“YOU JUST GOTTA BE GREAT”: NARRATIVES OF EXPERIENCE FROM TWO WOMEN CONDUCTING IN THE LUTHERAN COLLEGIATE CHORAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

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Many quantitative studies have shown that there is gender disparity in higher education. In college music programs, for example, women make up just 32% of music faculty (Music Data Summaries 2017-2018, Chart 7), even though nearly half (48%) of graduates from music doctoral programs in the United States are women (Music Data Summaries 2017-2018, Chart 27). Women who are hired average lower salaries and are under-represented in the top academic ranks (Music Data Summaries 2017-2018; Toutkoushian, Bellas & Moore, 2007; Lee & Won, 2014; De Welde, 2017; Armenti, 2004). Gender disparity for women choral conductors has been less explored, particularly for women who conduct or have conducted in the Lutheran collegiate choral context. While quantitative studies can identify problems and show that women do not have equity in academia, qualitative studies can show what inequity looks like and feels like in individual women's lives. Narrative research, especially, is an important method for exploring the experiences of women who conduct in a variety of contexts.

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the stories and experiences of two women choral conductors who conduct or have conducted at Lutheran colleges with strong choral programs. Research questions included: What meanings do they find in their work? What are the challenges they face? How do they see their gender impacting their experiences? The two participants in this study share stories that show they are both excellent conductors and singers who have had highly successful careers. They are both caring and passionate teachers who share a desire to balance the head and the heart in music making. But their stories also show how differently they see their gender affecting their lives and their work. There are differences in the support they experienced in parenting and in how they perform their gender. Their stories of experience and the meanings they attach to them shed light on issues of gender and representation in the choral conducting field in a specific context and in a new way.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Hence, it is important for us to recognize that personal narratives are never simply 'personal.' They are crucial entry points or portals for examining one's lived experience in relation to historical, social, and cultural contexts." (Kim, 2016, p. 126)

"The personal is political." (Hanische, 1970, p. 1)

Story #1

Early March, 2001. I'm sitting on the tour bus, squinting through the condensation on the windows at the rural Pennsylvania landscape rolling past. I have been trying, unsuccessfully, to read some of Uncle Tom's Cabin *for my Early American Lit class. While reading a paragraph on p. 9 for the third time I see Sadie picking her way down the narrow aisles, handing out sheets of paper and crayons. As she hands me one, I read at the top: Concordia Choir Poll: Who Will It Be?*

"Fill these out with the names of the most fitting choir members, and then we'll tally them up and announce the results at dinner tonight," Sadie says. A welcome distraction!

"This should be a fun 10 minutes, and it'll be hilarious to see who gets voted for what," Lindsay says across the aisle to her seat-mate.

I scan the list and see the categories: "Most likely to perform on Broadway" (Matt Mullaney, obviously); "Most likely to sing in a jazz club in NYC" (Kara Sherman),

"Most likely to have 10 kids" (maybe Amy Jenson, she's Elementary Ed and loves kids); "Most likely to be Raffi" (oh, that's a fun one! Who plays guitar?). My eyes stop scanning when I read, "Most likely to be the next conductor of the Concordia Choir."

They'll vote for me, right? Please let it be me. I've been a section leader for two years, I conducted that forty-five minute rehearsal of Schutz's Selig sind die Toten, *and I'm the only student who has directed a rehearsal this year. Oh, man. How will I react when I hear my name?*

Of course, not wanting to be egotistical, I write down Joel Anderson's name (how embarrassing if someone saw that I had voted for myself!). I carry on with my green crayon and the remainder of the list.

At dinner that night in the church basement, in the midst of our chicken casserole, bread, carrot sticks, and cookies, Sadie and Anna announce the results. We drumroll before every answer, laughing and clapping when the names are announced. The most hilarious one so far is when Kent Narum is announced as the next Raffi. Kent turns bright red, waves, and yells, "Thanks, kids!"

Then Anna says, "And the most likely to succeed Dr. Clausen and be the next conductor of the Concordia Choir is…"

We all drum on our legs… "Joel Anderson!"

I exhale the breath I hadn't known I was holding, force a smile, and clap for Joel.

"That was an obvious one," says Christine across the table. I nod and look away.

I am a choral conductor. I am also a White, cisgender woman, a mother, a wife, an academic, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a heterosexual, a Lutheran, a teacher, a violinist, a singer,

a feminist, a Canadian, an American, a French speaker, a church musician, a song leader, a liberal. This is not a complete list of my various identities, but it names some of the titles I have and continue to claim. Some of these identities have been easier to accept and wear than others. The role of conductor is one I have struggled to own and wear authentically. Sometimes it fits perfectly, and other times it feels too big – like it was made for a male body. I want to be more comfortable as a conductor. I want to know how successful women conductors have navigated their lives. I want to know how (or if?) they found acceptance in an identity the culture marks as male. I have been living with this research topic for a long time.

This dissertation is an exploration of the lives and stories of two women who conduct or have conducted in the Lutheran collegiate choral context. By focusing on their lives and stories I hope to see some of the challenges, joys, and influential factors in the work and context of which I am a part and use this entry point to explore my own journey.

Interjecting the "I"

In qualitative research the mind of the researcher is the research instrument (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This research is, in part, an inquiry into my life and identity. Yet in the positivist norms of academia there is the belief that research should be performed "almost as if there were no personal inquirer, no 'I' in the process" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 122). Creswell (2013) points out that "all researchers bring values to a study, but qualitative researchers make their values known in a study" (2013, p. 20). In this kind of qualitative research Clandinin and Connelly remind us that "narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines" (2000, p. 121). It is essential in narrative and qualitative inquiry to position one's self. Here, I

"inject the 'I'" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 122) to draw a connection between my own interests and "larger questions of social significance" (2000, p. 121).

My Story

I grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, the first child of a feminist schoolteacher turned teacher-educator mother, and a Lutheran choral conductor and high-school-teacher father. Music was a persistent presence in my life from the beginning. My mother sang to me in her rich alto voice when I was a baby and as I grew we sang in the car, we sang prayers around the dinner table, and we sang at church. My eager father enrolled me in Suzuki method violin lessons a few months before my fourth birthday and I spent the next fourteen years balancing the desire to please my dad with my dislike of practicing. My brother Ben came along when I was 4 and I embraced the role of bossy older sister (a role I still play today).

With the exception of some occasional cruelty to Ben, I was a good girl. I excelled in school, made friends, and loved to read. My best friend, Marja, and I were in all the church musicals and I remember someone complimenting my voice to my father when I sang the role of Mrs. Noah in the 7th grade. Dad didn't ever compliment my voice but singing well was expected. Because high expectations were the norm, I didn't realize they were high. I made it into the select vocal jazz ensemble in 8th grade, played the flute in band, and suffered through the South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra for two years in high school because I liked hanging out with my friends during the breaks. I had starring roles in my high school musicals and loved singing in the excellent high school choir my dad conducted. I grew to enjoy playing chamber music and performing with my violin, though it wasn't until college that I felt any ownership over "the violinist" aspect of my identity.

The Lutheran church and its theology permeated all aspects of my upbringing and continue to be ever-present in my life. My paternal grandfather was a Lutheran pastor and his wife, Ramona, was a church musician. Ramona's father was also a church musician and graduate of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Lutheran culture values education and there is a strong tradition of Lutheran higher education in North America. The excellent high school choir that my dad conducted and where I sang was at Luther College High School (where he spent his entire 33-year teaching career). My father likes to remind me that I'm a fourth-generation Lutheran church musician/choir director. This is the family business, so to speak.

I went to Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota – a good Lutheran school – where my father was an alumnus. I received a violin scholarship which meant I had to take lessons and play in the orchestra, but choir was my main focus and love. I made it into the top ensemble, the Concordia Choir, at the end of my first year and my three years in that ensemble were powerful and formative. René Clausen, the conductor of the Concordia Choir, constantly demonstrated artistry that inspired me. I remember thinking that the first chord we sang in our warm-up on my first day of rehearsal was the best choral sound of which I had ever been a part and it just kept getting better all year long. I was shocked when, at the beginning of my junior year, Dr. Clausen asked me to be the soprano section leader. I wasn't a music major (yet) and it simply hadn't occurred to me that I was qualified. When I said something to the effect of, "You want *me* to do it?!" he said, "Of course, you." He was encouraging, and in the conducting class I took from him later that year he encouraged me to think about conducting a choir someday. I felt at home conducting and I knew I was good at it. I held on to his words, though looking back they alone were not enough to displace the cultural expectations that made it difficult for me to imagine a career as a conductor.

After taking "Writing of Women" during my first spring at Concordia I decided on an English major and a minor in Women's Studies. As my third year of college began I signed up for conducting class and then added introductory music theory. Early that semester I surprised myself by deciding I wanted to add a music minor. I began to see that music wasn't just something my dad "made" me do – it had become something I chose for myself. The night before my senior year at Concordia I couldn't sleep. I realized that if I shifted my schedule, I could add a music major and still graduate (almost) on time. I graduated from Concordia with a double major in Music and English, and a minor in Women's Studies.

Proud of my accomplishments and ready for a break from academia, I signed up for the Lutheran Volunteer Corps and moved to Seattle. There I worked at a non-profit and strengthened my commitments to community and justice. At the end of that year I married Kent Narum and we moved to Chicago so that he could begin seminary. While in Chicago I further lived into my identity as musician and, eventually, teacher. I worked as the music department secretary at the University of Chicago, sang in the Rockefeller Chapel Choir, played my violin with various student and faculty quartets on the University of Chicago campus, and decided to pursue a Master of Music Education degree with teaching certification. I kept the dual identity of singer and violinist by serving as the Graduate Strings Assistant while focusing on choral music education at VanderCook College of Music.

My conductor identity grew during this program where I had both choral and orchestral conducting opportunities. My choral conducting classes were large and women made up at least half. Yet it still felt pretty clear to me that the women were training to be conductors in a K-12 setting. I don't know if there was explicit talk about some of my male colleagues having "bigger" dreams than that setting, but it was clear to me that one or two of them had collegiate

conducting goals and our professor encouraged them in these goals. I remember conducting in class during one of the summer sessions for master's students and having a fellow student tell me I was gifted and that I could/should pursue conducting. And, I remember receiving adequate praise from my professor, but never feeling particularly encouraged by him. I saw only male conducting professors during my time there and particularly masculine styles of leadership that I found off-putting. I emulated some of the gestural techniques taught but did not want to model my own conducting style, approach, or rehearsal technique on the approaches I saw. I wanted a woman mentor.

Also at VanderCook, my narrative researcher-self was born. I came across the name of Margaret Hillis, a trailblazing choral and orchestral conductor. Perhaps because I was in need of a mentor, I was very drawn to Hillis who had a long history in the Chicago area where I was studying. She had died a few years before I arrived in Chicago, but I had the opportunity to go to the Chicago Symphony Archives and listen to recordings of Hillis telling stories of her life. She told several of the stories over and over again. They were great stories in part because the characters were famous musicians (Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, Lukas Foss, Fritz Reiner, Georg Solti, etc.) but they were also fascinating because they gave insight into how Hillis saw her own life and work. I began reading about narrative inquiry and found that my English-major love of stories could translate into research. Margaret Hillis and her stories helped me to see myself as a conductor. I saw her life as situated in a cultural context that did not allow her to ascend to positions that her abilities should have earned because she was a woman (Cherland, 2005). Writing my thesis through this narrative lens was an enjoyable challenge and I particularly loved that so many of my passions merged in this topic: music, women, and stories.

After Kent and I received our degrees we moved to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Kent was ordained a Lutheran pastor and I began teaching middle school vocal music in Rapid City. We had a son during my second year of teaching, and I resigned my position to stay home with him for a year and a half. I was unsatisfied and mildly depressed as a stay-at-home parent and when the local middle school/high school choral job opened up I gladly applied. I remember realizing a few months into this job that all three members of my family were happier now that I was back at work. I taught in our small town for the next five years, having another son my second year in that position. In our community I was known as a choir teacher, violinist, pastor's wife, and mom. And, while these were the facts, the list didn't feel complete. My husband and I both knew we would not stay there for our careers. We knew that we wanted further adventure and development.

After eight years in South Dakota we moved to a small, isolated, former copper mining village turned Lutheran retreat center in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State (Holden Village), where Kent became the Village Pastor and I was the Village Musician. We worked together in planning and leading daily worship services and lived in that community for two years. At Holden I honed song leading and music leadership skills in the context of Lutheran worship and deepened my love for this work and comfort in the Lutheran musician identity.

This work and our time in the mountains helped me recognize my desire to develop my choral conductor identity. Up until this point I had been satisfied to let Kent's career desires guide where we ended up. I legitimately appreciated the narrowing effect that came with following him. For example, when we lived in Chicago, I chose the closest school that would give me some funding to pursue my Master of Music Education. Likewise, when we knew we would move to South Dakota, I looked for teaching jobs there. I did not want the responsibility

of moving a family to fulfill my own desires, yet by 2015 I feared the dissatisfaction and depression of being unfulfilled in my working life. So, at the end of our two years at Holden we moved to Seattle where I began my DMA in Choral Conducting at the University of Washington. It took until the end of my first year in that program for me to articulate and name out loud that I wanted to teach and conduct at a Lutheran school. When I was offered and accepted a position at a Lutheran college in the Midwest during my last year of the program, I had a moment of clarity. Of course, I had been preparing for this. Of course, this is what I should do. In some ways all of my experiences and decisions had led me here and made me well-suited for this work. Why did it take me so long to acknowledge this to myself and others? Why did I struggle to name this desire and have difficulty believing I could do this work?

Story #2

They both know that the first to break the silence will forfeit the prize.

The year is 1941. Two of the Christiansen brothers, Olaf and Paul J., sit facing their father's desk and the tall windows that look out on the St. Olaf College campus. Paul J. sees students hurrying between buildings to get out of the cold, Minnesota air and a backdrop of rolling hills. The office is spacious with the books and score-lined shelves bathed in the afternoon light. F. Melius was proud of this space and his position at St. Olaf. Though he has announced his retirement to his sons, they both suspect he will have a hard time giving up the office and the job.

Paul J. dares not make eye contact with his older brother. Instead, he keeps his face placid, crosses his legs, is careful not to let his pants crease, and straightens his jacket.

Olaf remains motionless.

F. Melius reads the newspaper across from them, waiting.

The minutes tick by slowly. Paul J. shifts in his seat, but Olaf, always the patient one, maintains his stillness.

Damn his resolve, Paul J. thinks, fondly. He smiles as he remembers teenage Olaf coming home late one Friday night and rolling a loud dominant seventh chord on the family piano, knowing their old man would never be able to leave it unresolved. Paul J. had shaken with silent laughter when F. Melius lumbered down the stairs a few minutes later, pounding a quick tonic chord into the night before shuffling back to bed.

But the joke was now on them. Neither had imagined their father would leave the decision as to who would succeed him to the brothers themselves.

A half hour into the silence Paul J. knows the outcome, but makes Olaf wait another few minutes.

Standing slowly and buttoning his jacket, Paul J. speaks to the window. "You are older, so you might as well have it." He walks to the door, opens it, and says, "See you at Christmas."

Olaf lets out a breath and looks at his father. "All right," says F. Melius, the Norwegian accent still coloring his words. "We've got work to do."

As I have struggled to make sense of this difficulty in imagining myself working as a collegiate choral conductor, particularly in the Lutheran setting, I remembered this story and sat down to capture it. This vignette contains two stories about the famous Christiansen family that I heard my dad tell over the years. F. Melius Christiansen was the founder and long-time

conductor of the famous St. Olaf Choir. He composed and arranged choral music and forged a choral tradition and model at St. Olaf that has been emulated by many schools, particularly Lutheran schools, for over a century. Two of his sons, Olaf and Paul J., were also conductors and arrangers, and had their own impact on the American choral tradition from their positions at St. Olaf College and Concordia College, respectively. The first story is how the St. Olaf choir director role was passed from F. Melius to Olaf. This passing of the baton ensured that a Christiansen was at the choir's helm from the founding of the choir in 1912 until Olaf's retirement in 1968. It conveys a monarchy metaphor by illustrating the succession of power. The second story, embedded in the first, is a myth that has been told in a variety of contexts. The humorous anecdote with its teasing dominant seventh chord is a cultural story told to show deep commitment to Western music values and it speaks to the character of the Christiansen family. Though I heard it first about the Christiansen's, it has been told in different contexts and with different characters. These cultural stories are fictions that convey a truth. It is unlikely that events happened exactly in this way, but the legend and the re-telling perhaps allows the storytellers to claim some power and prestige in American choral history. I tell it here because it further illustrates associations of masculinity with these positions and the gendered expectations that were set up long ago.

Social and Cultural Contexts

In part, the answer to questions surrounding my difficulty in naming and claiming my conducting identity is patriarchy. My life and work are situated in power relations and in a culture that still positions men as the ideal conductor and ideal professor and everyone else as Other (Acker, 1990; Bartleet, 2008; Hirshfield, 2015). While women are accepted and encouraged to teach music to young children, as the age and ability of students rise the

percentage of women teaching decreases and the percentage of men teaching and conducting increases (Music Educators National Conference, 2001). We see the consequences in research studies of choral conducting in higher education. While women's representation in higher education will be explored further in chapter 2, VanWeelden (2003) shows us that 17% of top choral positions at U.S. colleges and universities are held by women and 83% are held by men. My own exploration and research of the gender of conductors at Lutheran colleges in the United States during the 2018-2019 academic year show these same percentages (see Tables 2.4 – 2.6).

When my fellow Concordia Choir member said that Joel was the obvious choice for the future conductor of that choir in Story #1, she was highlighting the cultural norm that assumes a man will conduct a well-known choir. While my experiences and talents were recognized on certain levels, my fellow choir members assumed that the next conductor would be a man. That unnamed, cultural expectation was strong enough to outweigh critical thinking and analysis of supporting evidence. I may have been the most qualified, the most experienced, and best suited for the position (or perhaps not), but the cultural expectations of gender trumped those qualifications. I believe I have struggled to claim my identity as a collegiate choral conductor in part because there are still relatively few women in these positions and therefore it has been hard to imagine myself there.

A Note About the Lutheran Context

I have vacillated about whether to include the Lutheran collegiate aspect of identity in my study. The Lutheran collegiate choral tradition is worth exploring and has been pursued in a number of dissertations. My focus is primarily on the women who conduct in these schools, and I have worked to maintain that focus. Therefore, it is important to see the Lutheran tradition as what it is – context. It is a supporting character in this story, one that is present throughout, but

not a main character. Because of this, I will devote some time to it in the review of the literature section and ask how the two research participants see its role, but work to balance its placement and focus. This is not a dissertation centered on the Lutheran choral tradition – this is a dissertation about two women who live and work in its midst.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this narrative study is to understand the stories and experiences of two women choral conductors who have conducted at Lutheran colleges with strong choral programs. Some of the other research questions I explore include: What meanings have they found in their work? What are the challenges? How do they see their gender impacting their experiences? Through exploring the stories of experience and the meanings these women attach to them, I hope to shed light on issues of gender and representation in the choral conducting field in a new way.

It is essential to say from the very beginning that I do not explore the lives of these women in order to generalize and draw conclusions about the experiences of all women in this field, nor did I undertake this project in order to predict what my own experience will be. Yet exploring the stories of women who work in this context is a way to explore the bigger questions of gender in the choral conducting field. I hope to see up close the journey of fellow women conductors and the challenges and joys. Clandinin & Connelly, two influential writers on narrative research say:

> For us, narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it. In effect, narrative

> thinking is part of the phenomenon of narrative… Thus, we say, narrative is both the phenomenon and the method of the social science. (2000, p. 18)

I know I will not find the answers to every question I have about what my experience has been and what it will be, yet I also know that this research will add to the knowledge in my field. I can say with Brenneman (2007) that these stories cannot be generalized to others' life experiences; however, they "can contribute to a growing body of research on the meanings constructed from narrative and life stories" (2007, p. 9).

The quantitative, positivist research on women and conducting helps us by documenting the unequal numbers of men and women who conduct in colleges and universities. Numbers show that inequity exists. But narrative research takes us deeper into the experiences that result and the meanings that lie beneath the numbers. Quantitative research presents gender as a simple binary, an either/or. Narrative research will show us the similarities and differences in the experiences and meanings of two people who are on the same side of the gender binary. It will produce findings that are deeper and more subtle.

This is a deeply personal study. I will learn from it. I hope that other women and conductors of any gender will learn from it, too.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"The academy is not yet equal or equitable; our work is not yet done."

(De Welde & Stepnick, 2015, p. 2)

"The 'doing' of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production." (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126)

I am conducting this research in 2018 and 2019, when it can be easy to be unaware of gender inequalities in music and in higher education. At the recent American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Conference in Kansas City in March of 2019 women conducted choirs, led sessions, and one was even the recipient of a lifetime achievement award ("Awards/Recognitions," 2019). We look at our local colleges and universities and see women teaching, being treated pleasantly by male colleagues, and maybe even represented in high ranking administrative roles. Is there really a problem with gender in choral conducting and in the academy?

Yet, when we look more closely at the 2019 ACDA National Conference, we find indications that inequality exists. Of the 80 conductors who conducted choirs at the 2019 ACDA National Conference, 25 (just 31%) were women ("Alphabetical Listing of Performers," 2019). Of the 88 interest session leaders 35 (40%) were women ("Alphabetical Listing of Interest Sessions," 2019). And while the 2019 recipient of the Robert Shaw Award was Doreen Rao, she is only the fourth woman of fifteen recipients making the percentage of women who have

received this prestigious award just 27% (https://acda.org/ACDA/About-Root/Robert_Shaw_Award.aspx).

This is also the age of the #MeToo movement. The Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court hearings where Christine Blasey Ford testified about sexual assault took place only a few short months ago. Conversations about gender are widespread in mainstream American culture and there is a recognition that the second-wave of feminism in the 1970s did not finish the work of gender equality (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). There is indeed a problem with gender in the academy and in choral conducting. An aspect of the problem is the difficulty in seeing it. One of the goals of this research is to bring new perspectives to the challenges women face in these areas.

In order to frame this qualitative, narrative examination of two women who are conducting or have conducted choirs in the Lutheran collegiate choral context, I first clarify that there is a problem with gender inequality at the faculty level in academia. To do this I review some of the existing research on representation of women in academia including: equity laws; the pipeline concept; vertical segregation, the wage gap, and tenure; effects of household responsibilities and family formation. I then explore the concept of ideal worker norms, how this relates to women choral conductors in the academy, and look specifically at women's representation in music education and choral conducting. Because both women I studied were in the Lutheran collegiate context, I then present a brief history of the North American Lutheran choral tradition, and gender in this context. This chapter concludes with an examination of perspectives on gender.

Equity Laws and Women in Higher Education

I begin with the laws designed to ensure equity in employment. An eight-year period in the 1960s and 70s saw the passage of three laws that had a positive effect on employment equity. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1974. It prohibits employers from discriminating on the basis of sex, color, race, national origin, or religion. 1972 saw the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, an amendment to Title VII, which then gave the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission the authority to sue in federal courts in situations where they deem discrimination has taken place. 1972 also saw the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments.

