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How Did I End Up Here?: The Realities of Teaching Music Education at Small Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

Throughout this phenomenological narrative study, we examined our lived experiences as five music teacher educators working in small, liberal arts universities across the United States. Data included personal and shared narratives from each participant, and each story was coded for similar themes in our overarching realities of serving as the "lone" music education faculty member at our schools. The six core themes that emerged were: (a) music education faculty at small universities must assume augmented and varied responsibilities, both in and outside the music education curriculum; (b) recruitment is a heightened priority; (c) small class sizes offer both benefits and challenges; (d) limited resources, including time for research, can be challenging; (e) music teacher educators at small institutions can promote change on campus both in curriculum and policy; and (f) the evaluation process for tenure and promotion at small institutions emphasizes teaching but can be nebulous for "stand-alone" faculty. By reflecting and reporting on our personal struggles and successes, we offer suggestions for stand-alone music education faculty and doctoral programs preparing future music teacher educators.

Keywords: curriculum, music teacher education, liberal arts, music teacher identity, narrative inquiry, recruitment, phenomenology, professional isolation

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Introduction

Music teacher education programs exist in different types of institutions, including research-based universities, smaller teaching-focused institutions, schools offering graduate degrees, and schools focused on undergraduate education. An institution's size, demographic, types of degree granted, and philosophies can influence both the music education curriculum and the role music education faculty members play within that setting. Collegiate music education professors typically complete their doctoral work in large, research-focused institutions that are different from those who teach at smaller institutions. The authors of this study all taught at small colleges and felt their teaching environment was unique, required a different skill set than what they received in their education, and felt isolated in their teaching environment.

In their study on the perspectives of rural and urban music teachers, Hunt (2009) emphasized the importance of preparing music teachers for careers in environments in which they may be the only music teacher or situations that may be profoundly different from their own childhood experiences and/or collegiate environment. Though their study specifically speaks to K-12 school music teacher preparation, there are connections between the preparation and educational opportunities of *all* teachers, including those in teacher education. Smaller institutions often employ only one or two music education professors. This can lead to a profound sense of isolation. Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) examined the extent to which K-12 school music teachers expressed feelings of professional isolation and found that it is a reality for many. Further, they found that new teachers are more likely to feel isolated than those with more experience, and professional isolation has a negative effect on teaching and retention. They concluded their research by recommending further studies related to professional isolation, specifically in the field of music education. Inspired by this call, we retold our stories of teaching

at small colleges and universities with the hopes of providing insight for future music teacher educators teaching in similar settings.

Supporting Literature

Few researchers, both in and out of music education, have specifically studied teacher education at small institutions. Further, little research exists addressing teacher educator preparation in graduate schools and how this form of pre-professor mentoring applies to the situations of non-research-one (R1) institutions.

Teacher Education Preparation and Identity

People often perceive expectations associated with their field based on what others communicate to them (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snoek, 1964). In their study of the socialization process of new college faculty in family and consumer science teacher education, Lichty and Stewart (2000) found that subjects believed graduate school professors provided the role modeling crucial for preparing them in their careers. Additionally, their recommendations for teacher education programs included matching graduate students with prominent mentors from other institutions to enhance their professional success; reducing the teaching, advising, and service loads for new faculty during their first year; and providing new faculty with detailed information regarding workload, performance expectations, evaluation, promotion, and tenure.

Though researchers focused on the socialization and identity of music teacher educators (Bond & Koops, 2014; Conkling & Henry, 2008; Conway et al., 2010; Draves & Koops, 2011; Pellegrino et al., 2014), none of these authors identified the realities of those teaching in small school settings. In general, there is a lack of current research regarding the preparation and experiences of liberal arts faculty (Friedrich & Michalak, 1983; Michalak & Friedrich, 1981), yet these studies relevantly suggest conducting research may be more difficult at smaller institutions.

Michalak and Friedrich (1981) justified the importance of faculty research in smaller institutions in terms of its contribution to teaching, given that the mission of many of these universities adopts a teaching-first approach. One of the only qualitative studies presenting realities of teaching music education at a small college suggested there are unique challenges and opportunities different from those at larger institutions (Edgar, 2014).

