identity development.

Graduate music education programs should include coursework dedicated to leadership. Courses should dive more deeply into leadership theories and approaches as well as providing a better understanding of practical leadership and management strategies. Graduate students should explore their own leadership strengths to better understand how they might be able to serve the profession. By the time they start graduate school, many music teachers have already gotten involved in positional leadership and should be given the opportunity for guided reflection on these experiences. Those who have not yet gotten involved in such leadership should be encouraged to explore leadership options that best suit their strengths and their professional and personal goals.

Music education professional organization leadership should consider structured initial training processes based on the needs of their incoming leaders. Most participants in this study felt their initial training for their current roles was insufficient. When designing professional development geared toward leadership, consider incorporating follow up meetings or activities to any workshops rather than a one-stop approach. Finally, focus on activities that allow attendees
to explore and develop their philosophies while also assisting with their actualization of philosophy in practice and within their particular leadership context(s).

Music education professional organization leadership should also critically examine their nomination, election, and mentoring procedures to address barriers to access for potential leaders from marginalized populations. Diversity of backgrounds and perspectives enhances and strengthens a leadership team or organization, and music educators should actively seek to expand access to leadership opportunities. As it currently exists, the invitation cycle in music education leadership primarily perpetuates like-minding thinking in organizational leadership. However, when used purposefully, it can aid in diversifying leadership teams. Issues of marginalization and underrepresentation throughout the music education profession are mirrored in its leadership; leaders should actively work to broaden access to leadership within their organizations and institutions.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Leadership, and especially leadership identity development, are understudied topics in music education research. Future research in this area should explore several areas of interest. First, a descriptive analysis of music education professional leadership could provide insight into potential underrepresentation, especially of marginalized populations. Second, I recommend a deeper dive into the intersections between personal and leadership identities and leadership and music teacher identities in music education. Third, researchers should investigate the effectiveness of formal leadership education and training in music education.

**Conclusion**

Teacher-leaders play a vital role in the music education profession and provide much-needed insights in organizational leadership. Through formal leadership education, informal
interactions with mentors, on-the-job experiential learning, and personal development, music educators construct leadership identities that impact their values and actions in leadership settings. Though it can be a frustrating and nerve-wracking path for some, those who are able to develop a leadership identity are better equipped to not only lead our profession, but to mentor and guide the next generation of music education leaders.
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APPENDIX A: UNCG IRB INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: A Phenomenology of the Professional Leadership Identity Development of Music Educators

Principal Investigator: Nicole K. Ramsey

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Brett Nolker

What is this all about?
I am asking you to participate in this research study because you hold a state or national leadership position in a music education professional organization. This research project will take about 3-5 hours of total involvement (3 interviews, 60-90 minutes each, plus email communication) and will involve your participation in individual interviews as well as follow up email communications to confirm accurate representation of your experiences in the data analysis and interpretation.

How will this negatively affect me?
Other than the time you spend on this project there are no known or foreseeable negative impacts or risks involved with this study.

What do I get out of this research project?
Findings may provide insight for music teacher educators wishing to assist with the leadership identity development of pre-service music teachers or graduate students. There are no direct benefits for individual participants in this study.

Will I get paid for participating?
There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

What about my confidentiality?
We will do everything possible to make sure that your information is kept confidential. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Participants will be referred to by pseudonym. Data will be deidentified and stored in an encrypted file on a password protected computer and in Box (UNCG’s secure cloud storage system). Data will be destroyed five years after conclusion of the study; data will not be used in future research projects.

Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when finished so no one will be able to see what you have been doing.

Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording as described in this section.
What if I do not want to be in this research study?
You do not have to be part of this project. This project is voluntary and it is up to you to decide to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate at any time in this project you may stop participating without penalty.

What if I have questions?
You can ask Nicole Ramsey (PI) at [704-604-3145] or nkramsey@uncg.edu or Dr. Brett Nolker (Faculty Advisor) at [336-790-3540] or dbnolker@uncg.edu anything about the study. If you have concerns about how you have been treated in this study call the Office of Research Integrity Director at [1-855-251-2351].
Dear [name],

My name is Nicole Ramsey, and I am a PhD student in music education at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am seeking music education professionals who hold leadership positions in professional organizations to be participants in my dissertation research. The working title of my dissertation is “A Phenomenology of Professional Leadership Identity Development in Music Educators.” In order to progress, advocate, and stay relevant, the music education profession requires teachers who are willing and prepared to serve in leadership roles in a variety of settings. I am contacting you because of your notable current leadership position in [state or national music education professional organization].

If you agree to participate in this study, you will take part in three individual interviews (via Zoom) that should last 60-90 minutes each. Data collection will take place from May-September of 2021. After that point, I will continue to reach out via email to confirm findings and ensure that I have represented your experiences as accurately as possible. Interview topics will include your professional background, current and previous leadership experiences, and experiences with leadership development and/or education, along with other topics that emerge from our discussions.

I appreciate your service to the music education profession and hope you are willing to share your experiences with me. If you are interested in participating in this study, please review the attached consent form, save it for your records, and reply to me at nkramsey@uncg.edu to confirm your willingness to be involved. Also, please feel free to reply to this email with any questions you may have.

Thank you so much for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Nicole Ramsey

(Contact information and affiliation included in email signature)
APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Dear [name],

My name is Nicole Ramsey, and I am a PhD student in music education at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I previously reached out to you regarding your potential participation in the research for my dissertation, tentatively titled “A Phenomenology of Professional Leadership Identity Development in Music Educators.” Since I have not yet heard back from you, I am contacting you again to see if you are interested in participating.

As a reminder, the data collection will consist of three individual interviews (via Zoom), 60-90 minutes each, taking place between May and September of 2021. Interview topics will include your professional background, current and previous leadership experiences, and experiences with leadership development and/or education, along with other topics that emerge from our discussions.

I appreciate your service to the music education profession and hope you are willing to share your experiences with me. If you are interested in participating in this study, please review the attached consent form, save it for your records, and reply to me at nkramsey@uncg.edu to confirm your willingness to be involved. Also, please feel free to reply to this email with any questions you may have.

Thank you so much for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Nicole Ramsey

(Contact information and affiliation included in email signature)