Title IX is the most well-known of the three Acts and many associate it mainly with ensuring equal numbers of women's and men's sports teams in educational institutions. Yet Title IX is about more than sports and scholarships. As the U.S. Department of Justice explains:

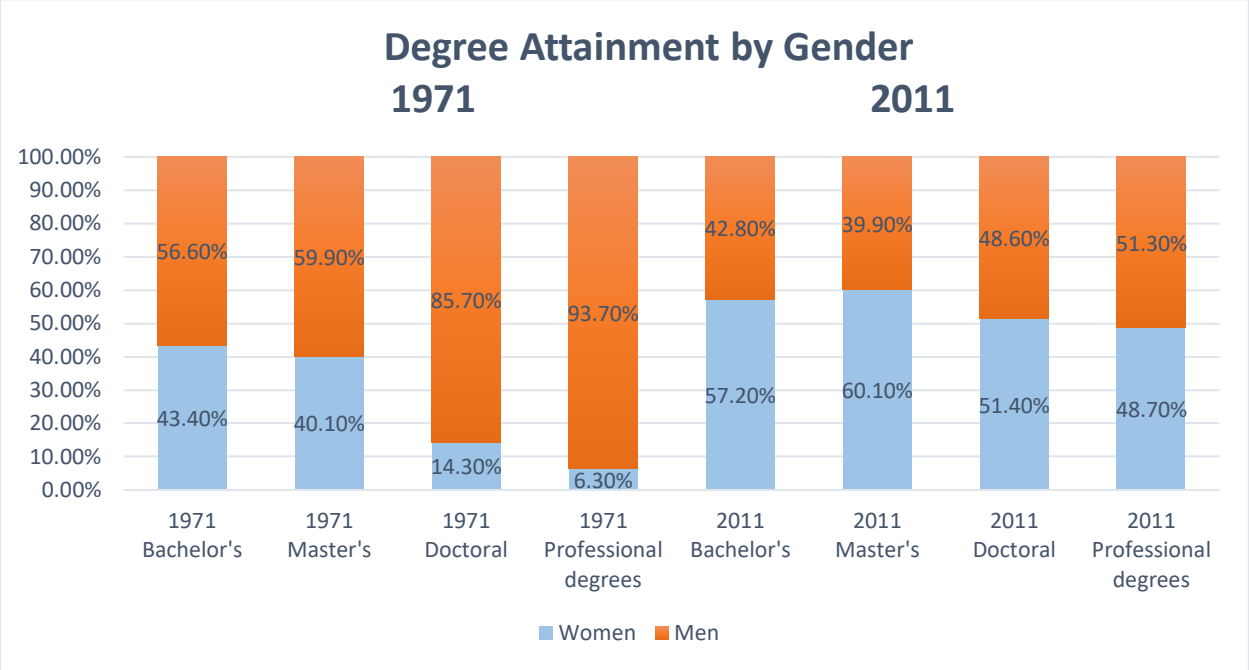
> Title IX is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. The principal objective of Title IX is to avoid the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and to provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices. ("Overview of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972," 2015)

Title IX has, among other things, helped ensure equal access to higher education, combatted sexual harassment, and confirmed protections for pregnant and parenting students.

The positive impact these laws had on increasing the number of women graduating from higher education programs is startling. Table 2.1 illustrates the low numbers of undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and professional degrees earned by women in 1971, the year before Title IX was passed. It also shows the tremendous increase in those numbers by 2011, forty years later.

Women moved beyond parity and now make up more than half of all degrees earned, except for professional degrees where they are at nearly 49% of graduates (Ahmad, 2017, p. 205).

Table 2.1 (based on statistics in Ahmad, 2017, p. 205)



Former United States Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley points out:

> The great, untold story of success that resulted from the passage of Title IX is surely the progress that has been achieved in education. In 1971, only 18 percent of all women, compared to 26 percent of all men, had completed four or more years of college. This education gap no longer exists. (as cited in Hansen, 2009, p. 188)

Pipeline

While statistics show women are graduating with higher education degrees more than ever before, statistics also show that women have not made the same headway as faculty members at the same institutions. The pipeline simile is frequently used in exploring representation of women on higher education faculties. Monroe and Chiu explain that "the image

of a pipeline is a commonly advanced explanation for persistent discrimination that suggests that gender inequality will decline once there are sufficient numbers of qualified women in the hiring pool" (2010, p. 303). The pipeline model is appealing because it blames inequalities not on "ongoing discrimination that requires alternate remedies" (Monroe & Chiu, 2010, p. 303), but on a lack of available candidates. Stout, Staiger, and Jennings further explain the pipeline concept:

> "Pipeline" wisdom suggests that if more women are hired at the junior levels, the number of senior women faculty will grow. Members of the academy have assumed that time would resolve the inequities between male and female faculty at senior levels after the push by second-wave feminism in the 1970s and accompanying federal legislation. (2007, pp. 125-126)

Yet the pipeline has problems and seems to be leaking women. Eddy, Ward, and Khwaja (2017) note that "women continue to lag in academic career progression and continue to 'leak out of the pipeline'" (p. 17). Zeng (2010) argues that the leaky pipeline concept names the phenomenon of losing women and minorities at each step of the path towards higher authority and better paying jobs, and also uses the "revolving-door" metaphor to reframe the idea of a pipeline by arguing that mobility in jobs has many ups and downs. Inequities between male and female faculty have not resolved, and despite much greater attainment of higher education degrees, women remain underrepresented among faculty (Ahmad, 2017; De Welde, 2017; De Welde & Stepnick, 2015; Monroe and Chiu, 2010; Payne, 1996; Stout, Staiger, & Jennings, 2007; Umbach, 2007). Marschke, Laursen, Nielsen, and Rankin (2007) summarize the unknowns surrounding the pipeline by saying, "women's attrition from academia indicates at best a leaky pipeline and, at worst, an occupation mired in institutional discrimination" (p. 3).

In a study focused on one four-year public institution in the U.S., Marschke et al. (2007) also found a disparity in the proportion of qualified female PhD's available and female faculty in 80% of departments at one school in particular, and found the greatest disparity in the humanities, psychology, and fine arts. In the music department at this school, they noted that 28% of the 2002 faculty were women, yet 40% of their doctoral music graduates in the previous 7 years were women (Marschke et al., 2007). The difference between the numbers of women with the qualifications and the numbers of women represented are clear.

In looking more broadly at music faculties in the United States we see that in the 1973-74 academic year women made up 21% of music faculty (Block, 1976). The more surprising statistic, perhaps, is that 45 years later this number has not changed significantly. By the 2017-18 academic year women made up just 32% of music faculty members (Music Data Summaries 2017-2018, Chart 7). Considering that nearly half (48%) of graduates from music doctoral programs in the United States were women in the 2016-2017 academic year (Music Data Summaries 2017-2018, Chart 27), there remains a significant gap between the number of qualified women candidates and the number of women faculty.

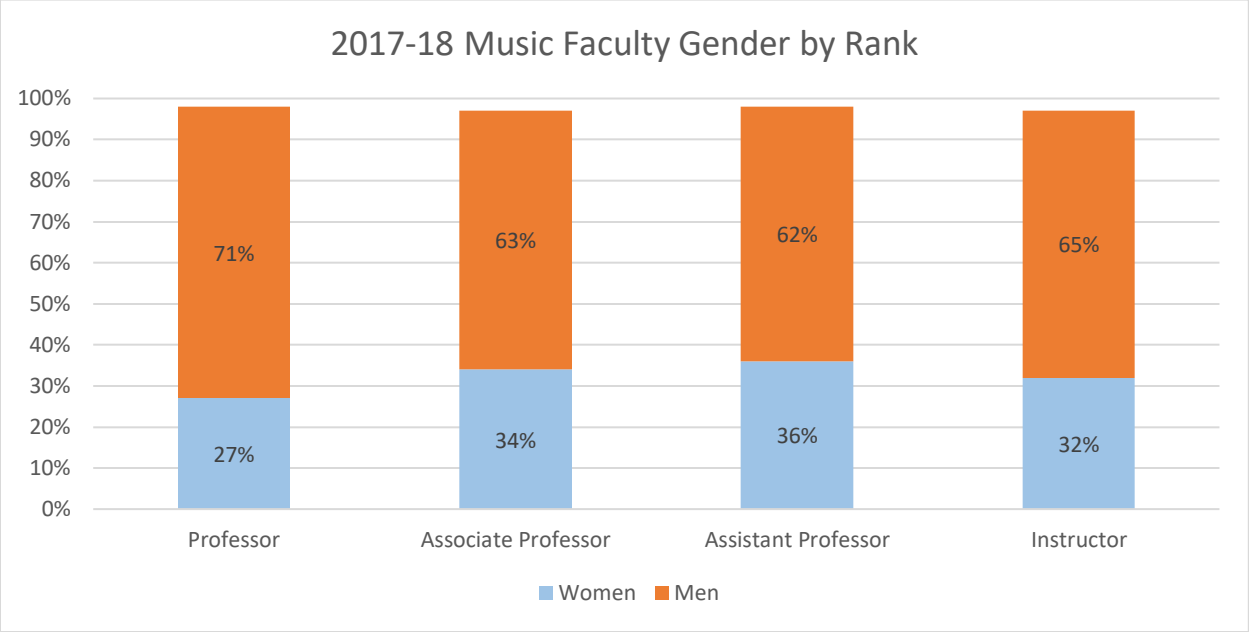
Vertical Segregation, Wage Gap, and Tenure

Examining the rank of women faculty is another way to see problems of gender inequality in academia. The term vertical segregation is used throughout literature on gender in higher education and is a structural phenomenon where women are overrepresented in lower ranks and underrepresented in higher ranked positions (De Welde, 2017; Gemma, 2010; Cama, Jorge, & Peña., 2016; De Welde & Stepnick, 2015; Renzulli, Grant, & Kathuria, 2006). Women are also segregated in contingent (non-tenure-track or part-time) positions, in lower paying positions, and in less prestigious institutions like community colleges (De Welde, 2017). Trends

of vertical segregation are seen across academia (De Welde, 2017; Umbach, 2007). The American Association of University Professors noted that in the 2009-2010 academic year female assistant professors outnumbered male assistant professors, yet accounted for only "about a third of full professors in universities and colleges" (as cited in Lee & Won, 2014, p. 331). The disparity of women at higher ranks is troubling and striking "because the aggregate data suggest that this disparity represents a problem of advancement and not an absence of qualified female candidates" (Monroe & Chiu, 2010, p. 304).

Vertical segregation is obvious when looking at rank in music faculties. While, as previously noted, women made up a total of 21% of music faculties in the 1973-74 academic year, many of them were segregated in lower level positions. Specifically, they made up 11% of Professors, 20% of Associate Professors, 26% of Assistant Professors, and 36% of Instructors (Block, 1976). On music faculties forty-four years later in 2017-18, women made up 27% of Professors, 34% of Associate Professors, 36% of Assistant Professors, and 32% of Instructor/Lecturer/Unranked/Visiting Faculty (Music Data Summaries 2017-2018, Chart 7). See Table 2.2 for a visual representation of these 2017-2018 numbers.

Table 2.2 (created from information in Music Data Summaries 2017-2018, Chart 7)



Women are segregated in the lower ranks and while there was growth in the number of women at each rank over the years (except for the Instructor/Lecturer/Unranked/Visiting Faculty rank) vertical segregation is still apparent.

Closely related to vertical segregation is the salary gap in academia – a subject many researchers have studied (August & Waltman, 2004; Barbezat & Hughes, 2005; Lee & Won, 2014; Toutkoushian, Bellas, & Moore, 2007; Renzulli, Grant, & Kathuria, 2006; Umbach, 2007). Wage gaps for paid work is a form of oppression and disadvantage based on gender and is a phenomenon that persists in the U.S. and around the world (Renzulli, Grant, & Kathuria, 2006). Academia is no different and women's pay consistently lags behind that of men (Harmon, Hopkins, Kelchen, Persky, & Roy, 2018). In 2017-2018, 93% of institutions paid "men more than women at the same rank for at least one rank," and this was true across departments and colleges/university types (Harmon et al., 2018, p. 9). In other words, "researchers generally agree that a wage penalty is associated with being female in academia [but] there is less agreement

about the factors responsible for it" (Toutkoushian, Bellas, & Moore, 2007, p. 574). The most recent American Association of University Professors annual report painted a bleak picture: "No change in gender inequity is visible as faculty advance through the professorial ranks, indicating that equity is not likely to be achieved in the near future" (Harmon et al., 2018, p. 10).

Among the many problems with wage gaps is that annual salary increases for faculty often come in the form of percentage increases on one's base salary. This means that initial differences become more pronounced over time (Lee & Won, 2014). Of the different higher education institution types in the United States (research, doctoral, comprehensive colleges and universities, liberal arts schools, and community colleges), the biggest gender wage gap is at research universities and the gap is the smallest at liberal arts schools (Barbezat & Hughes, 2005). Yet, it is important to note that faculty salaries overall are highest at research universities and lowest at liberal arts schools. So, while there may be a significant gap between a woman working at a research university and her male colleague, her salary may still be significantly higher than a woman colleague at a liberal arts institution.

Tenure is another important indicator of the gender gap in the academic career ladder, and Bradley, Yerichuk, Dolloff, Galway, Robinson, Stark, and Gould (2017) point out that, "beyond examining demographics, tenure research has investigated the distinctly gendered and racialized experiences of tenure" (p. 2). Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden (2008) note that among full-time faculty as of 2001, 68% of men were tenured as opposed to 48% of women. Lee & Won (2014) found that "women's share in tenured faculty decreased from 38.4% in 1976 to 34.6% in 2009" (p. 331). In looking specifically at music faculties and more recent numbers, women made up just 29% of tenured faculty, while men made up 69% of those tenured faculty in the 2017-18 academic year, according to the Music Data summaries from the Higher Education

Arts Data Services (2017-2018, Chart 13). Tenure itself is under threat and tenure-track positions in North America are decreasing as many schools move towards more contingent faculty (Bradley et al., 2017). As women are disproportionally represented at lower ranks, it seems likely they will continue to be disproportionally affected by the lower numbers of tenure-track jobs that are available.

Effects of Household Responsibilities and Family Formation

Examining how marriage and children affect women faculty is essential in any examination of equality in academia. This has been a central focus of research for many who study women in the academy. Research shows that family factors influence men and women differently in tenure attainment and overall career progress. Mason and Goulden (2004) showed that "men and not women benefitted (in tenure attainment) from having babies early" in their careers (p. 220). Perna (2005) demonstrated that in addition to women being "overrepresented in both part-time and full-time non-tenure-track positions" (p. 221), women faculty's careers did not benefit from family formation overall. Bentley and Wise (2004) conducted a study that showed that not only did women not benefit from family formation but having children and being married was actually harmful to women's careers at every post-doctorate stage. Alternately, Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden (2008) showed that women who were both single and had no children fared better than their male counterparts in obtaining tenure-track positions. Specifically, in looking at women in the science field, Ahmad (2017) pointed out that having children decreases the likelihood that women will advance in the academy, but both marriage and having children increases men's likelihood of advancement. This disparity and difference regarding family formation between men and women is problematic and disturbing.

The support that institutions offer parents in their quest to balance work and family is limited (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008), with only some institutions offering family leave after childbirth, dual-career hiring, tenure clock stoppage policies, and on-site child care centers. Even when they are available, many women faculty are reluctant to make use of these supports for fear of tenure-denial or being seen as less-committed academics (Ahmad, 2017). Armenti (2004), in her research on the maternal decisions of women professors, observed a previous trend of women trying to time childbirth to coincide with summer and the end of the academic year. However, now more and more women delay pregnancy and childbirth until after they achieve tenure, "believing that pregnancy before tenure would harm their career prospects" (p. 219). One of the downsides to delaying pregnancy is that women are then older when trying to have children, increasing chances of problems with fertility (Armenti, 2004).

There is research to support the perception that women still perform more home and childcare obligations than their male counterparts, and this is true for women faculty as well (Alemán, 2017). Aanerud, Morrison, Homer, Rudd, Nerad, and Cerny (2007) noticed:

> [much of the literature on this double duty] emphasizes the fact that women typically enact labor-intensive roles at home (in doing housework, childbearing, childrearing, and general caretaking), and this unequal and highly gendered labor, exogenous to the tenure decision, impacts women's ability to compete for tenure on a level playing field (p. 119).

While their point is made about tenure, the difficulties of these gendered expectations extend to all aspects of work in academia. Alemán (2017) stated that one of the results of women faculty with children spending more time on childcare and home/personal responsibilities is that they often spend less time on research and scholarly production, which may contribute to more difficulty in achieving tenure. Ahmad (2017) further articulated that "women with PhDs and

young children are disproportionately more likely to leak out of the tenure-track pipeline. Lack of family friendliness is one of the chief reasons why women opt out of tenure-track careers" (p. 204). The literature makes it abundantly clear that issues affecting women with children and families must be included when examining gender disparity in academia. Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2015) concluded their article by saying, "This study establishes the need for more research on women by discipline and institutional type to determine how departmental norms and culture affect the way faculty members navigate work and family" (p. 33). My research, in part, addresses this need.

Ideal worker norms

Before examining the extant literature specifically on women in choral conducting in academia, let us step back and examine the concept of the ideal worker; a helpful model in how it gives further perspectives on the challenges women face in the struggle for equality in academia and elsewhere. In 1990, Acker published a seminal article contending that organizations are implicitly gendered. "Acker argues that organizational texts like job descriptions and workplace policies assume a masculine subject; the ideal-typical worker therefore appears gender-neutral but actually embodies stereotypically masculine traits" (Miller, 2016, p. 119). Naming the ideal-worker as male was an important insight because it names subtle assumptions and cultural cues that privilege men and disadvantage women. Eddy, Ward, and Khwaja (2017) suggest that "the existence of these subtle and invisible forms of bias creates barriers for women, which are difficult to address by merely 'trying harder,'" as high achieving academics are wont to do (p. 26). As Ahmad (2017) points out, the pipeline model is dominated by these ideal worker norms. Bird (2011) argues that the academy as a whole is a gendered organization filled with gendered barriers to advancement. Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2014) state

that the ideal professor and academic is most certainly male and that "the culture of tenure is based on the assumption that 'good' professors are dedicated solely to their work. The tenure system favors ideal workers" (p. 21). In other words, the closer one resembles the ideal worker, the easier it is to achieve and succeed in the work. Because the tenure clock and ideal professor are "built on normative paths that assume freedom from competing responsibilities, such as family, which generally affect women more than men" (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2014, p. 21), the challenges are greater for women in academia.

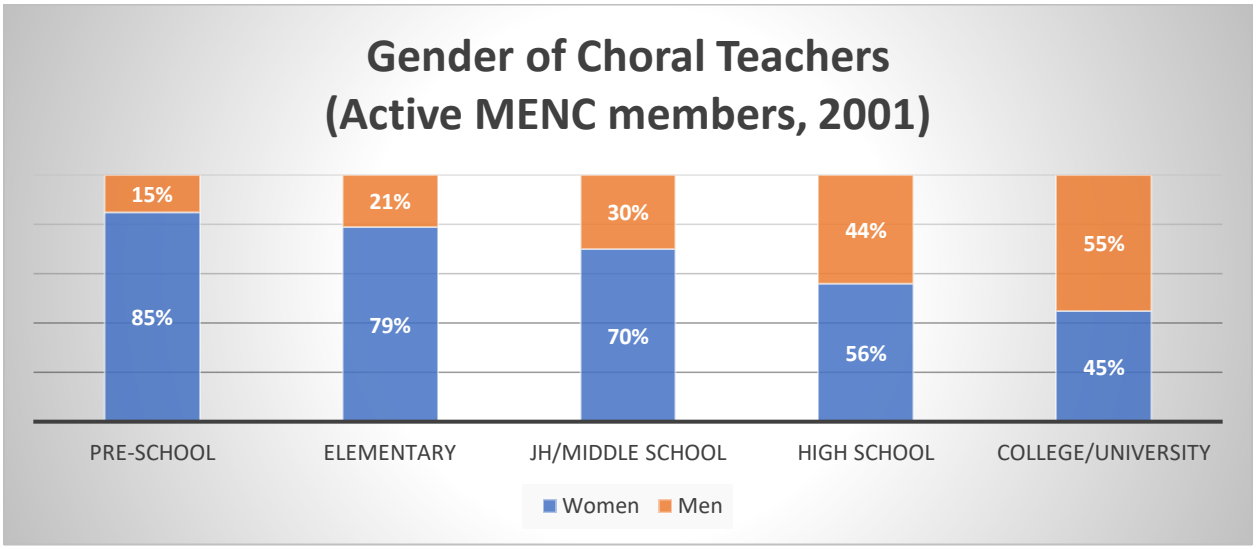
Miller (2016) extends Acker's ideas on the ideal worker to suggest that the ideal-typical artist is also tacitly masculine. Because choral conducting at the college level requires a straddling of both the academic and artistic worlds, Miller's identification of the ideal-typical artist as masculine is essential. She points out that first there is a creative genius model in the arts that centers a masculine subject. Secondly, she says that there is a gender bias in aesthetic evaluations that advantage men. Finally, she argues that artists are required "to engage in behaviors that are more socially acceptable in men than in women" (Miller, 2016, p. 119). Some of these behaviors may include self-promotion, seeking attention, asking for resources, and risk-taking; all of which are behaviors that are less acceptable in women (Miller, 2016). Acknowledging that the ideal workers of professor, artist, and choral conductor are implicitly masculine is vital in this study of the experiences of women choral conductors.

Representation of Women in Music Education and Choral Conducting

As we turn to literature that sheds light specifically on the area of women in choral conducting, we look first at gender representation of music teachers. Before teaching at the collegiate level many conductors teach in the K-12 context. In 2001, the Music Educators National Conference (MENC, now the organization known as National Association for Music

Education) published a two-page report on gender trends among MENC music educators. It reported that men outnumber women significantly in certain areas, especially in the teaching of band (Music Educators National Conference, 2001). Though never examining the causes for differences, this report reflects that women in the choral field outnumbered men two to one (Music Educators National Conference, 2001). Yet while this was the case overall, the numbers varied depending on the age and grade level taught. The statistics showed that as the age or grade level of the student rose, the percentage of male teachers also rose. So, while women made up 85% of preschool music teachers, they made up just 45% of college choral teachers (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 (information from Music Educators National Conference, 2001)



Hansen (2009) gives further insight when she states:

> Historically, women have been visible and well accepted as choral conductors primarily only within the realm of elementary, middle school, small high school, small college, or sectarian institutions...as children's choir directors (although not typically boy choir

> directors), as junior high and middle school choir directors, as women's chorus directors, and as training choir directors (p. 214).

Chorus America, an organization devoted to the advancement of the choral field through advocacy, research, and leadership development confirms Hansen's analysis. This organization published studies of its members in 2005 and 2017 that also show higher numbers of women conducting children's choirs than any other type (Kushner, 2017). Among other findings, Kushner (2017) also noted a wage gap between women and men choral conductors, with women earning about 74% of what men make. He points out that these numbers did not shift between 2005 and 2017 (Kushner, 2017). In these ways, it seems trends of wage gaps in choral conducting outside of academia mirror problems within academia.