Liberal Arts College Professor Experience

In their article, “How I Came Out of the Liberal Arts Closet,” Grollman (2015) shared much about their own Ph.D. work in Sociology and their aspirations for becoming a professor at a liberal arts university. Grollman asserted that most graduate programs still believe their graduates will go on to teach at R1 institutions and thus prepare their Ph.D. candidates primarily for these positions. They stated:

> Students who were open about their intentions to ‘go liberal arts’ were treated differently from other students. They weren’t pushed as hard on their research. They weren’t regularly selected for research assistantships, awards, and other research-based opportunities. I even suspected that certain professors declined to mentor such students at all. In general, they weren’t as visible in the department, and they never reached ‘rockstar’ status. (para. 7)

They further shared their disappointment at the lack of support received from their graduate school department upon accepting a teaching position at a liberal arts university and how they had a meeting with his committee members so they could talk him out of taking the position.

Western (2013) similarly spoke to the notion that liberal arts professors receive preparation by research university professors who work in a different environment than the one

which their graduate students may work. Western articulated three major differences between working at R1 institutions versus liberal arts institutions: (a) research support is minimal; (b) there are no graduate students; and, (c) there is a lack of specialization in teaching load and requirements.

Harvey (2003) also supported the discrepancy between teaching in liberal arts universities and R1 universities with specific attention to potentially lower salaries, less opportunity for sabbatical leave, and fewer opportunities for research funding as challenges of the liberal arts faculty experience. However, they emphasized several positive aspects to teaching at a liberal arts university, including the opportunity to teach in various fields, a strong sense of community between students and faculty, and the intimacy of small class sizes.

This limited research suggests there are unique challenges which music teacher educators in small schools could face. Seeking to find connections between the major differences and benefits articulated by Western (2013) and music education, the purpose of this study was to phenomenologically explore the personal narratives of five music education faculty at small liberal arts colleges/universities.

Rationale for this Study

Researchers have not yet examined multiple lived experiences of music teacher educators at small universities and colleges. Edgar (2014) explored the lived experience of a music teacher educator at a liberal arts college from a first-person perspective. Our collective stories share the lived experiences of professors working in environments different from where they received preparation to teach in higher education. As music education professors in small liberal arts institutions, the expectation is for us to actively fulfill a variety of roles. We are asked to teach a vast number/variety of classes, conduct ensembles, recruit for the department, develop

curriculum for areas in and outside of music education, serve on campus-wide committees, and develop partnerships with K-12 schools and the community, among numerous other unique expectations. This diversity of responsibilities was rarely, if ever, stressed as part of our music teacher education doctoral programs. As Hunt (2009) stated the importance of preparing K-12 teachers for environments different from where they have come, so must doctoral programs teach their students for environments other than R1 schools.

Methodology and Context

"Phenomenology is a philosophical discipline that studies the structures of human consciousness from the first-person point of view" (Hourigan & Edgar, 2014, p. 148). One of the primary uses of phenomenology is in music education research to investigate specific music educational settings as a form of professional development (Bower, 2008; Conway, 2000; Conway, 2003; Conway, 2008; Conway, Eros, Hourigan, & Stanley, 2007; Conway & Hodgman, 2008; Conway & Holcomb, 2008; Pellegrino, 2010; Lippett Kazee, 2010; Nichols, 2005). As one of the primary goals of the current study was to share our experiences as a form of professional development for music teacher educators, phenomenology was an appropriate methodology for this inquiry.

To accurately explore our lived experiences, the researchers accounted for epoche, or coming to terms with "prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation" (Patton, 2002, p. 485). To accomplish this the researchers engaged in self-journaling and reporting to help include "viewpoints within the report to put the researcher's perspective out front for the reader to understand" (Hourigan & Edgar, 2014, p. 150). We then coded our texts to horizontalize the data and organize it into meaningful clusters. The result was an understanding of the themes as "structures of experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 79).

Phenomenology is often used as the primary methodology blended with other approaches such as case study, mixed method, and narrative inquiry (Hourigan & Edgar, 2014; Reed, 2008). Melded with phenomenology, we drew from narrative inquiry in this current study (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012; Merriam, 2009), described as "the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form" (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). The construction of the narratives were from a psychological approach, which "concentrates more on the personal, including thoughts and motivations" (Merriam, 2009, p. 33). In music education research, Stauffer (2014) stated, "narrative inquiry is not merely storytelling; rather narrative inquiry in music education is scholarly engagement with stories of experience as a means of interrogating critical matters in education, in music, and the world" (p. 180). A small group of music education faculty from small institutions informally gathered at the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE) Symposium Conference in September 2015. From this gathering an awareness emerged that the realities, challenges, and opportunities present at these schools are unique compared to those emphasized in most R1-based doctoral programs – the programs that prepare music teacher educators.

As our discussion built, we realized we had commonalities, though we often feel isolated in our individual contexts. Presented as testimonio (Beverley, 2005), the authors felt underrepresented as the voice of music teacher educators in small institutions. A testimonio is a first-person narrative of one who faced inequality. While not as egregious as facing oppression or marginalization, the authors did feel the perception of inequality compared to R1 colleagues. In this form of narrative research the narrator is the tool, with an interest in providing a perspective that represents a larger, collective story to present a first-hand account of cultures and individuals (Mora, 2015). See Table 1 for demographic details of the participants.

Table 1

Participants.

Name	Institution	# of students (college)	# of music education majors	# of years of at institution (in higher education)	Area of specialization	# of Full Time Music Education Faculty
Nathan	North College	1,528	8	4 (4)	Instrumental	2
Ruth	Roberts University	3,624	13	4 (12)	Instrumental	1
Rachel	Clarkton University	2,083	30	2 (3)	Instrumental	1
Ben	Bishopton College	1,500	20	7 (10)	Instrumental & Elementary	1
Clayton	Miller College	2,700	60	6 (6)	Instrumental	2

The authors began by reflecting and constructing their personal narrative of teaching at a small institution. Email and virtual video online meetings occurred during this process in order to guide the overall format. The result was a format where all narratives addressed broad elements such as the benefits and challenges of teaching in such an institution. The authors engaged in a thorough reading of all narratives looking for primary themes. Each author tracked these themes focused on their individual section of the final research paper on the theme which naturally emerged as unique. This helped reduce redundancy and focus on depth in the individual narratives. The stories below share the realities of these five music teacher educators, including struggles, successes, and growth. This multi-researcher triangulation contributed to the validity and rigor Stauffer (2014) suggested, evaluating "critical matters in education, in music, and the world" (p. 180).

Findings

An analysis of the collective narratives exposed several common themes relevant for those teaching at small institutions including: (a) music education faculty must assume augmented and varied responsibilities, both in and outside the music education curriculum; (b) recruitment is of a heightened priority; (c) small class sizes offer both benefits and challenges; (d) limited resources, including time for research, can be challenging; (e) music teacher educators at small institutions can promote change on campus both in curriculum and policy; and (f) the tenure process at these small institutions can be nebulous for "stand-alone" faculty. In the following section, we will discuss each of the five core themes with support from data; in the conclusions, we offer suggestions for stand-alone music education faculty and the doctoral teacher educator programs that prepare them so that all music teacher education stakeholders may "understand better what it is like for someone to experience" this professional teaching environment (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 46).

Increased/Augmented and Varied Responsibilities

As the sole decision-makers for our curricula, we have great autonomy in shaping our programs and get to develop more holistic teacher identities because we teach courses both inside and outside the major. It is not uncommon for someone at a small liberal arts university to teach major courses like introduction to music education or the upper level methods courses, in addition to teaching a freshman writing seminar and a general education course they developed because they simply wanted to teach it. This is similar to research that asserts that there is a lack of specialization in teaching load and requirements (Western, 2013).

> **Clayton**: A 2-2 or even a 4-4 teaching load is foreign to me. My typical semester consists of no fewer than 14-18 classroom contact hours. Because only a single section of any given course is offered during the academic year, I am often preparing syllabi, materials,

readings, notes, presentations, assessment tools, and digital content for ten or more courses annually.

> **Nathan**: The reality of teaching at a small teaching-focused institution is that I am often asked to wear more hats than fit comfortable….My first semester I was expected to teach my customary three-course load, conduct the concert band, start an athletic band, and create a music education curriculum.

Like Nathan, other participants described varied teaching, administrative, and service responsibilities.

> **Ben**: Overall, the biggest difference I notice between teaching at a small school and a large one is that a small school role requires me to spread my expertise farther and wider than the large school ever did.

> **Rachel**: The number of classes I am asked to teach each semester are more numerous and more varied than I expected. In my few years at Clarkton, I have taught a variety of courses both in and outside of the music education curriculum, as well as classes both in and outside the music department.

> **Ruth**: I had no idea that I could triple the size of a music education program, rebuild a community-wide preparatory program, co-chair and chair aspects of accreditation reviews, teach choral methods, guitar, music history, and exceptional children's courses, develop partnerships with local schools, completely redesign a curriculum, administrate an entire program (including budgets, grants, and hiring), place and observe student teachers working in schools up to three hours from campus, and create meaningful scholarship without graduate students. Without the ability to rely on my other music education colleagues – because these colleagues have infrequently existed – I have been made to stand on my own, make large-scale decisions, and determine the fate of my students and my program. At times, it is lonely, overwhelming, and exhausting. At other times, exhilarating, freeing, and creative.