While women may be underrepresented as conductors in the choral field, they are further underrepresented in the instrumental conducting world. This may account for a recent rise in research and dissertations focused on women in instrumental conducting. Edwards (2015) conducted an ethnographic study of female orchestral conductors, looking specifically at "perceptions of gendered traits and characteristics among symphony conductors" (p. 49). Elkins' (2008) work examined a number of women conductors who were the first in their fields. Grant (2000) studied twelve women band directors at four stages in their careers and conducted cross-case comparisons, noting the importance of mentors particularly at the early stages of women's careers. Jackson (1996) performed a similar study to Elkins, examining 12 women who conduct bands at the collegiate level and she too highlighted the importance of mentors. Sears (2010) performed a similar study to both Jackson and Grant looking at female high school band directors. While not a dissertation, Gould (2003) argued that women are essentially the wrong gender as college band directors because cultural contexts position music, performance, and

bands themselves as Other. She argues that "accepting women as college band directors would position instrumental music and conducting as Other, creating further cultural tension for men college band directors" (Gould, 2003, summary and implications section, para. 4). Looking at the literature on women as instrumental conductors is important and has interesting perspectives to offer, but choral conducting is a separate field. While women have generally been more easily accepted as choral conductors (Jagow, 1998), as we have seen from the literature, there are still problems and a lack of women represented at the highest levels.

A few researchers have specifically studied women choral conductors at the collegiate level. Noting that conducting at institutions that grant graduate degrees in choral conducting is arguably the highest position available to conductors, Hansen found that in 2009, women were in the top of co-leadership positions of only ten (22%) of the forty-six research universities that offered a doctoral degree in choral conducting (2009, p. 215). Of the ninety-four institutions that offered master's degrees for choral conductors, women were in top or co-leadership positions at only fifteen institutions (16%) (Hansen, 2009, p. 215). In an earlier study, Hetzel and Norton (1993) showed that only 10% of the 276 conductors they surveyed were found to teach at institutions that offered graduate degrees.

Hansen's (2009) research on the gender of leadership in graduate choral programs was published ten years ago. In the interests of seeing if the gender of those in these positions has changed, I decided to find out who holds these positions today. Using a website (www.gradmusic.org/choral-conducting) to find the names of institutions that offer graduate degrees in choral conducting in the United States, I found that there are currently 49 programs that offer a doctorate in this field. I looked at the names of faculty to determine that of these 49 programs, 41 (84%) are led by men (holding the Director of Choral Activities title, or

equivalent), and 8 (16%) are led by women. Though this was admittedly an informal look, it seems the number of women leading in these positions has not shifted in the last decade.

VanWeelden (2003), in perhaps the most rigorous study of gender in choral conducting in academia to date, looked at the gender of those holding the Director of Choral Activities (DCA) title. She found that men held a shocking 83% of DCA positions, with women in only 17% of the 2,297 positions (VanWeelden, 2003). She also noted that 72% of women's choirs at the collegiate level were conducted by women, and "the number of female conductors in which a women's choir was the only ensemble credited to them" equaled 35% (VanWeelden, 2003, p. 20). The findings of all three of these researchers underscore the pervasive inequalities between men and women choral conductors at the collegiate level. Both VanWeelden's and Hetzel and Norton's work were published many years ago and there is a lack of recent research in this area.

Two recent dissertations that study gender and choral conducting are both examples of qualitative research, but differ from my own in significant ways. Brenneman (2007) focused her narrative study on gender issues that influenced formative experiences in the lives of three women choral conductors in Canada. Bryan (2016) focused her case study on the lives of four women choral conductors who are or were Director of Choral Activities (DCA) at their institutions. My study seeks to focus on the overall life story and narrative of two women conductors, neither of whom hold the DCA title, but both of whom are known and respected in the greater choral conducting community and both of whom work in the Lutheran collegiate choral context.

The North American Lutheran Choral Tradition

While, as mentioned in the introduction, Lutheran higher education is the setting for this research and not the main focus, here is a brief exploration of the extant literature on this context.

Armstrong (1996) gives a concise overview of the Lutheran choral tradition in higher education in the United States by addressing the influence of F. Melius Christiansen, who founded the St. Olaf Choir at St. Olaf College in the early 20th century. Armstrong lays out a brief biography of Christiansen and explains some of his musical philosophies; discusses the impact touring had on spreading this choral sound to the rest of the country; explores Christiansen's choral tone ideal with its emphasis on vocal blend; expounds on the sacred, unaccompanied repertoire the choir sang; and talks about how this philosophy spread to other Lutheran schools like Concordia College, through F. Melius' son, Paul J. Christiansen (Armstrong, 1996). Rothlisburger's (2013) article covers much of the same history as Armstrong, and adds a discussion of the influence of Leipzig, Germany on F. Melius Christiansen. Swan (1973) spends a portion of his chapter on the development of a choral instrument discussing the sound ideals of the Lutheran choral school. He describes its values briefly as, "Every singer in the chorus has a primary responsibility to subordinate his own ideas concerning tone production, rhythmic stress, and pronunciation to a blended and unified sound made by the total ensemble" (Swan, 1973, p. 9). Swan's influential chapter names this approach as one of the "six schools of thought which in theory and practice now influence choral singing in America" (1973, p. 8), and much of his information was gleaned from the influential sons of F. Melius (Olaf C. Christiansen and Paul J. Christiansen) as well as conductor and teacher Weston Noble.

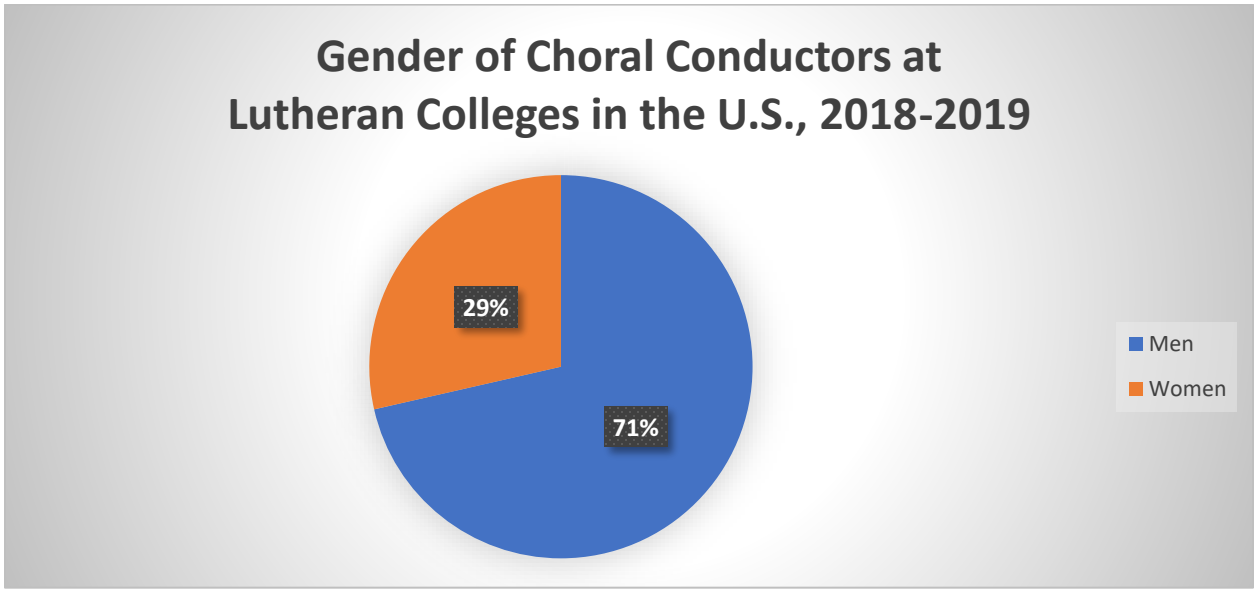
A variety of dissertations explore elements of this context. Garrett (2010) looked at elements of three highly influential choral schools in the United States, of which St. Olaf is one. Zabrieski (2010) also took a comparative approach and examined the evolution of choral tone in both the St. Olaf and Westminster Choirs. Robinson (2015), too, concentrated on choral tone and

looked at the philosophies of F. Melius Christiansen, Peter Lutkin, and John Finley Williamson. Jennings (1969) studied the historical development of choirs at four influential Lutheran Colleges including Concordia College (Moorhead, MN); Augustana College (Rock Island, IL); Luther College (Decorah, IA); and St. Olaf College (Northfield, MN), explaining that these four were chosen based on their outstanding choral tradition and reputation. Holdhusen (2007) and Armstrong (1987) focused their research on the history of specific Lutheran college choirs: Gustavus Adolphus College (St. Peter, MN) and St. Olaf College. Hendricksen (1988) compared the music programming of Concordia College (Moorhead), St. Olaf College, and Luther College. The bounty of dissertations and research centered around Lutheran college choirs in the United States show the depth and influence of this choral tradition and that it is a unique context. None of the research, however, addresses women conducting in this context, which makes my approach unique.

Gender in the Lutheran Context

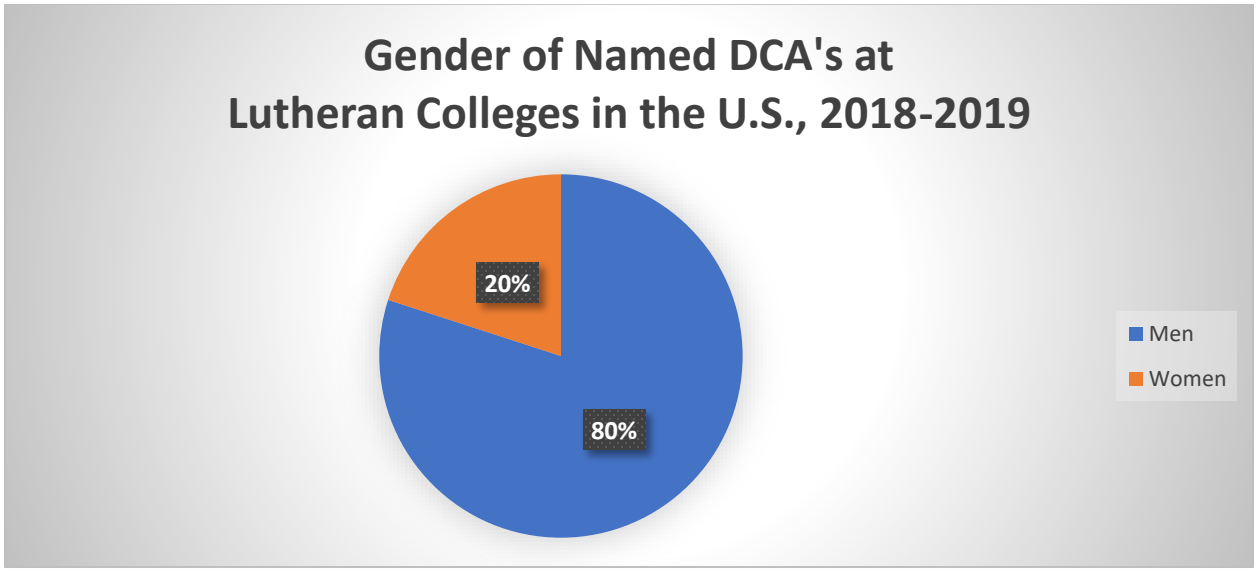
Inspired by VanWeelden's (2003) work looking at the gender of DCA's in American higher education, I did research of my own specifically looking at the gender of choral faculty at Lutheran colleges in the United States. Using the website www.lutherancolleges.org to identify schools, I looked at each website of the 37 schools within the United States that are listed there. 36 of the 37 schools have music programs, and I made note of the number and names of the choirs that are conducted by choral faculty, as well as the names and assumed gender (based on names, pictures, and/or pronouns used in faculty descriptions) of the choral faculty during the 2018-2019 academic year. There is a total of 128 choral ensembles. 50 men and 20 women make up the 70 choral conductors in these schools. The percentage comparisons can be seen in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 (compiled by Cherland, 2019)



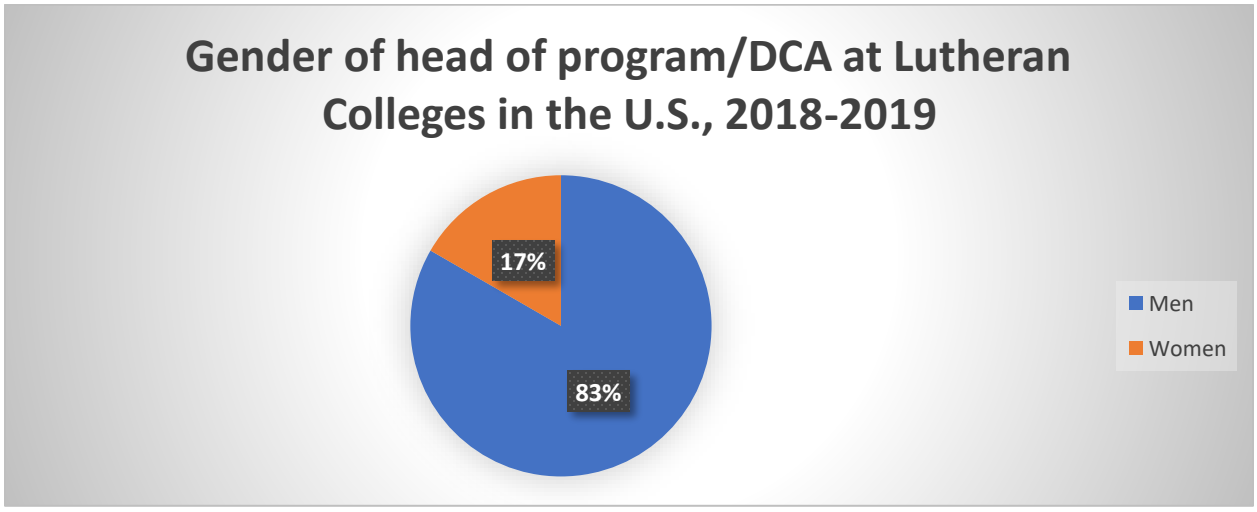
When examining those who hold the position of Director of Choral Activities (DCA) at these schools I found that 30 of the 36 schools had a DCA or equivalent position (or only one conductor so it seemed reasonable to assign them that title). Of those 30 positions, 24 are held by men and 6 are held by women, which can be seen in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 (compiled by Cherland, 2019)



These numbers show that 20% of these DCA positions are occupied by women, which is slightly more than the 17% that VanWeelden (2003) found when looking at DCA positions in all American colleges sixteen years ago. However, it is also important to note that in the remaining six colleges that do not have that position title, there is someone who has the top choir and is seen as the leader of the program. For example, Concordia College (Moorhead), Gustavus Adolphus College, and St. Olaf College do not have a DCA position, but in all three of those institutions there is someone who serves in that function (René Clausen, Greg Aune, and Anton Armstrong, respectively). Taking this into consideration, I examined the names and roles of the choral faculty again and made some judgements as to who in the remaining six schools occupies the role of DCA, though their job title may not name it. I found that in those schools all of the positions are occupied by men, bringing the total to 30 men and 6 women (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 (compiled by Cherland, 2019)



Notice that the new percentages of 17% women and 83% men are exactly the same as those reported by VanWeelden of DCA's in American colleges in 2003. With just 29% of

conductors being women and just 17% as head of program/DCA, there is gender disparity on choral conducting faculties in the Lutheran college context.

Perspectives on Gender

Because concepts of gender permeate this research, a brief exploration of gender and other terms surrounding it is essential. Gender itself is a term that can carry many different philosophies. The Cambridge Dictionary's first definition for gender is "the male or female sex, or the state of being either male or female" (www.dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/gender). While this may seem straightforward, embedded in this definition is an assumption that many would challenge: the assertion that gender has two sides: male or female; masculine or feminine. This binary is commonly seen in definitions of sex. Citron (1993) defines the term sex as that which "refers to biological characteristics of male and female and implies bodily innateness independent of the cultural variability of gender" (p. 5). Underlying this notion of gender as a binary, an either/or, is gender essentialism, which is defined by Oxford Reference as "the belief that males and females are born with distinctively different natures, determined biologically rather than culturally" (www.Oxfordreference.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095846595). As Citron points out, for some, "gender more closely resembles a male-female duality. [While for others] gender represents a continuum of possibilities between the end points socially male and socially female" (1993, p. 5). This second way of seeing gender, as a continuum, is an important distinction from the first and is a perspective that is becoming increasingly accepted.

Seeing sex and gender as an either/or duality is limiting and does not take into account the belief that gender is socially constructed. While some continue to perpetuate the essentialist or biological determinist arguments, more contemporary anthropology looks at gender not as

something that people are, nor as something they have; instead, gender is something that people do (Butler, 1990). In this way, gender is seen as performative (Butler, 1990). People are subtly (and not-so-subtly) taught and learn to perform gender in all activities and practices of their lives. It is so learned that it is something people do without thinking about it consciously, and we come to believe that these performances are a part of who we are (Butler, 1990; Goffman, 1976; West & Zimmerman, 1987). It is created and re-created as people take on societal expectations surrounding femininity and masculinity, and enact them (Mascia-Lees & Black, 2017). Mascia-Lees and Black go on to say:

> [Because this performance is constantly repeated, it seems] as though gender is natural and coherent. It allows us to think that it springs from some underlying biological reality of the body…That we come to believe that gender and sex are natural biological facts is testament to how deeply our ideas about gender and sex are embedded in the discourses of gender found in different societies. (2017, p. 69)

Though these ideas of sex and gender are deeply embedded, West and Zimmerman (1987) insist that gender is displayed in every action and interaction.

Similar to Acker's (1990) assertion regarding ideal worker norms, West and Zimmerman (1987) contend that in our culture there are certain roles that have situated identities (p. 128). They say, "many roles are already gender marked, so that special qualifiers – such as 'female doctor' or 'male nurse' – must be added to exceptions to the rule" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 129). The terms *female* and *woman conductor* are widely used and the use of these qualifiers shows that culturally we have deemed the conductor a masculine role. Lebrecht (1991) explores the myth of the "maestro" and the oppressive masculinity that comes with taking on this role. My research is an exploration of what gender means to two women who work in this choral

conducting role and what they tell about their lives and experiences contending with a position that is culturally marked as masculine.

What we see in much of the quantitative literature on women in academia and women in conducting explored earlier in this chapter reflects beliefs grounded in gender as a simple, biological, sexual binary. Gender is used as a demographic category. As Davis and Klobassa (2017) say, "The resulting simplistic and binary treatment of gender in general, and masculinity in particular, serves to maintain an entrenched patriarchy that not only harms women, but all genders" (p. 299). We must expand and add different views of gender to our understanding, including seeing it as complex and something that people do and produce. I am not concerned with finding out if women can be choral conductors. I stand firmly on the research and experience that says they can. As I will explain in Chapter 3, I believe a qualitative and narrative approach makes space for more nuanced views of gender and my hope is that this approach to examining gender in choral conducting will shed light on the phenomenon of inequity, through a presentation of the meanings women share of their own, personal experiences. The personal is, indeed, political.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

"In a true sense, the telling of a story is the construction of a life."

(Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 19)

The purpose of this narrative study is to understand the stories and experiences of two women choral conductors who conduct and teach or have conducted and taught at Lutheran colleges. Other questions I seek to explore are: What stories do women tell about their choral journeys? What role does their gender play in these stories? How do they see their gender affecting their conducting and teaching? How do their stories reveal their experience of gender? And finally, how does their own Lutheran identity impact their work? Through exploring these stories of experience and the meanings these women attach to them, I hope to shed new light on how these women negotiate and live into the choral conductor identity.

This chapter begins with a description and justification of both qualitative and narrative research, and explanations of why they are appropriate for this particular study. Next, I will describe what I did: the participant selection process; confidentiality and ethics; description of the participants; data collection, analysis, and presentation; a description of creative nonfiction and its purpose and use; and finally, the involvement of the participants in this research.

Qualitative Research

This qualitative research rejects a positivist approach to truth. Positivism assumes that a fixed reality exists, one that can be measured and known (Glesne, 2016, p. 8). Creswell (2013) calls this postpositivism, but the belief is the same: that a single reality exists beyond the

individual and the goal of research is to get at this singular truth (p. 36). While many social scientists today recognize some fallibility in this view, researchers "continue to use and value procedures and language associated with the scientific method and to assert that research can reveal close enough objective facts to assist in making generalizations and predictions regarding social behavior" (Glesne, 2016, p. 9). In this view, the goal of research, then, is to "create new knowledge" that is verifiable and transferrable (Creswell, 2013, p. 36).

There are limitations in applying a scientific approach to knowledge and "to the understanding of human phenomena fraught with complexity, uncertainty, uniqueness, instability, ambiguity and value-conflict" (Kim, 2016, p. 4). The positivist/postpositivist approach is not the only way. Creswell (2013) reminds us that qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without apology or comparison to quantitative research (p. 6). A qualitative approach to research assumes that rather than being objectively observable the world and human experience must be interpreted (Glesne, 2016; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) describes this as social constructivism, where "multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others" (p. 36). In this view, we build reality through our experiences. Understanding how people interpret and make meaning is, therefore, understanding reality. Knowledge is known "through the subjective experiences of people" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Glesne (2016) explains:

> What is of importance to know is how people interpret and make meaning of some object, event, action, perception, and so on. These constructed realities are viewed as existing, however, not only in the mind of the individual, but also as social constructions, in that individualistic perspectives interact with the thought and language of the wider

> society. Thus, accessing the perspectives of several members of the same social group about some phenomena can suggest some cultural patterns of thought and action for that group as a whole. (p. 9)

This study is centered on the social group of women conductors in the Lutheran collegiate choral context and understanding the constructed realities of two of these women.

Narrative Research

Qualitative research is an umbrella term that includes multiple methods of inquiry into "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). An important task for any qualitative researcher is to determine the methodological approach best suited to answering the research questions. Creswell (2013) outlines five main qualitative approaches to inquiry, describing each extensively. In Chapter 1, I admitted to a love of stories, but in weighing the merits of each qualitative method I consciously sought to remain open to finding the most fitting approach. After all, Kim (2016) warns against blindly falling "in love with narrative inquiry even before collecting data" (p. 2), and secretly thinking of it as "an 'easy' methodology that concerns 'just telling stories'" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr qtd. in Kim, 2016, p. 2).

Creswell (2013) outlines two points that affirmed narrative was the best fit for this study. First, more than phenomelogy, grounded theory, ethnography, or case study, narrative research is concerned with exploring the lives of one or more individuals. Second, "needing to tell stories of individual experiences" is the type of problem best suited to this narrative design (Creswell, 2013, p. 104). Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou (2008) expand on the merits of the narrative approach:

> Most often, perhaps, we frame our research in terms of narrative because we believe that by doing so we are able to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change. By focusing on narrative, we are able to investigate not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means; the mechanisms by which they are consumed; and how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted. All of these areas of enquiry can help us describe, understand and even explain important aspects of the world. (pp. 1-2)

Those accustomed to the positivist academic culture may be suspicious about the reliability and validity of narrative research. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) acknowledge that, "in narrative inquiry, the distinction between fact and fiction is muddled" (p. 179). We may ponder questions like, "Did these events actually happen? How do we know? How does the teller know?" (2000, p. 179). Indeed, "Clear and certain answers become elusive" (p. 179). Yet qualitative researchers question the idea of objectivity that underlies notions of generalizability and validity. Seidman (2006) points out:

> Because hypotheses are not being tested, the issue is not whether the researcher can generalize the findings of an interview study to a broader population. Instead the researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects. (Seidman, 2006, p. 51)

Presenting sufficient depth to deepen a reader's understanding lends validity and strength to the work.