Understandably, our field, as well as the demands of numerous state, regional, and national accrediting and certifying bodies, requires the inclusion of standards and specific content in courses, without consideration for institutions of limited resources. This necessitates that smaller music schools and departments offer the same type of music education coursework as R1 institutions, typically with fewer music education faculty or graduate teaching assistants,

while also distributing administrative tasks among fewer administrative assistants and/or reallocating those responsibilities to faculty with already burdensome teaching loads. Though the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) recommends a maximum "…teaching load of twelve hours per week, with no more than six separate course preparations during the academic year," faculty at small colleges and universities may be exceeding both recommended thresholds (AAUP, 1969). At the same time, having such a varied teaching and administrative load has positive aspects as well that allow us to extend our own expertise and expand the community of faculty and students with whom we work (Harvey, 2003).

Recruitment

Recruitment has a heightened priority at small colleges/universities compared to what music education professors in larger institutions may experience (Gritzmacher, 1997). As music educators, and often as ensemble directors, it is a crucial (and sometimes unwritten) expectation of our jobs to develop relationships with music teachers in our regions so that we can recruit their students. In larger institutions, ensemble leaders are not necessarily the music education coordinators, and recruiting is often the shared responsibility of the ensemble directors and studio instructors. At smaller institutions, where studio faculty are often adjunct and music education professors are also ensemble leaders, we must focus on recruiting for our music departments – often with few resources – to ensure the security of our jobs. In addition, it behooves music education professors at small schools to recruit in order to populate the music department as well as the music education major, and we may have higher expectations for student advising to ensure students are able to complete their degrees successfully and stay in our programs and ensembles.

> **Ruth:** One challenge has been the almost full-time responsibility for recruitment. When you work at a tuition-driven institution and/or you are in close proximity to multiple

> universities and/or the price tag of attending your college is higher than the schools around you, it is extremely important to have a strong program mission and teacher training philosophy so that you can clearly articulate and demonstrate the "value" of attending your school.

> **Nathan:** One of the most stressful parts of my job is that I am often tasked with recruiting for my program. Most of my self-initiated service involves assisting the admissions department with recruiting. Given the fledgling state of the program, recruiting is of utmost importance and takes a great deal of my time. The results of not achieving our quota of students include teaching overloads, cancelled courses, and tutorials.

Overall, the pressure to recruit – to fill classes and ensembles, maintain our teaching load, and ultimately, to continue to justify our position – is a large stressor. We have frequently shared our campus-wide recruiting strategies, and each of us has worked closely with admissions to ensure that there are numbers in our major (Edgar, 2017; Hossler, 1999).

Small Class Sizes

Smaller class sizes offer both benefits and challenges. Because some of our major courses range from one or two students to six or eight students, we often have to get creative with our teaching strategies. Often at large R1 institutions, we learn how the professors teach these courses, but because the school itself is larger, the class sizes in the methods courses are much larger. Often, having small-group and then large-group discussions do not work because there are not enough students to break up into small groups. In addition, there are not enough students to emulate a large ensemble or classrooms of students, so teaching one's "peers" feels less realistic when there are only one or two other students to teach.

> **Rachel**: When I got to Clarkton, I was surprised that the classes I was asked to teach had so few students in them. How was I supposed to do hands-on, lab-based learning that was so prevalent in the methods courses of my doctoral institution? I was used to classes with at least ten students, and here, my smallest class had one student and my largest had five. I began to talk with music education colleagues at other institutions and colleagues from other areas at my own institution to identify creative methods of engaging my students in

> meaningful classroom discourse and activities, as well as how to get more students in my classes in the long term.

Hunt (2009) discussed the importance of preparing music teachers for careers in environments in situations that may be profoundly different from their own childhood experiences and/or collegiate environment. The class sizes at large R1 universities are large enough to emulate classroom sizes that preservice teachers may teach in themselves. On the same token, doctoral students learn teaching strategies that work in those types of environments where there are enough students to emulate at least a shell of a large ensemble or have multiple small groups for debate or lively discussion. In some smaller schools, however, where there are not enough students in a class to have small group discussions, debates, or to emulate teaching a large ensemble, music teacher educators must think critically and creatively and work to find teaching strategies that will prepare preservice music educators to go out and work with large groups of students.

Because we have fewer students in our major classes, we are able to develop closer relationships with more accountability for our students. We are often able to meet with them one-on-one more than if we had larger classes. We also do not have graduate students to work with, so we have more time for direct contact with the undergraduates we work with. Harvey (2003) discussed the benefits of teaching at a liberal arts university, including the intimacy of small class sizes and "the powerful sense of community between students and faculty." Rachel and Clayton describe their experiences here:

> **Rachel**: The flip-side of having very small class sizes is that my students get much more personal attention from me. I am able to give more thoughtful written and verbal feedback on assignments and I am able to meet with them face-to-face as needed. In addition, they are able to have more time in front of the class teaching their peers during lab-based class activities and are held much more accountable for individual participation in classroom discussion and activities.

> **Clayton**: This environment fosters close relationships with students. Our largest class enrollment is that of the wind ensemble and choirs with approximately fifty participants each. No other course at Miller College has more than twenty-five students, and typically fifteen or fewer enroll in our music education coursework. I enjoy at least three interactions with each of our incoming freshman and transfer music education majors before classes begin, and often serve as the instructor for one or more of their required courses each term. Student progress can be continually monitored, unique learning and advising needs better tended to, and career and life aspirations nurtured in an intimate setting.

New music teacher educators who walk into situations where the class sizes are drastically different than the classes they experienced will need to think quickly and creatively about how to provide engaging classroom experiences for their students. This is a topic that doctoral programs can more directly address so that new music teacher educators will be more equipped and less surprised to effectively teach, for example, an elementary music methods course that has only two students in it. This might require partnering directly with local music teachers, having class off campus several times during the semester, or having students do different types of assignments. At the same time, having fewer students and being able to meet with and more directly assess their students could also make up for and provide additional support for this different type of learning environment.

Much of the research on the liberal arts college professor experience centers around the fact that many liberal arts colleges focus on teaching as the main focus of those schools (Grollman, 2015; Harvey, 2003; Michalak & Friedrich, 1981). However, graduate school professors often do not address the fact that the class sizes of these schools will likely be markedly smaller than the undergraduate courses at their doctoral institutions (Harvey, 2003). Perhaps graduate school professors could model alternative activities in courses they teach with undergraduates that may help doctoral music education candidates better understand the varied

types of teaching strategies used in different types of classroom settings. Even if they are unable to directly model different strategies, as the class sizes are what they are, having more intentional discussions about class sizes at smaller institutions could help doctoral students begin to understand and start thinking about different types of teaching strategies they may need to employ with different sizes of classes. Encouraging doctoral students to find adjunct work at small colleges during their residency could also provide invaluable experience to work in the environment prior to graduation.

Limited Resources and/or Research Support

When resources are inadequate due to insufficient recruitment numbers or when funds are unavailable to support hiring part-time faculty to teach specialized courses in the music curriculum, the administration may view the music education faculty as generalists who are capable of covering any music course, even coursework outside their specialty area.

> **Rachel:** As a public school teacher, I identified mostly as a band director-type, but here I am asked to teach elementary music classes for both music majors and non-majors, secondary vocal methods, and conducting courses. I was initially uncomfortable with the idea of teaching all of these music courses outside my "expertise."

Furthermore, there is often little or no time allotted for research at smaller schools. To gain tenure, the focus is primarily on teaching, with service and research following; however, it is often beneficial if we can show how research directly influences our teaching. At some small institutions, it is often considered enough to attend a conference once a year; and sometimes the administration tells us we should back off on the research and focus more on the teaching part of our job. Ruth discussed her realities:

> **Ruth**: As awesome as it is to be completely in control of every single aspect of music education at my university, sometimes this autonomy is truly exhausting. Add solo research and a large amount of service – often very unique and time intensive service – and I think it is evident why this kind of position is only for those who are self-motivated, extremely organized, firm in their vision and philosophy of music education, and requiring of very little sleep!

Nathan stated that he was "prepared in a 'publish or perish' mentality", as are many music education doctoral students at R1 institutions. But in the jobs we have, this is not necessarily the reality. Additionally, we are often expected to mentor undergraduates in doing their own original research. At many small liberal arts institutions where teaching is the main focus, student-faculty collaborative research is highly revered. We can view teaching undergraduate research methods and mentoring undergraduates in collaborative research projects as more beneficial than doing our own independent research. These findings echo previous studies in this area in that conducting research may be more difficult at liberal arts institutions where teaching is more of the focus (Friedrich & Michalak, 1983; Harvey, 2003; Michalak & Friedrich, 1981; Western, 2013).