Seidman (2006) also suggests that researchers can address questions of validity by using the three-interview structure. This structure "incorporates features that enhance the accomplishment of validity" by placing the participants' stories and reflections in context, accounting for idiosyncratic days and by allowing internal consistency to be checked (Seidman, 2006, p. 24). Seidman concludes that "if the interview structure works to allow [the participant] to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity" (2006, p. 24). Kvale (1996) believes that validity is directly related to the quality of craftsmanship of the researcher, and Creswell (2015) points out that higher quality research involves the participant collaborating with the researcher (p. 519). My commitment to careful and quality craftsmanship as well as the collaboration with both participants in restorying and analyzing data contribute to this process being valid.

Participant Selection

Understanding that data collection happens primarily in the form of interviews (Creswell, 2013), I considered how to choose participants. Seidman (2006) said, "Because the basic assumptions underlying an interview study are different from those of an experimental study, selecting participants is approached differently" (p. 51). Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2015; Seidman, 2006) is the most commonly used approach in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to choose those who are best able to answer the research questions. As a part of some initial research I found a website that listed all of the Lutheran colleges in the United States and their websites (www.lutherancolleges.org). I went to each of the 37 schools' websites, made a list of the names and genders (based on the names) of the choral faculty, and found that there were 50 men and 20 women conducting at these schools in the 2018-2019 academic year.

Originally thinking three would be the appropriate number of women to study, I chose two names from this list that I recognized and knew had excellent reputations. I had seen videos of one of them and had been particularly impressed by her choir. The third woman I selected was someone I had met and with whom I had a previous personal connection. She taught for 34 years in an excellent Lutheran choral program, had gone to college with my father, and had a reputation as an excellent conductor. My ideal list of participants, therefore, included three women who varied in age, institution, and rank; but were all well-respected and active in the greater choral community outside of their institutions. I applied for and received permission from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Washington and designed a consent form for participants. I contacted each of the three women via email or Facebook to introduce or re-introduce myself, explain my research, and ask if they would be willing to be a part of it. All three were agreeable and open to participating.

After obtaining signatures from the three participants I researched in-depth interviewing techniques, using the work of Seidman (2006), Kvale (1996), Wengraf (2001), and Kim (2016). I designed semi-structured, guided interviews (Kim, 2016). Instead of setting a list of pre-determined questions, I came up with half a dozen questions that were "flexible enough to expand the scope of the interview" (Kim, 2016, p. 163), and allowed other questions to be determined based on the information and stories the participant shared. Kim points out that "interviewer flexibility and open-mindedness are important because they will not only let unexpected data emerge, but can also contribute to developing good rapport and trust" (2016, p. 162). Excellent rapport and trust are essential, and perhaps the most important aspect of the interview method because they are "a means to generate data of high quality" (Kim, 2016, p. 162). My ability to build excellent trust and rapport with the participants was almost certainly

assisted by the fact that I had attended Concordia College, a sister school to all of the participants' institutions and I had recently accepted a choral conducting and teaching position at Gustavus Adolphus College, another sister college. Even with the participant I knew through my father, I benefitted from the understanding that I was not simply a graduate student interested in studying her life. I was accepted by the participants as an insider.

The goal of the first interview was to get a "grand tour" of each of their lives and a basic understanding of each of their experiences in order to be introduced into their stories (Kim, 2016). This first interview was conducted in person with one of the participants because I was in the area and she was available, and via video-call with the other two. I obtained their permission to audio record each interview and went back and wrote up transcripts for each. After the first interview it became clear that while one of the participants was generous and told rich stories of her life, her time was limited and being able to schedule two more 90-minute interviews, as recommended by Seidman (2006), would be too difficult. At the same time I made this realization, I came across a chart in Creswell's (2015) *Educational Research* textbook that helped explain how to evaluate the quality of a narrative study. One of the first things it said was that quality narrative research focuses on one or two individuals and that including more than two often suggests the telling of a collective story rather than detailed stories of individuals (Creswell, 2015, p. 518). Narrowing this project to two participants thus seemed wise to ensure both quality and feasibility.

Confidentiality

Kim (2016) reminds us that excellent narrative inquiry "requires ethical practice that involves the need to respect the dignity and welfare of our participants and intense collaboration with them about the area of the participants' experience and stories that are of interest to us" (p.

103). Keeping the participants' dignity and the sacredness of their storytelling central was important throughout the interview and writing process. While both participants were open to having their real names used and open to having their stories associated with them, we decided to use some basic identity protection devices. Since one participant is still in the middle of her career and since the other would occasionally indicate that she didn't want something that might seem judgmental shared, the pseudonyms offered some freedom. In addition to using pseudonyms for the participants' names, I have also changed the names of other people, institutions, and cities in their stories in order to protect their identities.

There are two exceptions to the blanket use of pseudonyms. The first is I kept the name Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. I have indicated that one of the participants (Ingrid) went to college there with my father, and her education under Paul J. Christiansen seemed important enough to include, though not so unique as to completely reveal her identity. The other exception is I didn't change the names of some famous musicians and conductors like Eric Ericson, Neville Marriner, Sandy Patty, Julie Andrews, and Barbra Streisand. The participants' mentions of these figures do not threaten their own anonymity and keeping these names does add depth and understanding to their stories.

While anonymity is important, both participants acknowledged that the possibility exists that someone may be able to deduce their identities based on their stories. Both still felt comfortable proceeding and sharing their stories.

Descriptions of the Participants

Much of the introduction to the participants will be done by the participants themselves in their narratives, but a concise overview of their working lives may be helpful. Ingrid Peterson is a retired choir director who conducted the first-year treble choir at a small (~3,000 students),

Lutheran, liberal arts college in the Midwest (called Liturgia College in this study) with a well-respected choral program. She was at Liturgia for over three decades and also had associate conducting positions with two professional choirs for many decades. Ingrid's position at Liturgia was initially that of Instructor but changed to Artist-in-Residence for the remainder of her career. Samantha Platt is an emerging conductor currently teaching and conducting at a small (~2,000 students), Lutheran, liberal arts college in the Midwest (called Meadowlands College in this study) with a well-respected choral program. She has been there for more than five years, was recently awarded tenure and promoted, and she conducts the first-year treble choir and a mixed upper-level ensemble. Both Ingrid and Samantha are well-respected in their field, have conducted All State choirs, and have performed or presented at regional and national conferences. Ingrid and Samantha have met and know each other, though neither interacted with the other during the process of this research. They are both talented teachers and conductors as demonstrated by their positions and reputations.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Presentation

After narrowing the participants to two, I then conducted three more interviews with both Ingrid and Samantha. After each interview I reflected on the conversation and began generating further questions. Sometimes these questions would be answered as I transcribed the interviews and other times they became a part of my list for questions to ask later. While I originally intended to conduct a total of three interviews with each participant, I ended up with four because of remaining questions I wanted to ask. The interviews were separated by a number of weeks and took place over a 3-month period. While this is a wider spread of time than Seidman (2006) recommends, the time line was spread out in part because of the conference that we all

attended and where I had the opportunity to interview Samantha in person, and because the first interview with Ingrid was in person when I was in the area for a job interview.

After each interview I transcribed the recordings. Because of the listening and re-reading required, I became intimately familiar with the stories and experiences of both women through the smoothing process. Narrative smoothing (Kim, 2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) involves "brushing off the rough edges of disconnected raw data" to help make the participant's story more coherent (Kim, 2016, p. 192). While there is potential for this to be problematic because it involves some interpretation on the part of the researcher, it is an essential part of the process because, ironically, without it the meaning can be difficult to discern outside of the interview itself. For example, I found that in the interviews it was common for there to be half sentences and a lot of words like "stuff," "you know," "so," "I think," etc. that in written form would sometimes obscure the meaning. Knowing that this is an important tool, therefore, I smoothed out and sometimes combined sentences in order to clarify for meaning.

This process of narrative smoothing to reveal the intent and meaning of the participant was a step in transforming the field texts into research texts. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) remind us this is not a fast process:

> The move from field texts to research texts is layered in complexity in still other ways. There is no smooth transition, no one gathering of the field texts, sorting them through, and analyzing them…We return to them again and again, bringing our own restoried lives as inquirers, bringing new research puzzles, and re-searching the texts. (p. 132)

The circular nature of this process – reading, smoothing, re-reading, smoothing again – was time consuming, but the efforts resulted in familiarity with the data and were a necessary aspect of the data analysis. After transcribing and through the smoothing process I made notes of

further questions or areas that I wanted to explore more with the participants. The guiding questions I asked in the first interview were similar with each participant, but because the subsequent interviews were explorations on their individual experiences, the interview questions and process varied with each participant. Samantha was quite reflective and many of her responses came out nearly fully formed. We were often able to explore one topic all the way through before moving into the next. Our relationship grew over the four interviews and therefore the tone and style of the interviews became less formal and more conversational. Ingrid, on the other hand, from the very first interview seemed to think audibly and would almost interrupt herself in letting one topic lead to another. I found myself reflecting this style and I would jump from topic to topic in my questioning, as well. I should emphasize that the prior relationship I had with Ingrid partially contributed to the conversational, casual interview dynamic, but Ingrid herself cultivates a friendly, relational style throughout her life. The interview process with both Ingrid and Samantha was not only fruitful, it was also enjoyable and led to deepened friendships.

Combining the four interviews into one, cohesive narrative for both Ingrid and Samantha was not only a presentation of the data, it was also a method of data analysis. This is called restorying (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and I tried to open up a space for Samantha and Ingrid's voices, and tried to read their data with an open mind. I found that in drawing on content from all four interviews I further smoothed the narrative and would often combine two or three different pieces of conversation on a topic to create the "final" narrative. For example, Ingrid spoke of her mother in three of the four interviews and at multiple times in each interview. Some of that repetition is discernable in Ingrid's chapter, but much of it is consolidated. Chapters 4 and 5 are the presentations of Ingrid's and Samantha's narratives.

Creative Nonfiction and Data Presentation

Another approach I use in both my data analysis and as a way to present data is creative nonfiction. Elliot Eisner (1997) was instrumental in legitimizing arts-based narrative inquiry which Barone and Eisner (2012) define as a "process that uses the expressive qualities of form to convey meaning" (p. xii). Kim (2016) refers to this process as "genre blurring" and explains that "qualitative social scientists increasingly became interested in exploring the possibilities of combining scientific research with artistic design elements that are more evocative, enabling readers to vicariously experience the lives of people through the stories" (p. 137). While other arts-based forms could be poetry, short stories, visual ethnography, fictional writing, ethnodrama, or even novels, the creative nonfiction approach is a gentle introduction to imaginative approaches in narrative data reporting. Yet the use of this form but could still be startling to readers brought up in positivist research culture. Kim argues that the use of creative nonfiction as a way to report qualitative research "can sometimes portray a research phenomenon more clearly than do the standard representations of qualitative data" (2016, p. 140). There is legitimacy to arts-based narrative inquiry in which "the arts accompany narratives to convey the meaning of the stories told and retold" (Kim, 2016, p. 138), and specifically to the creative nonfiction genre with precedent for its use in academia since the early 1990s (Caulley, 2008 and Schneider, 1997, as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 140).

As supported by Kim's (2016) explanation of creative nonfiction, I "present factual information using the tools of the fiction writer" (p. 140) and use my imagination and storytelling skills to bring the reader to an empathic understanding in this arts-based narrative device. For example, in the story of Ingrid singing *I Wanna be Ready* in a chapel service I used Ingrid's own very brief telling of the story, combined with my father's description of that

moment (because he attended the service that day), combined with my own knowledge of the Concordia campus and choral culture to present a research product in literary form. The story is nonfiction because it is based on an actual event, but it is told using creative, imagined elements in order to capture the essence of the story. Using this form allowed me to speak to Ingrid's talent, her naivety that she describes, the context in which she was "discovered" by Paul J. Christiansen, and the culture of Lutheran choral singing. The story contains meaning, and this form has great value.

To differentiate the stories I crafted from the rest of the research text, I have indented and italicized my nonfiction pieces. Note that I use present tense in the stories, which is a narrative device that gives immediacy, that brings the reader into a moment and, in a way, freezes time. It allows us to enter another world where past, present, and future are not easily separated. In Samantha's "Giving it Away on Looks" story, I use a shift of tense within the story itself to highlight the weight of Jake's comment.

The creative nonfiction pieces reside within Ingrid's and Samantha's narratives in Chapters 4 and 5. The following chapters are further explorations of the data and experiences that they present. Chapter 6 is an exploration of the individual themes that emerged from Samantha's and Ingrid's stories of experience. The format of this theme exploration is similar to Chapters 4 and 5 – Ingrid's are explored first, followed by Samantha's. Themes were elements that seemed to come up again and again in their storytelling, truths that wove their way through their lives. Writing Chapter 7 was a chance to not only continue to explore the stories of Samantha and Ingrid, but also to compare and contrast them. Seidman (2006) says that the interviewer seeks to:

> find connections among the experiences of the individuals he or she interviews. Such links among people whose individual lives are quite different but who are affected by common structural and social forces can help the reader see patterns in that experience. (p. 52)

Chapter 7 is, therefore, an attempt to find those connections and see how both Ingrid and Samantha experience/experienced their work in choral conducting and how their gender has impacted those experiences. Chapter 8 offers a brief reflection on the historical, cultural, and social contexts of their stories and makes recommendations for future research.

In summary, the data analysis process included: turning the texts into research texts; restorying by combining the interviews and data into one narrative; writing creative nonfiction stories to capture elements of the narrative; exploring and recognizing the themes; and comparing and contrasting the themes in Ingrid's and Samantha's experiences. The final step came in stating conclusions about what truths can be gleaned from these two narratives of experience.

Criteria for Evaluating Narrative Research

Creswell, in his 2015 Educational Research textbook, gives six helpful criteria that are present in high quality narrative research (pp. 518-519). These guidelines have been an important part of my process in conducting this study because of the clarity and structure they provide. Creswell's first criterion, mentioned previously, is that a high-quality narrative study focuses on one or maybe two individuals (2015, p. 518). As previously mentioned, this criterion helped me to decide to limit my study to two women and the reasons for choosing these two specific women are outlined earlier in this chapter. Second, Creswell says that in high quality narrative studies, "The researcher gives the reader a sense of an individual's life through vivid details of

their experiences" (2015, p. 518). Ingrid's and Samantha's own vivid descriptions of their lives were thorough, and I drew these out by crafting specific questions and delving deeper when possible. For example, after the first interview with each I returned to some of the points they had made or stories they had told and asked about them again in following interviews, searching for more details and depth. Vivid details are also seen in the creative nonfiction stories I crafted. Through describing the sound of the whistle of appreciation (in the Ingrid at Concordia Story), the sight of the shining black, patent leather Mary Janes (in the Polished Shoes Story), and the feel of collegiate competitiveness (in the Giving it Away On Looks Story), I further draw the reader into Ingrid's and Samantha's world.

Creswell's third criterion is that the researcher threads the individual's stories together, perhaps in a chronology, and embeds key events within the greater story (2015, p. 519). While lower quality research might present the narrative more randomly and not focus on descriptions of their life, I worked to present both narratives in a cohesive, intuitive, thorough, and mostly sequential way. It's important to reiterate that the narratives are a combination of four different interview sessions and that the cohesive narratives presented required deciding what to include, what to exclude, reordering, and combining different tellings of the same stories. The fourth criterion Creswell gives is, "The final report describes the context of the story, its setting, and the people involved" (2015, p. 219). I was able to observe both Ingrid and Samantha in their work at a recent conference, I watched videos of them teaching and performing which gave valuable insights beyond their own stories, and I was able to meet and talk with both women in person. Yet this criterion was perhaps the greatest challenge and one I may not have met to the same degree as the others. I was not able to travel to Meadowlands College to observe Samantha in person. Ingrid has retired from her work at Liturgia College and I was unable to see or observe

Ingrid in her home context. So, while I believe I did adequate work in describing the broader context of their lives, in doing this research again and with more time I would work to ensure opportunities to observe them in their own contexts.

Creswell's final two criteria, however, are well-met in this research. The fifth criterion underscores the importance of drawing and reporting themes that come from the narratives (Creswell, 2015, p. 519). Chapter 6 is an exploration of the themes I see in their stories and Chapter 7 further explores some of these themes by comparing and contrasting Ingrid's and Samantha's experiences. Creswell's final criterion highlights the importance of collaborating closely with participants throughout the process (p. 519). This criterion was daunting but important in making sure that the narratives I sought to frame were seen as accurate by those who gave them. Both Ingrid and Samantha were generous in giving of their time to read Chapters 4 or 5, respectively. Ingrid requested some minor word changes and Samantha pointed out a missing pseudonym, but otherwise they endorsed the chapters as written and shaped. While the narrative approach to qualitative research is admittedly still emerging and evolving, Creswell's six criteria helped provide goals and benchmarks that I used to create a high quality study.

Conclusion

To close the methodology section of this research, let us look at a quote by Seidman (2006):

> By presenting the stories of participants' experience, interviewers open up for readers the possibility of connecting their own stories to those presented in the study. In connecting, readers may not learn how to control or predict the experiences being studied or their own, but they will better understand the complexities. They will appreciate more the

> intricate ways in which individual lives interact with social and structural forces and, perhaps, be more understanding and even humble in the face of those intricacies. (p. 52)

It is my hope that the narrative, qualitative approach to examining gender in the stories and experiences of two women who conduct in the Lutheran collegiate choral context will be transformative for those who read this document. I use the word "transformative" to connote positive change for the future, to highlight my hope that the reader will empathize and be inspired to participate in changing how we view and value women in choral conducting. Perhaps the intricate ways Ingrid's and Samantha's lives interact with social and structural forces can help all who read these stories connect their own experiences and better understand their complexities.

CHAPTER 4

INGRID'S STORY: *I Never Felt it Because I Chose Not to Look for it*

March 2019, American Choral Directors Association National Conference. I am observing Ingrid rehearsing a large ensemble.

"What a privilege it is to work with you," she says, smiling at the ensemble of aging choir directors. They return her smile. This is the first of their four conductors that morning to acknowledge them that way.

"Shenandoah is just another snippet of your color. I know you have your own personal feel for this piece but come to me please! Let's begin. Sit tall, legs uncrossed."

"Can you stand on the podium?" an alto in the back-row shouts.

"I'll start there, but I never finish there!" she replies good naturedly.

She gives them an opening breath and invites their sound. Their tone is filled with individual vibrato and as their pitch descends under the weight of their sound, she raises her eyebrows and one finger, urging them to tend to the sagging pitch. She leaves the podium and begins walking in front of the group. I notice her cute haircut, stylish glasses, black pants, and flowing top moving back and forth. As they reach their final note, a unison E, she lingers just a moment, urging them to listen and unify before giving the cutoff.

"Lovely start, everyone." At her request Kevin, the pianist, outlines the original key revealing the ensemble has dropped a half step. "Yikes," she says as the group groans and chuckles. "It's all right, we can fix this."

She focuses her gaze on the women. "Sopranos and altos, would you all sing with a solo vibrato sound, please?" She gives them a breath, then, holding her hands in front of her shoulders

she flaps her fingers up and down. The treble voices match the wide wobble at their own pace. "Good, now with less." At her invitation they comply, following the narrower waving of her fingers. "Good! Now let's do it again without the vibrato." They breathe and her hands glide horizontally as though she is smoothing a tablecloth or spreading frosting on top of a cake. "Yes, but release it," she says as they continue, "make it shimmer!" She releases the first unison, in-tune sound of the morning. "That's the sound. Our job is to make the least amount of distraction so that we can hear the text. As soon as we hear the vibrating, it distracts. Let's maintain that beautiful shimmer, instead, and that will also help fix the intonation. On we go!"

What follows is a restorying of Ingrid's narrative using data collected from all four interviews. I ask Ingrid to give me an overview of her life and her path to becoming a choral conductor.

I grew up in Bismarck, North Dakota, and my family was very musical. My parents were really good amateur musicians. Mom had never had lessons, but she loved music and taught herself to play the piano by ear. She could play anything. My dad had an 8th grade education, but he had this beautiful, natural tenor voice and my mom would play for him. He was a fabulous sort of Joe Feeney, you know, the tenor on the Lawrence Welk show. He sang really churchy, homey stuff and was also in the local operettas. He couldn't read music or anything like that, my mom would teach him his part. My mother was a stay-at-home-mom until we were in school and then she was a radiology stenographer for our local clinic. My dad was in construction. We didn't have a lot of money in our family, but it seemed like there was always enough for a musical instrument or a music camp or something. So, they were really, really supportive in that kind of way. That was a blessing.

I started piano when I was about four and gave a piano recital when I was five. My mother would sit at my piano lessons to soak it all in herself and sit with me when I practiced, to make sure I was doing it all right. I had two older brothers – one played violin and one played cello. Once I started playing, when I was more like 6, my brothers and I spent our time playing piano trios. We played all the classics, any Mozart or Haydn piano trios, and we just loved it. That was our whole existence, our musical world. We were very active in the church and music in the church. We spent our Saturdays practicing and playing and enjoying it and fighting and all that kind of stuff that siblings do. We grew up on classical music – not that anybody was against pop music, but we didn't listen to it a lot. We still play. When we get together for holidays, we still play those piano trios together. For my mom's funeral we all got out our instruments and played. My brothers both are still in music. My brother Greg, he's a song writer and producer, and he just got inducted into the gospel hall of fame in Nashville. Both brothers are really talented, the other one was a jingle writer for years. Yeah, our family had a music love affair, that's for sure.

Once I started school, we performed all around, doing our schtick. When I was in middle school and my brothers were in high school, one of the things we used to do is go around and play music for the rotary club and do all the Christmas parties. Every club in the world you could think of – we were there, and we were running around. We Hanson kids were probably all totally ADHD. We were those kids who you feared for their lives when it would storm because they never had their coats or gloves. My mother would send them with us, but the first stop we'd make we'd leave them somewhere. Our middle school orchestra teacher is the one who carted us around to do all these things. She would keep extra parkas and gloves in her car for us. She was the oddest duck in the world, but she was a gifted teacher. She wasn't nurturing, she was just

very cut and dry, like, “This is what you do. If you want to do this, you practice. You practice and you have a time off, and then you come back and do it again.” But you knew she did it because she cared about you. She was really the first real person that paid a lot of attention to the integrity of what you do in music, and the work it takes, and the commitment that it is. That was instilled in us really young.

My piano teacher from the time I was four was the same way. She was a real disciplinarian, she was not lovely-dovey. It was all about learning form and learning theory. It wasn’t just, “Let’s play some pretty tunes that children like.” So, from the beginning I had a very disciplined approach to music. We had such fabulous music educators.

My choir director in high school was just enamored with Concordia and Paul J. Christiansen, and so he placed a very strong emphasis on that sound and approach. He wasn’t a warm fuzzy guy. Again, everything was very disciplined. I think what I got in high school was a lot of opportunities for chamber music, small groups. We had a women’s octet, we had a madrigal group, I got to sing a lot of solos, so I was exposed to music making in different formats. That was fun. In the women’s group he didn’t come to the rehearsals, so I got to run the rehearsals because that was a role that he gave me. So, I got some training in how to focus people and do it without trying to come across as the boss. I tried to make it as “What do you think? What do you think?” Rather than “Do it this way. Do it that way.” So, I learned some skills in how to get people to work in a positive way together.

We went to give a concert my senior year at Concordia, and Paul J came. I had a solo, and Paul J. came up on the bus and said, “We’d like to have you come to Concordia.”

Ingrid at Concordia Story

The old gymnasium had been transformed for the 10 a.m. chapel service. No altar today, just a semi-circle of choral risers. Four hundred Concordia College students and faculty were gathering for the optional service, everyone hurrying in from the chilly, Minnesota spring morning. The bulletin indicated that today the Bismarck High School Choir would sing a short concert.