Promoting Change

We have the ability and responsibility to promote curriculum and policy change both in our own programs and on campus. Having this much agency, often early on in our academic careers, has been positive when we have wanted to make curricular changes or create new courses. At the same time, because we are often the only music education professor on our campus, it can be isolating and challenging to take on all of these responsibilities and to continuously learn new content (Edgar, 2014; Harvey, 2003). Clayton, Rachel, and Nathan discussed their experiences:

> **Clayton**: An exhaustive program self-study during year two led to the revision of every undergraduate music education course offered, the creation of eleven others, and altered degree and certification checklists requiring approval from a variety of campus bodies and state agencies….In my third year, a NCAA Division II national basketball championship run triggered the impromptu formation of an athletic support band. The advocacy efforts of myself, the department chair, college dean, athletics director, and university administration, led to the timely and generous allocation of university funds to support this endeavor. A broader campus discussion of the necessary expansion of our competitive sports offerings continues, and, as one of just two faculty members with

experience directing athletic bands at any level, I look forward to perhaps developing these ensembles in the future.

Rachel: I did not realize how easy it would be to create and teach a new course, potentially all in the same academic year. It keeps my job interesting because, while I am still able to teach my music education major courses, I am also able to expand my horizons and learn more about new topics I find interesting. Since being at Clarkton, I have created an Intro to Music Education course and a Rock Band course at the undergraduate levels, and I have designed the curricular content and taught a freshman seminar. I was also given liberty to design and teach a Diversity in Education course at the graduate level. With collaboration from my other music colleagues, I was able to make large changes to the design of the music education curriculum, all within my first two years. The lack of red tape it takes at my school to create a new course or re-design curriculum is surprisingly liberating and it makes making changes much easier than what I have experienced at larger universities.

Nathan: My first semester I was expected to teach my customary three-course load, conduct the concert band (which had eight students—now 40), start an athletic band, and create a music education curriculum (getting it approved by departments, the faculty, and the state). From my perspective, this would have been daunting for a seasoned veteran in the profession, let alone a first-year professor. Four years later, the music education program is up and running, turning out well-prepared music teachers (or so I choose to believe), and I began to feel comfortable…Also, as a junior faculty member I have been asked to serve as music education program chair, member of the faculty policy committee, member of the education advisory council, and a member of the sexual misconduct board. This may sound like a negative, but I have learned more about the inner workings of the college in my four short years than I would have had I not been made to serve. I have developed the trust of upper-level administrators and been able to build relationships with professors across campus. Just as liberal arts college students are asked to embrace breadth, so have I.

These stories illustrate the ease, or “lack of red tape” in making and executing curricular change at a smaller school (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011). Similar to studies done with new in-service music teachers in rural and urban areas (Hunt, 2009), the music teacher educator stories embody the notion that their experiences were surprising and very different than the jobs they expected to be doing. For new music teachers who find themselves in unfamiliar cultures or roles should adopt, Hunt suggests implementing the Developing Contextual

Awareness (DCA) model, which includes "(a) understanding the music teachers' and music programs' roles, (b) focusing on advantages and accepting challenges as opportunities, (c) creating and implementing specific professional development goals, and (d) committing to persistence with patience." (p. 44). Though Hunt's study was for K-12 music teachers in rural and urban areas, the issues faced by the music teacher educators in jobs they had little previous understanding about are very similar contexts. Perhaps doctoral professors at R1 institutions as well as mentoring programs at small schools could focus more directly on addressing the issues laid out in the DCA model so that new music teacher educators could more quickly understand and adjust to their new teaching environments.

Faculty Evaluation for Tenure and Promotion

The liberal arts tradition places a different emphasis on the criteria for tenure and promotion than the R1 schools where music teacher educators conduct their graduate work. While scholarly productivity still has importance, other researchers (Grollman, 2015; Harvey, 2003; Michalak & Friedrich, 1981) as well as the authors of this study identified that the primary criteria for faculty evaluation at small liberal arts colleges is the quality of one's teaching.

> **Nathan:** The balance of teaching, scholarship, and service is a tough one. Teaching is unapologetically the number one priority for promotion, leaving precious little time for research. As I passed my third-year review, I received feedback suggesting I could back off from my research productivity. I was prepared in a publish or perish mentality, and now I am being told publishing is good, but something else (teaching) is better.

> **Clayton:** Working at an institution whose legislative charge and primary focus is on undergraduate education, my value is primarily determined by my ability to teach, and, in a professional program, to prepare others to teach. I do enjoy and maintain an active research, writing, and presentation agenda, but feel only support, never pressure, to do so. Miller College allows me to focus on my original love, teaching.

While the expectation is a heightened emphasis on teaching across disciplines in liberal arts colleges, the road to tenure appears nebulous with unclear expectations for "stand-alone"

music education faculty. Echoed in the study by DeAngelo et al., (2011) many of the participants noted that their tenure processes lacked clear criteria. Ben and Ruth discussed their experiences with the tenure process:

> **Ben:** The biggest challenge I faced in my job has been receiving specific feedback about my progress toward tenure from evaluators who are unfamiliar with scholarly productivity in music education. While teaching is definitely a top priority, my school also has strong expectations for peer-reviewed publication. At the initial stages of my tenure review process, I trusted in the system that my institution had developed for tenure and promotion by accepting the local notion that the review process should be entirely internal without external reviews. Despite strong teaching evaluations, a robust service record, and multiple conference presentations each year, there were still questions about my scholarly productivity. When I had to appeal my tenure denial, I sought external reviews from other music education professors at similar institutions and was able to add one more publication within my tenure clock. When my appeal was successful it seemed to suggest to some of my colleagues that despite its kinks, ultimately our evaluation system works since it awarded me tenure with promotion. But if I could do it all over again, I would be a much bigger advocate on my behalf and seek out earlier external reviews of my scholarship before going for tenure.

> **Ruth:** My tenure process went smoothly after I explained to my provost that the disc I turned in was full of written research, not the recitals she was expecting since I was a "music" faculty member. In the history of the university, it was my understanding that no music education coordinator had stayed long enough to be eligible for tenure, so navigating this system without any music education colleagues - current or past - was extraordinarily intimidating.

While the process of faculty evaluation varies from institution to institution, receiving timely and specific feedback on teaching, scholarship, and service is a key component for successfully meeting the expectations of a tenure-track position at any institution. The challenge of successfully achieving tenure at small liberal arts institutions may be more daunting because the scholarly criteria and job responsibilities of music teacher educators may be unfamiliar to colleagues and administrators outside the music department. Strategies to augment the review process include sharing presentations of our scholarly productivity on campus, seeking additional

teaching feedback from colleagues by inviting them into our classes, and requesting external reviews of our scholarship from music education professors at other institutions.

Discussion

Each of the participants had moments of questioning of the viability of their work at a small liberal arts school. We have asked whether the talents and potential fostered at a R1 doctoral program is fully realized at a small school. In our experiences, these positions require a great deal of competency to execute properly. The number of students reached and the renown of the institution may be less, but the responsibilities are potentially greater and more diverse. The freedoms and opportunities professors have to expand their knowledge and skills at small liberal arts institutions are uniquely different than at large R1 institutions (Friedrich & Michalak, 1983; Harvey, 2013; DeAngelo et al., 2011).; Michalak & Friedrich, 1981; Western, 2013).

The question of career satisfaction lies with each individual as we have each received questions if our jobs are merely stepping stones. "Even if you accepted a position at a liberal-arts college, you only kept that job long enough to get the kind you *really* wanted (meaning one at an R1 university)" (Grollman, 2015). These institutions fill an important niche in higher education. A diversity of the type of institution where students can study music education is necessary so those wishing to get an undergraduate education will have choices in where they attend and how they get their degree. Often, undergraduates receive more personalized attention from faculty at a small liberal arts college, and they may find that there are more opportunities to perform in their primary area, explore diverse performances opportunities completely unfamiliar to them, or create their own individualized educational pathways in regards to research or additional majors or minors. Just as music faculty who teach in small liberal arts colleges are often drawn to teaching and creating vast and ever-changing experiences, so may be students who typically

select this type of higher education environment. These findings echo the needs stated by previous research (Grollman, 2015; Harvey, 2003; Western, 2013) that R1 institutions need to educate doctoral students on the benefits and challenges of non-R1 jobs and support them in applying for and taking them.

Why are these testimonios important to tell? The "voice" of music higher education traditionally comes from R1 institutions. This is logical as there are graduate students to conduct research, they impact larger populations, and this is the primary research voice in the field; however, many other voices also exist. The voice of music education should expand to include those from a variety of colleges and universities. The issue, highlighted in the narratives, is time. It is hard to execute research and presentations in a teaching-first setting. Those teaching in non-R1 schools should actively have a voice in music education by presenting promising-practice sessions at conferences, conducting research relevant to their setting with their students, and having a presence at state and national conferences even if scholarship is not a major requirement for tenure and promotion.