Carl, a tall 20-year-old Concordia Choir tenor, found a spot a few rows up. He liked chapel, especially when choirs were performing. He watched the robed choir quickly file onto the risers. He listened. He thought they sang well, the tone mature beyond their years, like any group modeling itself on the Concordia Choir would sound. The second to last piece was a spiritual, of course: I Wanna be Ready.

The full, sweet soprano voice that emerged in the silence pulled his eyes from his bulletin. A pretty blonde in the front row was singing, the rest of the ensemble joining her on each "ready." She was good. Very good. "Ready…to put on…my long white robe…Lord..." Carl's body stilled as she cleanly jumped an octave. It was a sweet and mournful wail, drawing the choir back to "I wanna be ready." Verse after verse she continued, stretching the high note (was it an A? even a B flat? Lord, it was beautiful!) a little longer each time. Carl found himself waiting for the wail and unconsciously held his breath each time it came. As the piece neared its end, she ascended one final time, holding the aching beauty so it rang in the room.

A full five seconds passed before the student congregation stirred and began breathing again. The applause was generous, Carl joining in with a high-pitched whistle of appreciation. The singers shyly smiled their thanks and began their brisk retreat,

walking diagonally across the gym floor towards the southwest exit, where their bus waited. As Carl reached for his coat, he saw Paul J. rise from a seat near the northeast entrance and run after the retreating choir. The old man was in a hurry. Carl had never seen the poised, well-dressed conductor of the Concordia Choir hustle anywhere, much less run after a group of high school kids. I bet he's going after that soprano, Carl thought.

Ingrid had just reached her seat on the bus when she heard her teacher call her name. She turned and there was a distinguished man with graying hair and serious eyes walking down the narrow aisle towards her.

"Hello, Ingrid. My name is Paul Christiansen," he said as he extended his hand for her to shake.

"Oh, hello!" Ingrid breathed.

"You have quite a voice, young lady. We'd like to have you come to Concordia College next year."

"Oh!" she said. Her eyes widened. She saw her teacher beaming at her over Mr. Christiansen's shoulder.

"Thank you," she said, remembering her manners.

I was so naïve my whole life, so I just kind of said, "Oh, okay." So, that fell into place.

I went to Concordia and met Jack who was three and a half years older than me, and he was the manager of the choir. He was going to be leaving and moving on and I remember thinking to myself, "Well, it's either now or never. If not now, we'll go our own ways and then that will be it." So, he asked me to marry him and I did. I was 19 years old. After we got married

Jack got a job teaching as a choir director in Flatlands, Minnesota. After leaving Concordia I was planning to go to Augsburg College, but it cost too much money, so I went to Central State. I was their first Bachelor of Music student and did a degree that was half performance and half education, which was perfect for me. The choir there was quite weak and I wasn't really interested in it, so I studied opera and solo singing. Again, I had fabulous educators, teachers, mentors. From there, again, the stars were aligned, and my voice teacher was very instrumental in getting me to the University of Superior. She filled out the forms. People always did things like that for me and said, "Here, this is your life." And I was like, "Okay [*chuckles*]."

I went to Superior and though I got my master's in voice, I also took all the conducting courses I could because that was an interest of mine. All of my conducting training was there with Tim Hawley. He was the king of contemporary music and that was a whole different choral experience. It did not involve standing around and holding hands and singing, it was every man [*sic*] for himself. It was a chamber choir where there was no talk about blend. Everybody just sang in their solo voice and we did lots of repertoire. The refinement that we think of in the Lutheran tradition, specifically a cappella music, was not a part of that experience. But it certainly added to my perspective and my approach of trying to combine the intellect with the passion in what we do. The heartfelt part.

So, all of my degrees were in voice performance. My goal was to teach private voice in a college. I was really blessed to have a lot of different experiences and get a little bit of all the worlds: opera and solo singing at Central, conducting and pedagogy in terms of how to train the voice in the classroom at Superior, and then the finesse and nuance of it all at Concordia. All of that really shaped how I approach music.

After graduating from Superior I signed a teaching contract in a brand-new school: Detroit Bible College. I was going to be teaching theory, piano, voice – I was going to be the music department. But then an opportunity came up for Jack to be hired at Liturgia College as the manager of the music ensembles, and I said, "You know, I can really teach anywhere. This kind of a job at Liturgia is very unique and they don't come up all the time." So, we moved back, school had already started. Our town of Riverview has a wonderful music theater program and so I did a lot of musical theater and worked at the bank, which was my career when I was in graduate school. A guy named Lou Richards was the head of the opera and music theater program at the state University and he came down and performed with and directed me in a couple things. The following year he said something that is a resounding theme in my life story. He said, "Somebody quit at the last minute, so could you come and teach for a year?" I was 25, I had no credentials, really, but so I went and taught voice for a year at the U.

While I was at the U that spring, I got a call from Rasmussen College that said, "We're looking for a voice teacher – could you come and teach voice at Rasmussen?" I said, "Great!" During the interview they said, "We'd also like to have you conduct the Celia Singers, which is the women's choir." So, I said, "Sure I'd love to do that, that would be fine." I mean, talk about naïve and just having every confidence in the world. I did the *Ceremony of Carols* my first year, with a brand-new group. It was great fun, but how dumb is that? I was at Rasmussen for three years and had some maternity leave in there when Patrick was born.

While I was there, John Kenmore [the Liturgia Choir conductor] was on leave and came down for a semester to take over the Rasmussen choir while their director was on a sabbatical. I knew him only as Jack's boss, but he saw me work, and we did concerts together there. The next fall when he was back at Liturgia, two weeks into the semester there was a problem and they

didn't have a conductor for the Aurelia Singers [the first-year women's ensemble]. It was just temporary, so he asked if I would come. It was great for me because I didn't have to commute, so I said I would. It wasn't full time, it wasn't tenure-track, but that's what I wanted because we had babies and I had joined the Midwest Singers about that same time. I became the section leader, and then associate conductor. I was busy, we were touring, and it was a busy time for the Singers. I didn't want full time; I didn't want to have to go to committee meetings and do the academic part of it. The position was appealing to me, so I went to Liturgia. It ended up not being temporary. I stayed for 34 years and the rest is history.

To finish up talking about my other conducting jobs, with the Midwest Singers I prepared the symphonic choir for great people like Neville Marriner, you name it. That was always a part of my life. I got to wear a lot of different hats. And then in 1990 The Modern Choir called me and said, "I wonder if you would come over and help us." The group at that time was a big chorus, and it had four soloists, kind of the [*makes big vibrato sound*], and then the rest were church choir types. The conductor didn't have a focus in the sound. I said, "I will come, but you will need to clean house in the big group, you have to hire a minimum of 24 singers, paid, and you have to give it 10 years because it takes that long to build a group's identity." And that's what we did. I was the associate conductor for The Modern Choir, and then I retired after 25 years in 2015 when I left Liturgia. I have a long history with these groups.

My point is that I was always in the right place at the right time. If I had to apply for a job at one of these schools today, I would never get hired. I wouldn't have put myself out there.

I ask Ingrid to clarify her title at Liturgia, her responsibilities, and if her position was ever tenure-track.

My job was conducting the Aurelia Singers and teaching voice and voice class. And I initially had the Collegiate Chorale too, the other group that Edgar Seeger has now. I started the Collegiate Chorale because I felt there were too many people auditioning for Aurelia who should be singing, but we didn't have room for all of them on the risers. They had the right to be experiencing a choir. They were paying a lot of money to come to Liturgia to participate in music, and then to tell them and their parents that they couldn't get into the first-year group… that's why we started the Collegiate Chorale. Edgar became the director of the Collegiate Chorale because he wanted to work with a women's group and I thought it would be a real boon to the singers in the Collegiate Chorale. It would make them feel really good to have Edgar as their director, because he also conducts the Liturgia College Choir.

I also chose to be 80% time instead of full time because I was conducting the Midwest Singers, and I did the Symphonic Chorus. I was gone on the road a lot and I knew I didn't have the time to support my colleagues at their recitals or be at all the required things for a full-time tenure track position. I didn't have time to serve on committees, so I am the one that proposed working 80% time. The college agreed and it worked out perfectly. It must have been about 10 years into my teaching there that they made my position Artist in Residence. Until then they just kept renewing my contract and nobody ever talked about it. Nobody ever did anything. I was kind of under the radar, not intentionally, that's just kind of how it worked out. Rules around hiring have become much stricter since then.

Ingrid's husband, Jack, who was present for one of our interviews jumps in:

She would have remained at an instructor level and they thought with her national conducting presence and with all the All States that she was doing that it would also be to their advantage for her to have a better title than instructor.

Ingrid resumes:

It was different then than it is now. Experience and professional activity counted for a lot. Because I had that, I don't think they ever pushed me to get another degree. But now, in your generation, they really are after that DMA.

Music is in my blood. My brothers and I didn't know anything but music from earliest childhood. We had confidence. What education did for me was make me realize that I was innately musical. My confidence means that I don't really ever doubt myself musically. The fine tuning comes with putting the cerebral with it so that your choices are justified in an intellectual way. They don't come out as heady, but you always have a reason for why you do something that can be justified. Because the essence of music is that the cerebral, mathematical part of it is essential, to even start to make music. That shaped how I approach music and how I approached it with my students. It's one thing to say, "I'm doing this piece and it's beautiful, and I love it this way, and it feels good." But you have to always back that up with the cerebral, a historical understanding of style, and dedication to the intellect. It's that combination. There are conductors or singers or educators that come at it from the head. It goes through the heart, but they come at it from the head first. I would say I'm aware of the head. I speak to it in my brain and my training, but my approach is heartfelt first. I come through the heart first. It takes all of us to make the world go 'round, but that's my own inclination.

At Liturgia, our conducting team was made up of both head and heart conductors. We kept each other on task. The heart people would tell the head people what was really boring on a program and they would tell us to challenge our singers more [*laughing*]. I think the sum of all the parts added up to be really terrific. They were my new set of brothers in a new phase of life. I was so lucky to be there that long – 34 years – and have that.

I ask Ingrid if she remembers any specific time when she told one of her colleagues that something was boring or that they told her to challenge her singers more.

Well, they kind of left me alone. I was kind of the princess. And I always told them that I felt like Aurelia was the comic relief of the Yuletide Gala program. By that I mean we provided a shift in program and would make sure to do at least one piece that was not cerebral, not hard to listen to, something where people could just go, "[*sighing*] That's so beautiful."

But really, it was quite rare that we would suggest a colleague change a piece. We had a lot of respect for each other's ability to pick what they thought was good for their choir and good for the program. That was everybody's goal. Not "How can I look good?" or "How can I make my group really stand out?" I never had any of that feeling in 34 years. It sounds so Pollyanna-ish, but it really was a Pollyanna life with those guys. I didn't feel that I wasn't being taken seriously, or that my ideas weren't honored. I never felt that, ever, at Liturgia. Edgar is the artistic director of Yuletide Gala and he had the final say on the mass pieces, but it was like a family. We all met together, we'd do the theme and we'd all bring in ideas. Edgar was very open and very solicitous of input from all of us. I just don't ever, in 35 years, remember a cross word.

I put my foot down one time and that was when Edgar wanted to do a gospel piece. My objection was not that it was gospel, but it was so far removed musically from the norm that it

just was kind of like an eye sore. An ear sore. I felt strongly about that. I said what I thought, as did a couple other people and he decided to do it anyway and it worked out just fine. So it was that kind of relationship. We weren't best friends outside, but ultimately we all respected each other. We were all so different in our approach and in our priorities, but we saw the beauty and the value of what everybody did on their own turf and that's what it's all about.

Something I strongly believe is that you can't idolize people and not have it become your own. You take in what others do, it informs what you want to hear, but it can't be all you are. Finding your own voice is the essence of what we do. I see so many people that never find it. And that makes me sad because they're so worried about what people think. Somebody said to me once, "You know, Ingrid, that's because you've never had to worry about criticism." And I said, "No, it's that I *chose* not to worry about it." I know there are people out there that say, "If that woman gets up again I'm going to throw up." But you can't, you don't focus on that because then you lose your own voice. When you lose your voice you might as well do something else. And so, I've never felt discrimination. I never felt it because I chose not to look for it.

Old Boys Club Story

Miriam Bragsted found a seat in the convention hall, set her purse down on the empty chair next to her and opened up the shiny program. All the Aurelia Singers' names and their nation-spanning hometowns were listed, there was a nice picture of Ingrid, a brief description of the Aurelia Singers and their history, and the back page showed the beautiful Liturgia campus and its most recent choral recordings. No doubt someone on Jack's staff had put it together and, as always, the school looked impressive. When Miriam had called her last week, Ingrid sounded cheery and upbeat about the

performance at the regional convention. It was not their first invitation, but Ingrid had said, "Of course, it's always an honor." Miriam loved her friend, and knew the ensemble was fabulous. She couldn't wait to hear them.

She checked her watch and scanned the crowd of conductors taking their seats. Miriam heard loud laughter and banter behind her and recognized the three conductors making their way towards her.

"Did you hear University of Bethany this morning? Mike is really doing a nice job there."

She kept her face forward but listened as they sat in the seats directly behind her.

"I heard The Midwest Youth Choir last night, and frankly, they were awful. Their director, Miss Show-off, was all memorized but she danced too much, and the performance lacked rhythmic polish."

"Well, you know what I always say," his voice lowering as the Aurelia Singers walked onto the stage and the applause began. "The biggest problem with choral music in the Midwest is that there are too many women conductors."

As the old boys snickered, Miriam felt her ears get red. She clapped loudly as Ingrid walked to the center of the stage, her black palazzo pants swishing. You show'em Ingrid, Miriam thought into the expectant silence.

Miriam was the first on her feet after the final cutoff and the whole crowd stood to join her. They applauded the impressive and beautiful Aurelia sound, the singers, and their conductor. As she picked up her purse, she heard behind her, "Well, maybe there are a couple good ones."

"Damn right," Miriam muttered as she made her way towards Ingrid.

I've since reconnected with this fellow and was with him in another context where somebody asked him, "Well, who are the best conductors in the area these days?" And all three people he mentioned were women. So, there's hope.

I ask Ingrid about letting others guide her and lead her life.

I think my nature was this: I liked everybody, and I assumed everybody liked me. It was not a part of my process to wonder or not get along with people. I trusted people. And I particularly trusted people who knew more than I did. That came naturally to me because I came from a trusting, loving home. I was always satisfied with my spiritual life because of my music. So, I was never questioning or looking for something more. It makes sense to me that I would take the advice of people I admired because I took the advice of my parents and I really admired them. And so that helps in understanding why I let other people guide me because it had worked out before [*laughing*].

I ask if she can remember a time when she felt somebody trying to push her in a direction she didn't want to go, and she had to resist or push back.

No. I never did. Of course, my high school teacher was thrilled that I went to Concordia. And Paul J. was furious when I left after my sophomore year, but he came and worked with Jack's groups and stayed with us in Flatlands. So, that was all water under the bridge. And my voice teacher in Central was just hell-bent on Superior. This is how naïve I was. I think I didn't have to be a trailblazer because people were blazing a trail for me. Had I not had those people I suppose I would have fought for things more. I'm guessing I would have…but it never dawned on me that I would need to. My brain does not say, "I didn't get that because I'm a woman."

That may have happened along the way, under the table. But I just very rarely didn't get what I was supposed to get. I know that's highly unusual. I have women colleagues that are out conducting and they struggle. They're promised things they don't get, they feel like they keep applying for things and don't get them. They feel discriminated against, but I just have never had that experience. I have *never*.

I've always known that my life was directed. Forgive the pun. It was led not only by my teachers but by some other force, because I was never put into a position where I had to apply for something, where I had to compete for something, because I don't think I would have put myself in that position. For instance, if when I was teaching at Liturgia there had been a student run thing where they tried to get me out for some reason, I would not have fought it. And it's not because I don't believe in myself, it would be because if I had lost the confidence of other people, I wouldn't want to be in that position.

The bottom line is, put me in a good rehearsal and let's go from A to C. That's where I get my sense of worth, sense of value. It's not in the culmination or standing in front of people and conducting. I don't mind doing that, but that isn't what it's about for me. And so my perspective on that is a little bit different. I'm not a trailblazer, other than on a one-to-one with my female students, and hopefully more as a model than a blatant "this is how you should do it."

I remember students coming in, my girl voice students. They would say, "Mrs. Peterson, we're in the conducting class and we don't get the same amount of time that the guys do." Whether or not that was true, I don't really know. That was their perspective at a time when people were very cognizant of that relationship and the abuse of it. So, I said to the students, "Try not to play that card, the 'poor woman' card. Poor me, poor this. I understand that discrimination happens, that it's a reality. The point is, though, if you only get five minutes to

their fifteen, you make it the best five that you can make it. Don't blame it on other things. This was true for me: your work speaks for itself. You don't have to tell people how good you are. You don't have to say, 'I didn't get this or I didn't get that.' Just go in and be the best that you can be." And I really believe that to this day.

Eric Ericson once asked me, "Ingrid, do you ever feel like you're discriminated against because you're a woman?" I didn't expect that question from him. I said, "You know, I cannot say that I have." I just never looked at it in that context. I never felt it. I never had anybody direct anything toward me. But as I said, I'm naïve enough not to know.

I'm grateful for the women who were champions and made it easy for me. Truly grateful. That just isn't, it wasn't my purpose. And I would rather be in a room of four students talking about my craft than giving a lecture at Notre Dame about it. It's not right or wrong, it's just who I am. If you understand that about me, it will probably make things a little easier to understand.

I ask what she makes of those women's experiences.

I think it's absolutely true that that's their perception. And, I think it's an honest reaction to what they're feeling and sensing. There's a bitterness there. I can think of three people that really are good people. They get up right to the final few and never get it. In our conversations they'll say, "Well, the man on the board..." or insinuate that "there's some man who thinks I'm too strong." And I know that happens, I'm sure it happens. It's just out of my world. And I've never run into any male colleagues that I have felt treated me that way. Now, whether they thought it or not is another issue. And I don't care. That isn't a place I want to go.

I've been thinking a lot since the whole Kavanaugh thing came up [*referring to the hearings on Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination in the fall of 2018 in which Christine*

Blasey Ford testified and accused him of sexual assault]. People say, "Well, you know he was so young." And I get that, but when he put his hand over her mouth, that's a whole other level. I do think that's in a person's heart. I think there is a huge part of the male population that is that man. And I think there are men who aren't. And…in the worst scenario, I couldn't see the men I love doing anything like that because it wouldn't be in their heart. I've given this more thought in our current political climate than I ever have.

I know I'm off track, but it's all tied together. I do understand where my women conductor colleagues are coming from. Our field is ripe for certain kinds of problems. Problems with directors and their students and abuse of power, and all that kind of stuff. It's a place where it can happen because you're on a certain level with people. There's an intimacy and a vulnerability in the music making that allows a person to be caught off guard.

I ask if she ever guided or directed students in the same way that her teachers did for her.

What became more and more important to me as a teacher was not necessarily to guide my students' lives in terms of where they were going because, especially with Aurelia, they weren't yet at the stage of their life where they were making those kinds of decisions. My goal was for them to be the best human beings they could be and to help bring out their best. I remember I always talked to them about how it doesn't have to be about organized religion or going to church every week, but you have to be curious of spirit. If you don't have that, there's no way for you to be the kind of person you want to project into the world. You can't not think about things and expect to live the life that you truly, at your core, want to live. It was more important for me to see the strength in their character and in how they treated other people. I tried to help them feel good about themselves and know that they had something to offer and not

necessarily just with the music. I didn't do things outside of class with them. I wasn't going out with them to have pizza or do selfies. I wasn't that kind of teacher. But I can still tell you what they looked like in rehearsal and how I perceived them. When I see them back 20 years later and they say, "Do you remember me?" probably 9 times out of 10 I won't know their name, but I'll remember where they sat and their countenance during that year.

Of course, it was always in the context of women not being nice to other women. For me in the Aurelia Singers, that was very important. I saw a lot of the kind of behavior that starts when they're little. "I'm not gonna be your friend anymore." Or I would walk down the hall and someone would say something about somebody else. I remember specifically a few years ago when I did the women's choir at an All State. There was an East Indian girl in the bathroom who overheard two girls talking about her in a mean way. And I had a very poignant discussion with her about finding her core, understanding herself, so that she could forgive people who didn't have the capacity yet, hadn't had the life experience yet to embrace her. I told her, we all run across this. There are people who don't like us for our ethnicity or gender or personality or whatever.

Then I had a really fabulous talk with the two girls. I tried not to be unkind and I think they appreciated that. They didn't understand yet that words matter. That will always be true. It's true more today than ever that words matter and that people don't understand the consequences of what comes out of their mouths. Words need to be carefully chosen so that people can hear and understand what you say instead of react to it. And, of course, those girls were just oblivious. Nobody had ever called them on it. They were both just in tears. They were so regretful, and I knew it. These girls were talented in music and of all people they should have been magnanimous in their hearts.

I tried to teach people in those kinds of experiences. I tried to point out in a loving way how we could be loving people. I remember in voice class, it wasn't about how they performed, because I had people who couldn't match pitch and I had kids who had studied for years. It wouldn't have been fair to judge them on how well they sang. And so, after somebody would perform, I'd go around the class and I'd say, "Let's respond. What did you hear as this person sang?" It's very painful for them. I taught them how to say, "Here's what I loved about what you did," to start with something positive. And they would say, "Now I noticed that Mrs. Peterson mentioned this and I think that's something you could continue to work on. Let's talk about some exercises that would help." Or they'd say, "I have that problem too. I'm working on that same issue." So that they learned how to have conversation that was uplifting to people. It's so important not to hurt people and you wouldn't believe how challenged people are with that.

Sometimes I'd ask a kid for a comment and they'd say, "Well…" and make a face. And I'd say, "You're giving a message right there. If somebody asks your opinion, you don't tell them what your opinion is with your countenance. You need to be aware of how they're reading your face and how that affects them. If you're having a job interview, any time you're interacting with other people, this is a lifelong lesson that you'll learn. You need to learn how to speak in a way that's uplifting and positive and still true. It's about creating an atmosphere where people hear you. Because any little adjective can just set people off. I work on that all the time, still to this day. I think about that a lot, because I'm a person who wears what I'm feeling on my face. I have to be aware of that.

I ask Ingrid how she brought her desires for her students into her teaching.

It usually came through the text of the music. Or sometimes I would talk about my own challenges with young motherhood and career, some of the things that I faced and finding the balance in life: what's important and how you decide what's important. And there are fabulous texts that give so much room for musing on different things. So, I would say that's where it would start: from a text that we were doing.

This would be one example of the kinds of connections that I would try to make. I had one student who was anorexic. She came to me after the semester and said, "Mrs. Peterson, I have to leave school. And I have to drop Aurelia because I'm leaving to get help." I had no idea she was anorexic, but I gave her a big hug and said, "I'm *so* thrilled that you are getting help. Do me one favor. If you're strong enough when you return, come back and talk to Aurelia. I would love to have you do that." And she said, "It's a promise." Sure enough the next fall, she said, "Mrs. Peterson, if you still want me to come in, I'd be happy to do it." The girls are new in the fall, so I needed a couple months to gain their trust. Then I had her come in and talk about it. And it was really interesting because there wasn't a dry eye in the house. It wasn't because her story was so sad as it was, I found out later, that kids were either struggling themselves or knew of friends that were struggling and didn't know how to deal with it. She talked to them saying, "As a friend, here's what you need to do. This is what will help, and this is what won't." It was just a fantastic thing.