Conclusions and Suggestions for the Field

Although our findings are not generalizable beyond our own situations, the reader may use these narratives and themes to "understand the complexity" of the lone music teacher educator at a small college or university (Creswell, 2007, p. 75).

Strategies for Success in Small Liberal Arts Colleges

Given the challenges articulated in the findings, the implementation of multiple strategies can help prepare music teacher educators to assume a position at a small college or university. One of the most important elements is to combat isolation. This could manifest as building a community of people who teach in similar institutions (such as the team who created this

research). Within the college, finding colleagues across campus who can provide support both pedagogically and socially is important if only one music teacher educator exists. This could include colleagues from the music, education, or psychology departments (typical departments included in the music education curriculum); however, building relationship in more varied departments can also prove fruitful. Many times, these relationships are already building through collaboration on college committees. Building a solid team of adjunct instructors or local K-12 music teachers could also combat isolation and help reduce the number of uncomfortable hats the music teacher educator needs to wear. Due to the small school atmosphere, relationships are critical. Building relationships with the admissions and development departments will go a long way in finding resources to showcase the viability of the program.

Finding time for research amidst the time it takes to teach a heavy load is difficult. Engaging in action research, mentoring undergraduate research projects, and conducting collaborative research projects are all viable options to fold scholarly work into teaching responsibilities. Many small liberal arts colleges value undergraduate research mentoring on par with personal scholarship. As the service load is often heavier at a small school (due to fewer faculty available to assume roles), balance and perspective is essential. It is easy to become overwhelmed by any one area (teaching, scholarship, and service). Prioritizing time for each is essential to having a balanced personal life, a strong promotion and tenure portfolio, and long-term success at the college.

Considerations for Music Teacher Education Programs

Throughout music teacher education doctoral programs, new music teacher educators need to be aware of non-R1 jobs and what teaching music education looks like in these environments. When searching for a job, doctoral candidates should be aware that these jobs are

just as plentiful, and often more so, as R1 positions and may require different skills and materials for marketability. They should also be aware of the unique benefits and challenges of jobs at small liberal arts institutions. Doctoral students should receive encouragement to have experiences outside of their areas of expertise to help facilitate success in a "jack of all trades" setting. This could involve opportunities to be a graduate student instructor in diverse areas (i.e., a choral primary assisting in band methods), professional development, or alternative certifications in methodologies or approaches. Additionally, several of the authors had opportunities to teach at smaller schools as adjunct professors while working on their doctoral degrees. This experience is invaluable and should warrant inclusion in doctoral fieldwork. This could mirror the traditional student teaching placement experience in undergraduate teacher education. This could also present an opportunity to research these experiences.

Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

Very limited research has occurred on the realities of teaching in small university settings. Future research that examines the realities of lone music teachers educators in these settings, as well as their perceptions regarding their preparation for this unique situation, could provide valuable insight into diverse music teacher education programs. We have begun exploring the differences between the realities of teaching at a small liberal arts college and larger R1 institutions utilizing a large-scale survey. We hope this data will further expose the differences between teaching in these institutions. Doctoral students could benefit from sessions at conferences geared towards teaching and interviewing at non-R1 schools. Further opportunities for communal discussion, such as adding a Society for Music Teacher Education Area of Strategic Planning and Action (ASPA) for teachers and schools of this demographic, should occur as well.

There needs to be open discussion of both problematic issues and positive aspects of liberal arts and small public institutions that could be a first job - or lifelong career - for many new music teacher educators (Edgar, 2014). Just as Hunt (2009) and Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) found in relation to K-12 music teachers, teacher educators in small universities often have a sense of isolation, and support needs to be available so this is not debilitating. New professors are often expected to be experts with limited mentoring and induction. With these challenges also comes freedom and opportunities for growth and learning that warrants discussion. It is important for new music teacher educators to recognize the sense of autonomy and satisfaction that also comes with the unique responsibilities of professors at small liberal arts institutions.

While it was not the intent of this project to be a "support group," the act of sharing our stories decreased a feeling of isolation and provided a sense of community and voice. One of the most problematic elements emerging from this study was the collective sense of isolation. In order to fight this feeling, the authors created a community of learning to complete this study. As Ben reflected after the completion of this study, "Though one of our common themes was a sense of isolation, I'm really struck by how NOT alone the process of this article has made me feel." At the heart of narrative inquiry is learning from others' stories. This project provided a collective voice to those not always heard.

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