Those are the times that I think it's important to have a woman conductor for a women's group. Because…it just is. There's a different awareness. So that's what I tried to do, to be reflective of things happening in our daily lives and try to draw it in and connect it, to make safe places for them. We had lots to address. And we did.

I mention to Ingrid that when I observed her conducting and interacting with others, I noticed that she seems to be a caretaker. I ask her to tell me about that role.

That comes naturally from my mother. My mother was a servant spirit. It was a family where you make sure everybody else is comfortable. That was actually problematic sometimes in the sense that our feelings were always diffused through the comfort of others. In other words, if you felt angry about something, you diffused it into something else. I don't do well with conflict. I can be tenacious and people who don't know me well wouldn't necessarily say that about me. My students, maybe, would.

So, I think that's just part of my nature. My mom instilled that in us: to not let your head get big. There are other people out there who need attention more than you do. Just because you do something good, you don't need to draw attention. In a way she exemplified that. She was a woman of great faith and a pure heart, and that's how she lived her life. That was, in some way, impressive to me.

We jump to talking about balancing kids and family with her work.

We were able to balance it all because of my mom. Jack's parents had both passed away when we had our kids. My father died of a heart attack at 56. My mother never remarried or was interested in any other thing, other than her children. When the kids were little she moved to Riverview, so we had that luxury – she was there. Our kids very rarely had a babysitter. Jack was on a schedule. I was on a schedule. And mom had the kids. Jack and I could negotiate somewhat between the two of us, but she was always there. She did everything but live with us.

We were at the ACDA National Convention in Salt Lake City when mom died. It must have been four years ago. When we left home they said, "She'll be fine, she'll be fine." And then

we got a call that she wasn't doing well, and she may not make it through the night. We didn't make it in time, but the nurses said that our boys, Sam and Patrick, were there with her from the moment they got the call until the end. They sang hymns to her all day long and read scripture to her – that's her idea of a great time. Even though she wasn't responding, they took turns going home and getting a shower, but one was always with her because they loved her so much. She was such an integral part of their upbringing. They're both fine young men. They're thoughtful and considerate and always looking out for somebody else and that's all my mom. That was how we did it.

In that way, young moms with young children have it harder than we did. Because they have to find people to care for their kids and it could sometimes be someone you've never seen before and they live 15 miles away and you get desperate. And we just never had that. I'm remembering another story about mom.

Polished Shoes Story

Ingrid couldn't be sure but thought maybe it was the rhythmic brushing sound that woke her. She blinked into the night, her eyes focusing on the sliver of light coming from underneath her closed bedroom door. What day was it? Friday night? Or Saturday morning? That's right, they had a performance at the Rotary Christmas party the next day, the first one of the season. The memory of their rehearsal the evening before came back to her. Ingrid and her two brothers had practiced the Mozart as well as some Christmas carols, their mother sitting next to Ingrid on the piano bench, stopping Greg's teasing and encouraging all of them to play it through again.

It was not yet morning, Ingrid was sure. But what was that sound? She tossed back the heavy blankets, swung her feet over the side of the bed, and quietly crept to the door. The sound stopped for a moment. She heard water sloshing and then dripping. Then the brushing sound resumed. Ingrid carefully opened the door and tiptoed out.

The sound was clearer from here and she quietly made her way down the hall towards the living room. Before rounding the corner, she noticed three pairs of shoes lined up by the front door. Her black, patent leather Mary Janes were so polished that they reflected the light streaming from the living room. Her brothers' dress shoes looked almost as shiny and gleaming. They would wear their winter boots in the North Dakota snow, but Mom would hand the bag of polished shoes to Mrs. Weiss when she came to pick up the Hanson kids for the party. It was best if Mrs. Weiss carried the bag. The Hanson kids would be bound to lose it.

Ingrid lifted her eyes as the water sloshed again and caught the lemon scent of soap. She peeked around the corner to see her mother on hands and knees on the living room floor, sweat trickling down her hair line, pressing a soapy rag in sweeping circles into the floorboards. Her back was to Ingrid who watched her from the doorway. Her mother paused for a moment, standing on her knees, and brushed a stray strand of hair from her forehead. Ingrid quietly moved back into the hall as the scrubbing resumed and tiptoed back to her room. As she reached her bedroom she looked back and saw again the shining shoes waiting neatly by the front door.

So, when you say "caretaker" that's what I think of. That memory makes me cry. I haven't thought about that for 20 years, but it's a part of my fabric.

I recall Ingrid mentioning ADHD and ask if that is something with which she struggled.

I was never diagnosed because when I was a kid nobody had ever heard of that. I don't think I'm hyper. But my mother definitely had some obsessive-compulsive tendencies. You know, like if she bought a pair of shoes that she really liked, she would get them in every color. So, there was both the obsessive and compulsive side…and I certainly have that. One of my students said once, "You could spend three days on one measure." Which is true. That's the compulsive part, the ADD part because you can get hyper-focused, I think. You zone in on something. And for me it was sound and choral music. And where I feel the most in my element is in *a cappella* choral music.

I ask Ingrid what was hard for her over the years.

I think I've told you in our conversations that because of the way I was raised my nature is not to think about bad things that have happened in the past and bring them back into my life. This is problematic sometimes. I know I have a tendency to avoid conflict, for one thing. Growing up, we learned to diffuse any kind of negative feelings by turning those feelings into something else. Sometimes it was being compulsive about good housekeeping or zeroing in on my kids and their lives instead of thinking about myself. That didn't keep me from being self-critical, because I always am. I think it's the nature of those of us who are in the creative world to be insecure about our decisions. We wonder if we did the right things.

When my kids were very small, I worried about not being at home with them enough. But my self-doubt was more about my personal life than it was about music. I mean, I would sometimes think, "Was it good enough? Did I do well enough? Did people get something from this?" All those concerns that can overwhelm you. I just never allowed myself to feel negative in

response to the negative things that people were feeling or saying, either about my work or about me. I don't hang on to negative feelings. I don't recall those hard times. There's something in my psyche that doesn't pull those things up, because I know I couldn't deal with them if I had to. Not remembering, that's my own little coping mechanism.

I had health issues that were problematic at times. I was really in a lot of pain for many years before I got it under control. There were times when I would get up in the morning for an All State somewhere, like in Kansas, and just be totally incapacitated with pain. And I would have to push through in a way that only people with chronic, bad pain can understand. I just forced myself through it with a pain pill or a glass of wine. I forced myself through that time of chronic pain and came out on the other side. It was a struggle, but I don't have vivid memories of it. I know I should remember and I should probably deal with the memories, but I think I came to terms with it by talking to people over the years. I have come to grips with a lot of negative feelings. And, of course, alleviating the pain was a huge plus for me. So those are the memories for me. They aren't really about making music, because as much as you want accolades and you want people to say they liked your work, you do know you're making a contribution. As important as the music is, at my core I don't think I ever felt musical self-doubt. I was insecure sometimes, but I also was never put in situations of failure. I tell my children, "If you want your own kids to succeed, don't put them in a place where they're not going to succeed." I was never put in a position where I was unable to rise to meet the expectations.

I ask Ingrid what she wears when she performs and how she made those decisions.

When I was younger, I'd get clothes that were new for a performance. In my old age, I feel more pressure if everything's new. Now, I just like to wear things I have that I'm

comfortable in. What I wore at my last concert I'd had for 10 years from Chico's. I wanted a little splash of color because people always complain that I always wear all black, so I wore a red top under a black, drapey jacket. I would love to have a female version of a tuxedo: like blousy pants and a formal tuxedo style top, but without the confines of a male tuxedo because that would inhibit my conducting. A tuxedo shouldn't just be a male thing. I've often said I'd like to design something, you know, a top and a bottom. I would never wear a skirt. I would never wear high heels, ever. I want to be totally comfortable. I don't want my body to be encumbered anywhere.

I remember I had a one-piece jumpsuit that was kind of my staple. It was very plain, had a scoop neck, sleeves that closed at the wrist, and then a really wide-legged pant, almost like a palazzo pant. And then I remember spending a fortune on this wide gold and black braided belt. And that was my outfit. I think in the back of my mind I didn't want people to be looking at what I was wearing. I'm surprised at some women who wear more revealing or flashy outfits. In dressing for concerts I'm pretty gender neutral. I don't want to draw any attention to my body or have something cut out in the back, fitted, or tucked in the leg. I'm fairly modest in my dress. That's interesting, because it really is curious what some people pick. But you know, if it works for them that's the bottom line.

I ask Ingrid to talk about teaching and conducting in the Lutheran context.

My mother used to say to me, "Ingrid, you should be memorizing more verses from the bible." She was just a devotee of reading and studying the bible. She lived her faith, it was all important to her. I said, "Mom, I understand, but in the context of working and travelling so much, it is very difficult for me to be so purposeful about bible study. But I bet you that I

probably know as many bible verses as you do, from the music that I'm a part of. I could say every word for you." That was interesting to her, and she said, "Oh, gosh, I never thought about that."

I'll tell you, the Lutheran part of Liturgia wasn't so much about being Lutheran. It was a context of spiritual awareness. Being purposeful wasn't so much about God as it was about the spirit. I used to tell my choir girls, "We all come from different faiths, different belief systems, but the bottom line is you have to be curious of spirit. You have to understand how you project yourself into this world and how you treat other people. You have to reflect on what you want people to know about you, and think about you, and observe in you as a person. How will your presence in life be accounted for?"

One of the joys for me in teaching is helping kids understand how they can be better human beings and relate to people in a positive way through music. Music is my vehicle, but ultimately, I'm interested in the students. I like people. I like their stories. I like to hear about them. I truly enjoy that. I'm less comfortable talking about myself. And it's not a selfless thing. Do you know what I'm saying? It's not that I'm so selfless. It's just that I don't enjoy talking about myself as much as I enjoy getting into somebody else's head.

CHAPTER 5

SAMANTHA'S STORY: *No Crying on the Podium*

She sits in the conference center ballroom at a table on the small stage next to her fellow presenters. From the audience of about 150 people I see the top half of her short sleeved, square-necked, form fitting, maroon Ann Taylor dress. I guess at, but don't see, the signature high-heeled shoes crossed at the ankles behind the black, corporate tablecloth. Her brown hair is parted in the middle and hangs in careful waves around her face. Her look is professional, put together, and beautiful. The blue, white, and green lanyard holding the ACDA conference badge hanging from her neck matches everyone else's in the room.

Right at 11a.m. the session moderator introduces Samantha (mispronouncing her last name) and the three other men on the panel. They are leading a session on Raymond Magnus, a famous and beloved conductor and teacher at Meadowlands College. Meadowlands is a Lutheran school known for its choral excellence, and Samantha is the only one on the panel who is on the Meadowlands faculty. The session is well-attended with about one hundred and fifty people making the room full, but not crowded. As the session begins, Samantha rises briefly to turn on the slideshow – a series of pictures of Magnus with the presenters over the years – and then returns to her seat. When it is her turn she speaks articulately and concisely, mentioning her unique perspective as a former student, choir president, and colleague of Raymond's. She talks about his pedagogy, his approach to the individual voice in the ensemble, and how he valued people – music was really his vehicle to get to know individuals and communities. One of her fellow presenters awkwardly rambles at times, but the applause at the end of the hour is generous to all.

We have lunch planned together for our third (though first in-person) interview, so I pack up my bag and chat with fellow attendees as Samantha wraps up conversations with colleagues and friends. I'm laughing with her husband Greg when she comes over.

"Ready to go?" she asks.

Greg looks at his phone. "You've got the undergrad conducting master class at 1:30 and we can connect after that."

"Sounds good. Greg put all of our commitments into our Google calendar so we could keep everything straight," she says to me. "There's a lot going on."

"I bet," I say as we wave goodbye to Greg. "I know a good lunch place that's fairly close. Are you okay walking a little bit?"

"Oh sure, I can walk for days in these things. My feet may hurt at the end of the day, but I'll be fine."

As we walk into the cold Kansas City wind we chat about clothes, shoes, and the session she just led. We met in person for the first time yesterday in the exhibit hall when I was walking through looking for my friend's booth. Samantha had been standing and talking with Greg and two former DMA classmates, one of whom was my former Concordia classmate, Joel Anderson. She stopped me saying, "Here's someone I know."

"Samantha!" I said, giving her a hug. "It's so nice to meet you, or er, to see you!" Do you call it meeting when you know so much about a person and have shared hours of conversation via video calls in the last month?

I mentally note that the in-person conversation on our way to lunch feels different than the video conversations, and a little awkward at first. We put our jackets down at a table and wait in line to order our food. I tell her the fancy grilled cheese sandwich was really good yesterday.

"Oooh, that does sound good. I may get that." I swear about something and she laughs saying, "Oh, good, I can swear in your presence!" We head back to the table and resume the interviewing dynamic that is familiar to both of us.

What follows is a restorying of Samantha's narrative using data collected from all four interviews. I ask Samantha to give me an overview of her life and her path to becoming a choral conductor.

I was born in Illinois but was an army brat, so we moved all over. We were in Illinois until I was three, moved to California for a few years, and then to Oklahoma. But a lot of my formative elementary school years were in Germany. We lived on an army base there from 4th grade through 7th grade. I come from a pretty musical family. My parents always sang in church choir, and I remember I probably started singing in 1st grade. The first time I sang in the little kids' choir at church I remember wearing one of those white triangles with the big red bow, you know? My mom is a pianist and organist – I think she took some lessons but was mostly just self-taught. My grandmother also played piano but mostly by ear. My great-grandmother was a concert pianist and had a Carnegie Hall recital. She would take the train into Chicago to take lessons. This would have been just at the turn of the century. Both my parents played in band and my dad sang and did musicals in high school.

My dad's a doctor and my mom's a nurse. I was born when they were nineteen. Since I moved around a lot, I didn't get a chance to do a lot of lessons or anything, but music was powerful for me. I remember a definitive moment when I was in about 4th or 5th grade. My parents were in the church choir and they were singing the benediction in Ludkin's arrangement of *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*. They sang from the balcony, and when they got to the

"Amen" I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard in my life. Maybe a year later, in 5th or 6th grade, I remember my mom playing the Overture to [Handel's] *Messiah*. I had taken a few lessons before that, but I learned how to read the notes of the bass clef by trying to figure out that first page of the Overture, because I thought *that* was the most amazing thing I'd ever heard.

I was a big musical junkie. When we moved to Germany there was one TV station for the Armed Forces Network, so we watched a lot of movies and I watched a *ton* of musicals. I was really influenced by Barbra Streisand. I would mimic a lot. I listen to old home movies of me as a 5th grader and I think, "Oh my gosh, I was so musical!"

When I was in 7th grade I went to an honor choir festival in Germany. I wasn't in choir that year because I chose to take an art class, so I did band instead of choir. My band teacher did both the band and the choir at this 7th through 12th junior high/high school. There was an audition for the Armed Forces Network honor choir for all of West Germany. I raised my hand and asked, "If you're not in choir can you still audition?" And she said in front of the entire band, "You would have to be Julie Andrews to get in."

I didn't realize what it was at the time, but our audition piece was Barber's *Sure on this Shining Night*. I went into the little upstairs room that we had in our apartment building and practiced, sang my scales, made my own tape, and submitted it. And my best friend and I, we got in. They announced our names, and no other students. None of the high schoolers made it, but we made it as first sopranos! And with no help from my teacher.

That friend of mine from Germany was very musically involved. She had been taking piano lessons since she was little and could play the Chopin *Minute Waltz* as a 7th grader. She really stoked the fire of competition in me. So I was like, "I want to do this." We moved right

before 8th grade from Germany to the Northwest. I started taking piano lessons and voice lessons and trumpet lessons. I played in band and choir and did jazz choir. I just did as much as I could. I didn't really practice voice or trumpet very much at home, really only out of necessity, but I would usually be first or second chair because I could count better than the boys.

I was a kid that my parents had to kick off the piano. I loved it so much. I didn't have the skills early enough to formulate solid technique, but I could accompany my friends at Solo and Ensemble contest. I took pretty intense piano lessons in high school from a great teacher and she pushed me really hard. But it was just a little too late to be as good as I wanted to be. I remember in 8th grade my choir teacher asked me, "Do you think you could play the accompaniment for this piece?" It was a version of *Winter Wonderland* and I was like, "I can't play that!" But I was just such a huge people pleaser. I went home and I learned how to play it. I can still play about the first page of it. I accompanied the choir in high school and it was well beyond my skill level, but I really didn't want to say no. I wanted to be like this girl, Amy, who was two years older than me and totally beautiful, talented, and cool.

I was not a cool kid. My family was Evangelical Christian and I wanted to be Sandy Patty. Singing a lot of her stuff was very formative. I sang with praise bands, but I also did classical voice. I did a fair amount of competitions when I was in high school with music. Raymond (my Meadowlands mentor) used to like to tell this story about me. It's kind of dumb that I'm saying it, but we had Solo and Ensemble contest where you could win for the whole state. I won as the soprano when I was a junior [*laughing*].

I had some teachers who were really good for me in high school and who understood that we shouldn't try to push this voice too fast, too soon. And then I had other teachers who were not so protective and my parents really didn't know any different. I think they pushed my voice too

hard, too fast. In undergrad I really had to re-learn how to sing without pain, because I was singing Puccini's *Quando m'en vo* as a 15-year-old. I mean, that was just vocally inappropriate! I think I performed back then for the affirmation that I would receive, because I was not a very coordinated kid. I wasn't a very good-looking kid. I was chubby. But it was like, "This is my thing. I can sing."

I came into the choir as a sophomore (that's when high school started for us). I didn't realize it but [the director] Stan Fisher never let sophomore females into Concert Choir. You always had to wait until your junior year. He let me into the choir the first day of school as a sophomore. So, I don't think I made friends [*laughing*]. But I remember that as the class was starting, he played their recording of the Rachmaninoff *Ave Maria* from the year before. The previous year's singers started to cry because they had such an attachment to the piece. I thought, "That is the most beautiful thing I have ever heard."

When I listen to the recordings of my high school choir, both my husband and I still wonder, "How did he get us to do that?" The program was phenomenal. I was a section leader and my senior year everyone knew that I was interested in being an officer. But Stan pulled me into his office and said, "I don't want you to nominate yourself for an officer position. I'd like for you to be my assistant conductor."

In the winter of my senior year of high school, unbeknownst to us, Stan was looking for other jobs. He took a leave of absence and asked me to conduct the choir while he was gone. I conducted the rehearsals every day for three weeks and I think maybe I did the jazz choir too. That's what sort of did it [got me hooked on conducting]. I don't know if it was completely appropriate, but he would sometimes ask me things like, "Okay, I'm casting the jazz choir. What do you think about these baritones?" And he asked me about my husband [*laughing*]. He said,

"What do you think – between these two guys?" I told him, "Well, I think Greg's a big partier. I don't think you should have him [*laughing*]."

I ask Samantha why she thinks Stan chose her, gave her so much responsibility, and sought out her opinions.

I think he knew that if he'd send a section away with me, like the entire soprano and alto sections, I would get the job done. From an early age it made sense to me, how to teach people things in a way that would help them learn. I could expedite the process. I think that was because I had really great band teachers. I was the kid who, at the end of 9th grade, gave my band teacher a notebook with all the funny sayings that he used. Even now I'll say to a festival choir, "Immature musicians always rush." That's what my 8th grade band teacher told me [*laughing*]. I was just a sponge.

Stan left in March of my senior year and Dana Schultz came and replaced him. She actually had me conduct when we went on tour and for our recording in the spring. I kind of knew what I was doing gesturally. I understood the patterns. But Stan was really big on conducting the shape. I remember complaining to him later on when I sang with William Jones at Northwest Lutheran College (NLC). I told him, "I can't believe it. He just conducts the pattern [*laughing*]."

I ask her what literature she remembers conducting or singing in high school.

We did Schumann's *Gypsy Life*. I begged Stan to program it because I had sung it in the honor choir in Germany and I was so excited to conduct that. We did *The Seraglio Garden*, a set of three pieces by the Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammer. We did *Zum Gali*, the Gould, I

think, and the Gretchaninoff *Nunc Dimittis*. Oh, we did Erb's *Shenandoah*, but Dana might have brought that. I remember my sophomore year that *Little David* was the first piece and we did *The Lord is my Shepherd*, the old one with the organ. My music was so marked up, I just was like, "Feed me! More! [*laughing*]"

I ask what she enjoyed or felt when she conducted for the first time.

I loved creating music to provide an out-of-this-world experience for an audience. It was captivating that that happened through me. I'm not directly facing the audience, but I'm sort of a satellite. And the connection that I felt with people, with the choirs specifically. The connection that you have with those individuals is probably even more powerful than what it does for the audience.

Even though I loved it, I still decided to do vocal performance in college. I was supposed to go to Meadowlands College, which I had heard about through Stan, but I just didn't want to move from a more urban area out to the middle of nowhere. I had a boyfriend (my now husband) and that was also a big pull not to go. We've known each other since the 8th grade but didn't start dating until the last couple of weeks of our senior year of high school. He was in community college and his house was only about 10 miles from NLC. But a big reason I didn't go to Meadowlands right away is because there is no choice: you're automatically put in the first-year treble choir. And I did not want to do that, I really didn't. Even though I was a performance major, choir was all that really mattered to me. I was not excited about having to be in what is now Bella Voce, which is hilarious because now I conduct it. Sometimes I do tell my students that story.

So, I went to NLC and sang under William Jones and it was just a very intellectual, left-brain approach to the music. The music that he programmed was really heady. We even had Eric Ericson come and work with us and I remember we did all this really difficult, avant-garde, 20th century stuff. I didn't like the way he wanted us to sing, but mostly I did not like his conducting gesture. I just didn't feel like he was as musical as we needed to be. And, of course, there was no real connection to music making a difference in our lives as human beings or being a vehicle for us to be able to express all that we needed to in that formative, 18 to 22-year-old angsty life. I'm not a touchy-feely person or a crier, but I needed that through choir. And I didn't get it.

January of my freshman year I got sick with the flu and it sounds cheesy, but I felt like God was saying, "This is not where you're supposed to be." I knew that my husband and I might break up if I said we should go to Meadowlands, but it just so happened that the Meadowlands Concert Choir came through on tour. We went to the concert and Greg did his audition for Raymond that night. Raymond said, "I can give you money, and we're going to Russia next year." And Greg said, "I'm sold." So, that did it. He never actually stepped foot on the campus before deciding to come here.

At Meadowlands I majored in vocal performance, but once I took my student conducting courses I decided to add all of the music education requirements. I came out of Meadowlands doing everything that I could for both vocal performance and music education, even though we don't really have two different degrees. Greg decided to be a music major, too, despite having very little skills. It was all because of our high school choir experience. It changed our lives and … I think that was my impetus to becoming a conductor. Singing as a solo artist has meaning for me personally, but I think the amount of people I can reach and change their lives through music or be the vehicle through which their lives can be changed is significantly higher as a conductor.

My high school experience was the pivotal experience for me. Raymond and I would talk about this because oftentimes I was a little disappointed in my Meadowlands experience. It was not the quality – it was that I had had that mountaintop experience already.

After Meadowlands I taught for six months in the rural Midwest at a K-12 school and then for three years in a suburban high school. It was in a huge district and I loved it. But the third year I was there I had vocal nodules. I was singing in a professional group. I was taking lessons and trying to do everything. And that stopped me and made me reevaluate. Greg, who's also a choral conductor, and I decided this might be a good time for us to pursue a master's degree.

We met Scott Danielson at a conference. We were interested in going to a place where I could do both vocal performance and conducting. So, we went to Scott's program at Southwest State University. I found out I was pregnant two days before we were packing and loading the van to go to our master's program. We had been married for three years at that point, but I was horrified. I thought, "Oh, I'm so irresponsible [*laughing*]." So, Emma was born when we were doing our master's. Then I was able to come back to Meadowlands from 2002-2005 and had an alumni lectureship in voice. I was so arrogant at the time because I said I would only take the lectureship if Raymond let me conduct a choir [*laughing*]. Raymond gave me Melodia, which is a treble choir here at Meadowlands. I did that for three years and our second daughter, Faith, was born. My brothers both ended up going to Meadowlands, and I overlapped with my brother, Justin, during that time. Justin is one of these people that you hear them talk and you're like, "Oh my gosh, you need to sing. You're just so obnoxiously loud and resonant." We always told him that. I remember one time he told me – this is so dumb – he said "I am not gonna do choir! Like, if your sister is Michael Jordan, you don't play basketball [*laughing*]!" Anyway, during those

three years at Meadowlands I decided that university teaching was what I wanted to do forever and knew that I had to go get the doctorate for that.

Greg and I both went to Southern University for our DMA's with Reggie Johnson. When we made that decision he told us we would each have assistantships. Then, when it came down to it, they gave me an assistantship but not Greg. By that time we had sold our house, quit our jobs and bought a house near Southern. Greg ended up taking a part time, well, 0.8, teaching job that first year. The education portion of things at SU was fantastic, but some of the collegial relationships were terrible.

Giving it Away on Looks Story

It had been a long afternoon on the Southern University Campus. It was August and the temperature on her car dashboard had read 98 degrees at noon, but it looked even hotter now. Samantha stood around with the other new graduate students outside of the music library, drinking the tail end of her iced coffee while everyone talked and tried to figure out the pecking order. She checked her watch. Greg had left the meeting early to go pick up the girls at their new day care. He was still about 15 minutes from coming back to get her. She was ready. Once they were released from the long library orientation it didn't take long for the egos to start bumping into each other. This was a performance degree, and the sooner they knew who was best and where everyone else stood, the better.

"Okay, so who got the assistantship with Dr. S. and the University Chorus?" Richard asked.

"I did," said Todd. "Auditions start this week, and I hope they're good because Dr. S. said I could conduct Lauridsen's Mid-Winter Songs *this year."*

Samantha internally rolled her eyes, but smiled and said, "That's a great piece."

"Who got the assistantship with the early music ensemble?" asked Jake.

"That's me," said Richard. "I can't wait to get started." Samantha had guessed that spot was Richard's. The fact that he had already mentioned Baroque performance practice was a dead giveaway.

"Well, who got Dr. Johnson's group?" Todd asked, looking expectantly at Jake.

Samantha spoke up. "I'm Dr. Johnson's TA with the Southern Choir."

All heads swiveled to Samantha. Jake looked surprised for a moment, then smiled and said, "Oh, well, I guess they were giving it away on looks."

Samantha's stunned silence is covered by Todd and Richard's laughter.

The moment to respond passes as the group begins to break up and move towards the doors. The guys decide to go get a beer in the University district nearby, and Samantha says goodbye as she heads to the spot where Greg and the girls will be waiting. While she walks, she plays the encounter over and over in her head. Are you kidding? Did he hear how demeaning and dismissive he was? The most ridiculous part was that she knew he meant it as a compliment. She starts thinking of a hundred different retorts, all the things she could have said. As Greg pulls up with the girls in their car seats, she says to herself, "Well, I will make it my mission for the next three years to absolutely squash him in every way possible." All she has to do is be better than all of them.

I definitely felt that you had to do things better. And there was no way that I was going to show frustration, or anger, or – heaven forbid – cry in front of them. Never. I felt like it was good for me. I mean, is it a textbook case of misogyny? Yeah. But was it something I needed to do? Oh, yeah. I don't think I'd trade that experience for an easier road. And Reggie didn't stop that kind of thing. There were lots of inappropriate jokes and stuff like that. I have two brothers and I always kind of considered myself kind of a guy's girl, so that didn't bother me too much. Gosh, that was fourteen years ago. I don't think that would fly now.

When we were finished with our coursework it was at the low point of the financial crisis and we could not find two jobs in the same area. At that point we had a five-year-old, a three-year-old, and an infant. Kyle was born while we were at SU. So, we found two full-time church jobs. Mine was at the largest Lutheran church in the state and it was really attractive to be in an amazing space with a lot of resources. It took us about a year or so to realize that was not what we intended to do, though. So we decided to make our own job. We started an organization called Musical Arts Southwest. We started out with a semi-professional orchestra and choral ensemble. We had some people in our different churches that helped us create the non-profit organization and the board of directors. We just found that there was a niche in that area for emerging artists and entry level professionals who might not be going to the local university or might not be good enough to play in the city symphony, but who wanted to play.

Greg and I basically just sat around over wine and said, "What do you want to program?" Our first season was Schubert's *Unfinished*, the Mozart *Requiem*, and *Pictures at an Exhibition*. We did the *St. John Passion* a few years later. I did Mozart's *Mass in C minor* because we had the venues with our churches. Once we put out the call that we wanted to do great music and we could pay, we were able to add a children's component of children's choirs and youth orchestras.

Always the dream for me – though I'm not sure for Greg – was, "We have to hurry up and get these DMA's because Jason and Linda [the married couple in two of the three choral conducting jobs at Meadowlands] are not going to stay there very long and we're going to come back and take their spots." And then they left at different times and it was like, "You've ruined my plans [*laughing*]!" Jason left a few years into our church and Music Arts Southwest jobs, so I applied for his job. I had a video interview but didn't move beyond that. The following year Linda left and I got her job. A friend of mine who was on the committee told me later that they had wanted me to come on campus to interview that previous year, but the president of the college said that because the job included the men's choir, they would not allow it. He told me that after I'd already accepted the position, but I almost decided not to come and teach here, because that's ridiculous.

I ask her to tell me about sharing her profession with Greg.

When I got hired at Meadowlands the kids and I moved to Hillside but Greg had to stay behind. He had multiple interviews for a great job close to Hillside and he was flown out twice. Two weeks after I was here with the kids by myself, he didn't get it. We had thought, "This is how we're going to make it work," and then suddenly there was nothing. In this area, if you don't work at Meadowlands maybe you would work at the co-op or Walmart, but we're talking about minimum wage jobs. We were in a rough financial position and just couldn't afford to have one of us without work. Meadowlands was completely unbending with providing any sort of position for Greg, which is interesting to me because I now have a colleague who conducts Centurymen [the men's choir at Meadowlands] and his wife has been offered numerous positions. We talked about it in a faculty meeting, that people can't wrap their minds around a

trailing male spouse. Even in a progressive place like Meadowlands, they just can't. He applied for jobs that are well beneath his skill level – secretarial work, practically, $19,000 a year jobs, and they wouldn't hire him. I felt like in a way – I'm totally projecting, it's probably just my own guilt of bringing the kids out here by myself – that they were saying to me, "Well, you did this." He stayed back for a year and a half and I was here with the kids. Then he got a job at Astoria University about a hundred miles away. Finally, two years ago he got the job at Turin College, so he commutes about 50 miles. It took a long time [for him to get a job close by] and we spent three years living apart.

Greg and I talk pretty openly about how I have some animosity towards him. Our master's program was okay, but as an undergrad I was accepted to Oberlin. I was looking at going to a conservatory or going to New York for a master's degree. Mostly with our master's I felt like I could have gone to a way better school than that. But it seemed like we always needed to do this journey together. That's been tricky.

It's been good, actually, that we teach at different institutions because he needs to be able to do his own thing without me trying to overshadow him. Which I would…probably even intentionally, I would do that. I took the strengths finder test and I feel like a horrible human being because my number one strength is competition. It's kind of a curse. We worked well starting our non-profit after grad school, but it was difficult because I sort of felt that I needed to build him up, to give him the big gigs to conduct. I think when people looked at the organization they would think he was the primary conductor. I've found myself falling into that trap which I see in a lot of husband and wife conductor teams. You don't see a lot of the husband being the supportive figure and the wife having the big career. I found myself falling into that and it really bothered me because I didn't want to do that.

He would say I am the stronger musician. I'm a pianist, he's not really a pianist. I've done the solo singing stuff, he hasn't really done that. But I think I always felt like I have to be careful not to outshine him. I think he always felt like I had a leg up on him, but he doesn't understand that just by being a man he has a leg up on me all the time. It's interesting to watch because he's taken a career path of, "I'm not going to teach at such big institutions or big programs, but I'm going to be the head person." And it's very interesting to see how that really changes things. Unless as a female you decide, "I'm going to be a DCA immediately," it's very difficult, I think, to get into that role.

I had a little personal crisis earlier on this year because Greg was asked to do a Carnegie Hall event, and I was like, "Are you kidding me? No! You cannot get something big like that before me [*laughing*]!" I've done All States and I teach at Meadowlands, and I'm not being asked to do that. I think it's because he's the head person. He's great and he's really good at what he does. It's terrible for me to say that it's only because he's a man. It's not. But, the more that I'm in this collegiate world, the more that you notice that it's just still an old school world.

I ask her to tell me about her position at Meadowlands.

When I first started, I took the choirs and classes that Linda had been conducting and teaching which are Bella Voce, Chapel Choir, and Beginning Conducting. Bella Voce is our hundred voice (106 this year) first year, treble ensemble. Chapel Choir is almost exclusively sophomores. So, I did that for my first four years. And then when my colleague Matthew took the Concert Choir/DCA position I asked if I could conduct University Singers which is the junior and senior mixed ensemble. I now conduct University Singers instead of Chapel Choir, and it's about a hundred voices. With that I also asked if I could teach Advanced Conducting instead of

Beginning Conducting. I don't know that it was an intentional move at Meadowlands to have the conductor of Centurymen also teach the more advanced level courses, but that's always the way it worked out, so this is a shift. And, for the last five years I've also taught the Vocal Pedagogy course.

I note that with the changes she requested when Matthew switched positions, she is essentially the second conductor in the hierarchy, and moved up. I ask her about the hierarchy in the choral department.

One of the things that I don't like about Meadowlands is that we have this Director of Choral Activities role. That's a relatively new thing that's happened since Raymond retired. Raymond and Jason and Linda [the previous choral conducting faculty] were all very equal entities. Of course, from an outsider's perspective, maybe not, but not having that position allowed for more flexibility. I think it's a shame that Meadowlands bought into the idea that we need to have that sort of structure, especially since we don't have a graduate component. This is the only area where you have tenure track individuals in a subservient role really throughout the entire institution. Even in the vocal area there is a rotation of who conducts the opera. I know at other schools there's a rotation of who conducts choral/orchestral works in the concerts. There is still very much a hierarchy with our conductors that I wish wasn't present. Because of how these positions were structured for so long, those who conduct the women's choir were always put in sort of a lesser role. To try to get yourself out of that you have to go to a different institution.

In general, it's a good collegial relationship and luckily, I work with a good colleague who understands what it's like to be in this position and how important these other choirs are to the success of the entire program.

I ask if there was a specific time when she felt the hierarchy or that she was in a subservient role.

Saying 'No' Story

She feels her face get red and blood pressure rise as she reads the email:

> *"Dear Matthew and Samantha,*
>
> *I couldn't help but notice as I walked by yesterday that only one of the Messiah movements was listed on the board for your rehearsal agenda. I'm concerned that this work is not getting the preparation time that it needs."*

That was obviously my rehearsal, Samantha thinks, and of course there was only one movement listed. We are trying to get ready for our own tour (with two hours less rehearsal time every week than his group has!). Not to mention the fact, she seethes, that at Bella Voce and Chapel Choir's level if I tried to do Handel every day they would die. They'd absolutely hate it. She continues reading:

> *"As you know, Meadowlands has had a long-standing tradition of performing Messiah, and this is a particularly beloved work to our community. Raymond has told me personally how thrilled he is that we are performing it once again. I'd like the three of us to meet Thursday to discuss the importance of this project. And, please know that for the next week I'm planning to come in to your rehearsals and will rehearse Messiah for half of the time. That should leave you plenty of time to rehearse your tour pieces."*

The nerve. Bella Voce and Chapel Choir were her ensembles. Samantha's rage propels her out of the chair, and she walks in tight circles around her office, considering how to

respond. After two minutes she slows her breathing, sets her jaw, and sends a quick email to the department chair asking for a few minutes of his time. Then, she carefully replies to Mark and Matthew simply saying she would be happy to meet. There is no way she's going to let them know he got to her.

On Thursday afternoon, promptly at 2p.m., Samantha walks down the hall to Mark's office, finding Matthew already seated there. After some pleasantries Mark begins.

"…so because our first performance is just a couple weeks away, starting on Monday I'll come in either for the first or second half of your rehearsals – you choose – and I'll make sure each ensemble is in a good place."

Samantha takes a calm breath and begin her response. "Actually, Mark, no. I am not going to have you come into my classes. But we will be prepared, I give you my word as a colleague," she said calmly. Matthew looks at her and then back at Mark.

Mark's eyes widen for a moment, then he smiles and says in a leveled tone, "Well, I'm just going to have to pull the Director of Choral Activities card and say this is what I feel is best."

Samantha leans forward, almost imperceptibly, and with steely calm says, "No. These are my classes. I checked with the department chair and you do not have the right to do that."

She glances over at Matthew who looks like he wants to crawl out of his skin.

"Matt, if you wouldn't mind, maybe Mark and I can have this conversation ourselves," she says, giving him an out.

"Oh, no problem," he says, hurrying from his seat and not looking for Mark's approval as he leaves the room.

"I know you have been burned in the past by other people not preparing things well," she continues, "but you have to trust me. You don't understand that these kids are sometimes performing at a lower level because you're over-rehearsing and they're bored. It's a very difficult balance that I have to have with so many non-majors in there and I have to be able to feed it to them in very specific ways. So, I'm sorry. They'll be prepared but I'm putting my foot down."

Mark sits for a moment, then takes off his glasses saying, "You know, I'm disappointed." Tears fill his eyes as he looks at her from behind his desk. Samantha is fully aware that crying in this situation is not an option for her.

"I'm really saddened that you don't trust me. You know that I respect you and when people ask me who they should hire for a female conductor to come and do a festival or something, I recommend you. I mean, I am a huge fan of yours," Mark says wiping his eyes.

"Mark, I respect you, too, you're a brilliant conductor. But trust me when I say that Bella Voce and Chapel Choir will be ready."

Samantha's shoes click on the tiles as she walks back to her office a few minutes later. I may be on the bottom rung of this hierarchy, she thinks, but I'm not giving up all my power.

I don't usually let people know, but as a kid I was bullied. I learned that you can't let the bullies know they're getting to you, otherwise you're screwed.

There was another time when I really had to push back and stand up for myself. It was Palm Sunday and my boss was very particular about the timing of services. Services needed to be 50 minutes long and no longer because of parking issues. Well, we did a whole processional on *All Glory, Laud and Honor* with bells and brass and kid's choirs. My boss looked at his watch after the eight o'clock service and said, "You have to cut verses because we're running too long." And I was like, "We can't." He was like, "Just do it!" I followed him outside where he was greeting the congregation, and I said, "You know we really can't –" and he took his bulletin and he HIT me on the arm with it. He was like, "Don't talk to me about this right now!" So, I went to the choir room and he was talking to me and I walked away while he was talking. I went to go get the choir ready and he came in, and my oldest daughter was right in front of me as a part of the kid's choir, and he grabbed my arm. He said, "Don't you ever walk away from me." I told him, "Get your hand off me right now," and I walked out. There was a little hallway that connected my choir room from the narthex which is bookended by two doors and I told him, "You ever touch me again and I will sue you. Do not touch me." And he was like, "Fine. You try to do that, and you'll be gone." Anyway, that was one time where I said you don't treat me like a dog, hit me with a newspaper, grab my arm and threaten me. And, I didn't change the piece, we still did the whole thing. I just thought, "Forget it. Kiss my ass. It's Palm Sunday for heaven's sakes [*laughing*] – I have a little kid's choir that's going to mess up if you change their hymn, okay?"

Last summer I had vocal surgery and I had to be on total vocal silence for six weeks. That really changed my perspective on what's important. That, plus the fact that my oldest is a senior. I just looked around and thought, "Samantha, start living your life. Stop opening up the *Choral Journal* and having a panic attack because you're not doing enough. Start uplifting other women

instead of being jealous when you look on Facebook and thinking, 'Why has she got that gig?' And 'I'm tired of seeing Opal and Lydia. There are other female conductors out there! Just stop and start enjoying what you do.' I suppose that's been kind of like my mantra lately when I run. Enjoy what you have. I feel like you'll be rewarded if you let go of that bitterness.

Though she has mentioned many, I ask Samantha to tell me about her mentors and what kind of approach to music they modeled.

Stan Fisher (my high school teacher) would be one of my top mentors. Through him I got this sense that music-making is the vehicle for changing lives and people, for helping them open up. Music is how we get to the commonality and community that we're all striving for. Without that it wasn't interesting to me. And that's why the solo performance – I love to do it, but it doesn't hold the same place for me. He would be the first one.

Raymond, of course. Raymond really made the connection with faith and music-making. He was vulnerable all the time and would immediately go for the emotion of the piece. That is not my style, but he was amazing. He also had great rehearsal technique. You had every confidence that there was no one who knew that music better in the room than he did. I didn't always agree with him, but you know how it is when you're just a budding conductor. I think there are two different types of people who come out of their institutions. You either feel like, "I want to come back here and teach because it meant so much to me and I need to be able to fall in line with that tradition," or you come back here with that idea that, "Maybe I could do it better [*laughing*]. I like what you're doing, but maybe I could do this." I was that way. Yet, the more that I do this whole art I realize how ingenious Raymond actually was.

In graduate school Scott Danielson was a fantastic advocate for his students and still is. He is my mentor for how I want to be as a teacher. Raymond was fantastic with that too, but if he didn't feel like you had the chops, it was very difficult to change his mind about what you can do professionally. Luckily, I fit into the group of students that Raymond really believed in. Scott, on the other hand, knew that it was beneficial to the institution and to his being able to recruit other students to have his former students do great things. I always know that I can call on Scott and he'll support and advocate for me.

Reggie Johnson is a mentor for me because he is the polar opposite of everything else I've ever experienced. There is no touchy-feely aspect to music and there was much more fostered competition in his program. No one in the room ever worked harder or knew the music better than he did. That was really inspiring to me. As a woman it was good for me to know that I can hold my own in a group of 25 other mostly doctoral, mostly white, male students. It was good for him to light that fire. I've always been relatively competitive, but he stoked that monster in me. There was something about his language with me. He would say, "Your musical will is so strong and you know what it is that you want to hear. Now we just need to make the gesture as effective as it can be." He encouraged me to be competitive, I think, by putting me as the TA for the top graduate choir. Like, "Okay, now you know you will be conducting Jeff McMillan [another great student], and you're my second. They're all watching and waiting for you to fail. So don't do it. You gotta be better than everybody." I think he was very realistic with the idea that he was going to treat the females equally in the sense that he was going to push us all. He knew that the men are, in many ways, waiting for you to crumble. So, there's no crying on the podium. If you get frustrated, just keep going at it. He really didn't give us any props for being women. He would push you almost to the point where you felt humiliated in front of the class

sometimes. It felt like this was the baptism by fire: that you needed to be able to take this because if you're in front of an orchestra and your trombone player is like, "What? Can you give me a clearer beat one?" You have to be able to take that kind of stuff. I think he did a good job of imitating what that would be like.

Unfortunately, I don't really have any female mentors. I think that's where the mentoring ends.

I ask if she considers herself a mentor to her own students.

In the last two years I have felt a sense of calling that I need to be that for my students. And so, I try to do that even if they don't ask. Especially the female conductors because I didn't have that. I asked to be able to conduct University Singers and teach Advanced Conducting because in my institutional memory there has never been a female in that advanced conducting position. Well over 50% of our music education majors are women and they need to see women in higher areas of the institution. So especially in the last year, I've really consciously told my students, "It's important for me to create these opportunities for you." I do have a finalist in a conducting competition this year. I try to push them to do more than they think that they can. It's very surprising to me that here at Meadowlands we have, say, 30 undergraduate choral music majors and I'll say, "Okay, for our last day in Advanced Conducting I'm going to let you conduct this movement of the Brahms *Requiem* that we did for Meadowlands Christmastide. Who wants to do it?" And it's not the women who stand up. I think I am doing something wrong if they are not standing up. So, I try to create assistant conductor positions for Bella Voce and get them in to sub for my church job. Not that I wouldn't do that for a male student either, but they will have an easier road anyway.

I ask her about a time when one of her mentors tried to draw her out or encourage her or push her in a similar way.

I've always been so intensely competitive and self-directed, that, if anything I feel like some of my teachers had to say, "No. Stop." For example, in my master's degree we recorded all of the women's choir music that Libby Larsen had written up to that point. She came out and worked with us a couple of times. There were two grad students who were working with that choir. Scott encouraged us to write an article on this process to submit for publication to the *Choral Journal* and my colleague would not do it. She just wouldn't get it done. And I remember sitting in his office and saying, "Well, maybe I'll just do it myself and send it in." And he was like, "That would not be a good decision [*spoken slowly*]." He said, "Do not go around me on this." So, I think sometimes I was more aggressive than what some of my teachers have wanted. In the DMA process, though, Reggie Johnson would just stoke that fire, sort of the monster in me [*laughing*].

I feel like if anybody really pushed me at a formative time, it was Stan during high school. I've always been a student that watched my conductors and thought, "I don't really quite understand how they can stand up in front of a group and listen to everything and know what's wrong or how to fix things." That was always kind of amazing to me. But the process of conducting or teaching a piece, I thought, "I could do that [*laughing*]." I did always feel like I could diagnose the vocal faults and correct those. I could do that at a very early age, like a high schooler. And I think I was just kind of too big for my britches.

I ask her about the "too big for my britches" comment. I refer to when she said she was "so arrogant" because she told Raymond she would only take the apprenticeship position if he let her conduct a choir. I ask her to tell me about another time when she was arrogant.

While I was in my first big, suburban teaching job, there was a great choir director who left his position in a huge program to go get a master's degree. I marched into the principal's office and said, "I want to take his job. I want you to consider moving me up to that." I don't know if that was arrogance so much as advocating for myself. But they said, "No, you're too young." Which is like, illegal. It's funny because they interviewed a person who, for some reason, walked on the chairs during his audition. He was just putting on this show and even asked the kids, "How old do you think I am?" And I thought, "Are you serious? You're thinking of hiring this joker and not me [*laughing*]?"

I suppose I'm the kind of person who, if someone asked, "Who wants to conduct this movement of the Brahms *Requiem*?" I would be the first person to raise my hand.

Grabbing the Books Story

"Believing in yourself is simply an attitude. Believing in yourself is a choice," he assures the crowd.

Samantha sighs, crosses her legs the other way and subtly checks the time. She's grateful they're seated on the aisle of the suburban hotel ballroom in case they want to cut out early, but the air conditioning was cold at the edge. When Greg had suggested they attend the Jack Canfield seminar for entrepreneurs she consented, agreeing it might be good for them as they launch Musical Arts Southwest. Neither of them had much experience in the business world and Canfield, the Chicken Soup for the Soul *guy, might*

have some good ideas. Of course, much of their "One Day to Greatness" experience so far had been filled with prompts to sign up for the "Private Mastermind Retreat" that no doubt cost $10,000 per person. But he was entertaining and had a way of making the clichés inspiring. Samantha starts wondering if he's really as extroverted as he seems or if he, like her, has a different persona for when he's in front of a group.

She's pulled out of her thoughts by the silence in the room. "These books changed my life," Jack says again with intensity, holding them up for the group to see. "Now I want to know: Who wants their lives changed? Who wants these books?"

Silence again. Samantha looks around as a few tentative hands in the group of 500 start to rise. She feels a jolt of understanding as she looks back at Jack. She knows what he's waiting for someone to do. Who's the person who's actually going to get up – who wants *it?*

Samantha startles Greg by throwing her purse in his lap as she rises. She moves towards the stage stairs, picking up speed. As she runs up the steps, she hears her shoes pound on the plywood floor, but she doesn't slow down until she reaches Jack and grabs the books from his hands. She hears a few gasps from the crowd as she turns.

"That's the one who wants it," Jack says. He begins to clap.

"Oh my gosh – are you crazy?" Greg says as the applause die down and she returns to her seat with the books. Samantha just smiles. "I see your Jedi mind tricks, Jack Canfield," she thinks.

"I changed my mind," Greg teases on the way to their car a few hours later. "You running up there should not have surprised me. It completely encapsulates who you are."

I ask Samantha to tell me about her Meadowlands students.

I love the Meadowlands student that is so excited to be here. It's different from other places that I've been. They're just very joyful to be in the middle of nowhere, completely focused on this Meadowlands experience. It takes a special type of student to want to do that. I remember the first time I took part in the auditions at Meadowlands, in walks this 6'6", 300-pound linebacker who played football here. He had never made it into a mixed choir because his intonation was a little wonky. And so I asked him to talk to me about football because the choir rehearsal time would conflict with the team and he said, "Oh, yeah, I play football, but if I make it into the choir, I'll quit [*laughing*]." That captures what Meadowlands is like.

I did not have as joyful of a Meadowlands experience as my students do. Sometimes I'll tell my students about it. I was in the Concert Choir for three years, my senior year I was the choir president, and I think I had the worst attitude of all of them. I came from such a big high school that Meadowlands felt very high school-ish to me. So, there are some things that I'm mindful to try to create for my students. I try for a more professional, higher-level experience for them and less of the happy-clappy high school stuff we leave behind. I really love everything that I get to do and teach here. There's no, "Oh, but I have to teach this class." I find myself very fortunate that way.

I ask her about moments or accomplishments in her career of which she's really proud.

Some of my proudest moments are even just teaching our middle school summer choir camp. I love those children. I have colleagues who say, "Oh, bless you for wanting to do the 300-voice middle school choir." But I would be nowhere else than right there for that week. I love them. I love teaching. It doesn't matter what age it is. I love the wonder of the human being –

seeing on their faces that they didn't know that they could make that sound [*laughing*]. The first time I conducted that middle school summer choir, I left the concert and cried in my car because I loved them so much. So that's one of them.

I've been really proud of the thematic programming I've done for the last six years at Meadowlands. I know it isn't out of the box anymore, but it's a way to differentiate my groups from the others. I wanted to do something so that we don't look like the JV choir, so I started programming thematically. I take an idea and try to have it make sense as far as momentum and program in a way that there's no applause, there are just interjections or snippets of text. I've done a number of different themes. My first year was "Out of Darkness, Light." I knew that this was hitting home by about the third year when my colleagues would come to me and say, "Oh my gosh, I had another kid say, 'What's our theme this year?'" And they say, "That's Dr. Platt! I don't do that [*laughing*]." Last year we did a peace and justice theme and included "All of Us" from *Considering Matthew Shepherd*. I told the students, "I really want you to see how music can be a force for social change, and have you realize that you're part of something bigger than just this here." I love watching my students and seeing how that affects them. A few years ago, we did one called "I Believe" and incorporated Kim Arnesen's *Even When He is Silent*. And that was when I still had to buy it at six dollars a copy through the Norwegian publisher [*laughing*]. I think that was the most life-changing program I've ever done. The kids just wept.

I'm also proud that I've been a part of changing how Meadowlands approaches gender with our choirs. I really tried to rework my language about five years ago with only calling my students soprano, alto, tenor, bass. And it just changed my thinking. I started to have more students at Meadowlands who, when I would see them at first, I would think, "This kid could be gender non-binary or maybe the student is transgender," but just didn't know how to ask. I'd get

emails at the beginning of the year saying, “You emailed me to see if I want to be part of Bella Voce, and I know the information page lists me as female, but I'm transgender. Can I audition for Centurymen?” I finally went to our Dean of Student Life and said, “We need to have some indication of students’ preferred pronouns. Because what kind of a welcome message is this for us to not affirm their gender identity?”

I did a presentation at the state ACDA summer gathering about how we're changing this, how we need to affirm people's gender preferences, and how making our choirs gendered instead of vocally specific hurts us musically, too. Because before, if I had a singer who was transgender and wanted to sing in Bella Voce, it just was not going to work. These changes allow us to be welcoming to all singers. We’ve changed their attire. There was a robe campaign and it fit in very well with the timing so that we were able to purchase robes now for Bella Voce and Centurymen. Centurymen will have a new name, and that will be unveiled in the spring. So, it's exciting stuff that's happening.

I ask Samantha about how she perceives her own gender and how she sees it affecting her work and life.

There’s a persona that you cultivate for when you stand in front of a group, and it may be very different from who you are personally. Sometimes my students find it surprising that as an individual I'm not really that outgoing or extroverted. My children even say, “Mom, do you have friends [*laughing*]?” “Well, not really. Maybe like, two [*laughing*].” But I think that my persona in front of the group would make them think that I am an extrovert. They probably have this picture in their head of who they thought I was in high school and that is very different from who I actually was. I had two students who dressed up as me this year for Halloween. They've never

done that before. So, of course, they wear a form fitting dress and heels because that's my thing. They ask, “How do you wear heels every day?” I don't know, it's just what I do. I don't know if that's necessarily gender, but that's kind of who I am.

When I read student evaluations they say, “We think you're awesome and you're such a great role model.” Or they’ll say, “She's fierce.” And, “We love the way she dresses.” Then some of my student evaluations will say, “We think that she could be harder on us.” Or, “Sometimes she's kind of scatterbrained.” Or ,“She's not as serious.” If I had to figure out who that was, I bet I could tell you the demographic of what kind of student that is. The kind of student who doesn't relate well to a woman who looks the way that I do. It's a hard balance trying to figure out how to be a female professor in an area where you also have to be able to attract a lot of different people. If I turn on my full-fledged Reggie Johnson side, then I don't know that they’re going to enjoy the experience that much – they’ll probably think that I'm bitchy. I think there's still the reality that as a woman you're either bitchy or you’re flighty and concerned with things that don't matter as much. There is that bias that I don't think my male colleagues face.

I talked to Ingrid Peterson before I started this job and I asked, “What do you do when you're talking to your budding female conductors? What's important that we need to be able to do as women?” She said, “There's nothing about being female. That doesn't matter at all. You just need to be a good conductor and that's all that matters.” But I don't find that’s always true [*laughing*].

I talked to Nancy Bolivar briefly last year. I had met her and heard her recordings and thought she was brilliant. She said to me, “We have to stick together. There are not very many of us.” I was like, “Oh my gosh, that's right.”

I'm still trying to find a balance. I'm curious to see what it will be like as I get older. Starting as a 22 year-old you know that some of your students are thinking, "She's awesome." Or maybe, "She's attractive." Or even, "Wow, I would date her." You go from being the cool babysitter age, and then you're like a cool aunt or the cool big sister. And now I realize they look at me and I'm their mom [*laughing*]. Yes, I'm starting to realize that when I talk to Bella Voce they look at me and they see Mom. They don't see cool, hip woman [*laughing*]. There's such emotion and baggage tied to all of our students when they see women in front of them that I don't think is the same for the men. There are probably some professors that students look at and say, "Oh, yeah, that's like my dad," but I don't think they do in general. But they *do* look at me and they think, "That's like Mom."

I've always been more of a guy's girl and that doesn't work as a straight female once you get to a certain age and you're married. Raymond was really interested in Carl Jung. I think it's Jungian to talk about the Anima and the Animus – the male and female parts of our personality or the more competitive attributes and the dominant personality traits. My Animus is *huge*. Whereas my husband is not that way. So, it's interesting to think about ways that women interact or view themselves socially. Most of my female friends, we are the same. We're like, "Oh my gosh, I'm just a *guy*." That's the problem – I'm competitive. On the first day of the ACDA conference I had people recognize me and come up and talk to me. I said to Greg, "My Animus is just so strong right now." And he was like, "Oh, I know [*laughing*]."

I ask Samantha to talk about what she wears as a performer.

When I was a younger conductor, I really tried to do more of the all black and pantsuits and stuff like that, partly because I'd never seen anything else modeled for me, and I was more

concerned with not wanting to look young. I've talked to other conductors about it and now I tell my students that sometimes we miss the idea that conducting is a performance art. We are performers as well so the idea that we should blend in, that we shouldn't draw attention to ourselves is crazy. I want to draw attention to myself because I want to guide the listener to what I want them to hear. I don't want to be obnoxious with what I'm wearing, but I don't want to hide the fact that I'm a woman.

Maybe that's the performer part of me but I love to dress up and wear a gown. I'm not opposed to color and I spend a ridiculous amount of time trying to figure out what I'm going to wear each year. It's become kind of a thing. I've been caught in these threads on Facebook where there was a woman who bought a beautiful purple gown (her school color) and she even put up a short video clip of her conducting her choir. A colleague or a parent wrote, "You should rethink that dress because it makes your rear end look big." If I could name for you how many men perform wearing ill-fitting suits, tuxes without tux shoes, or vests that are ready to pop open! I mean, come on people! Wear something that makes you feel good, looks good, and fits. That's what matters. Nancy Bolivar really dresses up too and looking at what she wears is very affirming.

I ask Samantha about how her role as mother affects her work, or vice versa.

I have a very hard time with work-life balance. I have none [*laughing*]. I feel like women are just not afforded the luxury of having balance. I came here at first with three kids never dreaming that it would be three years before we'd be officially living together as a family all the time. There was a lot of guilt. You know, "I can't believe I did this to my kids." I don't think Greg took on that guilt in the same way that I did. My oldest especially had a very difficult time

with it emotionally and personally, and I felt that as a mother and as a woman you cannot share that with your colleagues. I thought, “Oh my gosh, I’m not paying attention to my daughter, and it’s because I moved my family out here that she is imploding.” And even if my child is in the hospital I can't miss. I'm not going to miss. Even when I was pregnant with my children, “You need me to move chairs? I could still move chairs. It's fine. I will. I will.” I hated the idea that they would take anything away from me because I used motherhood as an excuse. I can't count how many times I’ve been asked, “How are you going to balance your family and this job?” My husband is in the same profession and he is not asked that question. It's still very 1950s-esque. That double standard is still very prevalent, I think even at Meadowlands.

For example, my first year we were doing spring choir auditions. Emma had been in the hospital twice that year and the clinic finally called to say she had an appointment with the specific clinician we needed and had been waiting for. So, I mentioned I would need to miss and asked if there was a way we could videotape the auditions. Mark had this tone in his voice and said, “Well, are you sure that you need to be gone?” I just thought, “Are you kidding me?” If his daughters were sick and his wife needed to be out of town there was no question. Not only would he miss but there was a whole army of people who would say, “Oh my gosh! Do you need food? Can we help? I can’t believe you’re taking care of these kids as a single parent while your wife’s away [*laughing*]!” My male colleagues are seen as champions if they miss because their children are sick.

In my last job before I came to Meadowlands my boss was a tyrant. I told him that in order for us to recruit younger members into our church choir we needed to have babysitting available. He was like, “You only want babysitting because you want *your* kids to be babysat.” He was such a jerk but some of that kind of rubbed off on me.

When my son, Kyle, was 18 months old, he got the chicken pox the first weekend in December. We had *Messiah* going on at church and we called everyone that we knew at all of our churches to see if someone could come in and watch him. And no one would. We eventually had to call a babysitting service that cost $200 for [*tone of voice rising*] my baby! I remember the nursery coordinator even accused me of irresponsibly bringing my children to the nursery the weekend before and intentionally infecting the whole community with chicken pox.

So, you don't bring motherhood in to work. If you try to use that excuse, suck it up. Somehow that rubbed off on me. It's sort of self-imposed. Like, "*I* did it." There's part of me now that says, "Don't use that excuse because you set us all back." But I know that's stupid. We're parents first.

I mention that it sounds like she didn't have much of a community when she needed it. I ask if she has that now.

Oh no, we don't. My kids have even said, "Do you and dad have friends [*laughing*]?" I don't know. We work so hard. I mean we do have friends, but they don't live around here. I've talked to my kids about perhaps my obsessive busy-ness is to mask, to fill up your time so you don't have to think. But there isn't much of a community. Maybe it's just you have to wear this mask of trying to look so capable and put together all that time that it's very hard to be vulnerable with needing any kind of help. Especially having a family, it seems like if you're a good mother and wife you should be able to handle that. And have a clean house and everything.

I ask her if she feels she has to wear a mask in her teaching and conducting, or if she remembers an experience where she learned she needed to wear that mask. I ask her where she can be vulnerable.

Oh, that is absolutely the definition of an alcoholic parent. I'm a naturally guarded person, and that's directly related to my mom being an alcoholic. I wasn't very old when I realized that my mom could not be there for me in a way that I wanted her to be. Maybe I was in 6th grade when I started to go, "My mom's not like everybody else's mom." So, I learned to put on a mask and project: "I'm fine."

But just because it isn't easy for me to open up doesn't mean I don't want to. I think now in my conducting and teaching I try to facilitate a vulnerable atmosphere where music can reach in and change you and be more than what's on the page. I think I take the approach that music is first, music is the vehicle to open up that way. I've seen other choir directors for whom it's all about the feels and we've got to get to the feels as soon as humanly possible [*laughing*]. I was a person where that didn't work well for me. If you come from that really guarded, "You have to be strong because otherwise your world is gonna fall apart" structure…that just shuts you off. Especially with the voice and coming from a position of real physical vulnerability, I'm trying to make better connections with my students, individually. I want to be a conductor where they have this life changing experience. But it just doesn't come naturally for me. I suppose I'm still just trying to find how to facilitate that ownership.

I'm probably more vulnerable in rehearsal than I would be in any other situation. Maybe it's just that having been at Meadowlands for so long, I realize that even though you need to earn students' respect more than ever before, there's a certain amount of respect that they have for you coming in. So, I don't get too worked up with worrying that they think I'm flighty or that

being vulnerable makes me less serious as a professional or as a musician. I'm starting to be able to observe myself from the outside and I don't think that that turns them off to the music making.

Maybe the mask just comes from…you know when you're young and teaching high school if you would cry – especially for the guys – that they would think, "Oh, we got her." I remember my junior high choir teacher. We were singing an arrangement of *Rockin' Robin*. We got giggly and there were some kids who were just misbehaving, and she was trying to work us through it and she just… I remember she slammed down the cover of the piano, started to cry, and ran out. And the door [*laughing*] had a catch. So, when she tried to slam the door it went "whoosh" really gently. There was no bang. We laughed so hard. I was a good kid and normally I would have said, "We can't do that!" But I just never wanted to be that teacher.

I remember a teaching experience of my own when I was teaching high school. I had a kid named Nick. He was so defiant in rehearsal. He was leaning back and putting his feet up on the chair in front of him or something. I ran a tight rehearsal most of the time and would not allow that. So I said, "What are you doing?" And then he wouldn't put his feet down. I said, "I'm gonna need you to go to the office." He said, "I'm not going anywhere." "Well, I'll need to call security to have you removed." And then he got up and just kind of pushed the chair and was pretty close to me, from like here to that wall and suddenly I realized that, yeah if he wants to do something, he's six foot tall, I think he was probably stoned, but [*voice trails off*].

I ask what other parts of this work are hard.

I should find this student evaluation that you could read. It was someone in Bella Voce who wrote it and it said, "She says that she's a feminist, but feminism isn't just about uplifting women, it's about doing away with stereotypes. We think that she's very cisgender and

heteronormative in her thinking and the way she deals with people. She's overly sexualized and students will comment about the way she looks and she doesn't shut them down." Reading that I thought, "I think I know what they mean." I'll have a student, like my tenor section leader, who'll say something like "Dr. Platt, I love that dress. It's awesome." Should I shut him down and say in front of a group of 10 people, "That's inappropriate. You can't talk about my body?" Then I'm known as a bitch.

That student evaluation made me feel, "You can't win." I spent the entire year feeling like I just had to change everything about who I was. There were a lot of good things that came out of it but it was really difficult.

I comment that even in the hard times it seems like she really loves teaching. I ask her to talk about teaching.

I just conducted an All State Treble group and it was so impactful, I think for both them and for me. On the day before the performance, in our last bit of our rehearsal I told them the complete, honest truth. I said, "I would love to have every single one of you come to Meadowlands, I really would. I would be remiss if I didn't say you should look at Meadowlands. It's part of my job to recruit but honestly, it's not that I want to recruit you it's just that I really do like every single one of you. I really do. It's just something magical that has happened. No matter what you do I hope you keep singing. I hope that if you choose to have kids you have your kids sing, and you remember that there was a point in your life where music just made magic you can't even really describe."

They made these little "Love Arrives" stickers. That was the name of one of our pieces. When they brought those out, I finally was like, "They got it." We had a rehearsal one of the

evenings and they stayed after. I could just sense they needed to talk about this idea. Especially as adolescent women they feel so unworthy of love and they don't feel like they are enough. They're not pretty enough. They're not skinny enough. And so many of these girls stood up in front of the group and said things like, "I've been hospitalized for an eating disorder." Or, "I've been called a slut." Or, "I'm not getting into the college that I want," or "my parents [*voice trails off*]." And when we sang *Love Arrives*, they had a way to talk about it. They wept. And the adults, they wept. I went to Walgreens and bought all these cards and I sat in my room and I wrote notes just to say, "You are enough. *You*. Just for who you are." I suppose that's the conductor and teacher I wish I could always be.

I point out that she has told a few stories in which she stood up to authority. I ask if there was ever a time when she didn't and she regretted it, or if there were other times of regret.

Last year I was going to apply for the ACDA International Conductors Exchange Program. I got my application ready and had videos of rehearsal and everything. Before I sent it off, I looked more closely at the guidelines and they said that in your video you have to state the composer and the title of the piece before you begin, and I thought, "I don't have anything that's like that! I just have rehearsal footage." And so I thought, "Well, I don't fit the guidelines and they're going to disqualify me immediately." So, I just didn't worry about it [and didn't apply].

Then just recently I was talking to someone I went to grad school with. He's one of these people who perplexes me because I've never been overly impressed by him, but he is so strategic in building his career and taking job after job. He has a wife in a different profession who makes the money and he takes whatever job he needs to in order to move up through the ranks. Last year he was accepted to do the conductor exchange and he has a Carnegie Hall conducting gig

coming up, and I feel like, "Wow," but also like, "Really?" We talked about the conductor exchange and I told him I was going to apply but then realized my videos didn't meet the parameters and I wasn't going to make the deadline. He said, "Oh, don't worry about that. Mine didn't either but I just submitted."

And I thought, "Oh my gosh." This so fits what all the research that talks about how we socialize girls to be perfect and boys to be brave. What is it, like 80% of guys will apply for something even if they don't meet all of the requirements, but only a very small percentage of women will be bold and do it if they feel like they aren't totally qualified.

So, I regret that and frankly, I regret not applying for the Concert Choir job when Mark left. I had numerous colleagues at Meadowlands and outside of the school who said, "Well, you're gonna apply, too, aren't you?" Even Matt said, "Well, you're gonna apply." But I think I was pretty realistic knowing that Matt was going to get hired. I just said, "You know I'm not gonna get it because you've been doing such great work, you've been here a little longer and why would I create such turmoil in the department when we've already had that?" So, I just self-selected. And I probably will always regret that I didn't do it. But I knew that I wasn't going to win, so why [*laughing*]? It has taken some soul searching to get over that. I don't want anybody to know that it affects me. Just bring it on, people [*laughing*].

I ask Samantha about being awarded tenure and her recent promotion, and ask her to talk about that process.

I didn't feel like the tenure application required me to do much more than what we as choral conductors do already. I have just started being the tiniest bit choosy, but usually I take every conducting gig that I'm offered. My colleagues look at my CV and say, "Oh my gosh!

How do you do that?" And it's like, "Well, I need to be able to feed my children, and you guys don't pay very much." Publications, luckily, weren't a problem either because a good friend offered me a choral series a couple of years ago. One of the biggest blessings of having lived so many places in the country is that my husband and I have good connections with people that my midwestern friends just don't know. There are certainly more talented arrangers and composers than me, but I just know people [*laughing*]. So, it wasn't too bad keeping the academic scrapbook.

I think the process is a little different at Meadowlands because the tenured colleagues in your department are required to come and observe you teach a class or lead a rehearsal and then they write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. The letters are then stored at the Dean's Office and then there's a period where your file is open, and you can go read those letters. I chose not to read them because if there were any negatives I think I would obsess over them. But, when I got the big letter written by the head of the tenure and promotion committee, what my colleagues had said was very generous.

What are your career aspirations?

There's a part of me that thinks about this probably every day: What do I want to do? I've come to peace with the idea that I might just stay where I am. This is not a bad place to make music. I look at my friends who have that coveted title of DCA and then I go on Facebook and I see their choir of 30 and I say to myself, "What are you complaining about [*laughing*]?" But I would like to be in an institution where I have more autonomy. I don't ever get to conduct the oratorio. I don't conduct the opera. I don't get to say, "Hey, I would like to do this great new piece in the fall with a little chamber orchestra." We're very locked in. I would say in ten years

my dream would be to be the DCA at an institution, especially where I could teach graduate students.

I ask her to tell me about the Lutheran context and what makes it unique.

There's a lot of talk at Meadowlands right now about the Lutheran school tradition and how we talk about it. There's part of me that really loves it. It's pretty remarkable to be at a place where there are over 500 kids who want to sing. And having students who know that choir is such a life-changing experience or just something that they want to say that they did. We get juniors and seniors who have never sung but who say, "I want to try out this year because I don't want to say that I didn't do it." So, that is amazing. I love the fact that there's a connection to the music that you don't see maybe at state schools and that everything is memorized. There's something to that.

The limitations on repertoire really bother me. I don't want to sound like I think I'm some sort of pioneer, but when I think about my colleagues and look over repertoire lists from the last 10-15 years, and from what I remember as a student too, I think I push the envelope more than anyone in terms of the amount of secular repertoire that we do. And, even though we say we don't have a tiered system of "this choir's the best, this is second best," we absolutely do. I would prefer choirs with different functions so students would understand how music can fit in their lives a little better. Right now, at Meadowlands I feel we're just an extension of what they do in high school, just at a different level. That bothers me. We just don't do enough secular repertoire and we certainly don't do enough historic repertoire. But I think that's a larger trend. I'd like to see a Lutheran choral program with a vision that pushes it a little bit.

Each choir offers music in weekday chapel three times per semester and I don't mind doing that. Many of those services are interfaith and that's a pretty easy sell. But the students coming to Meadowlands are increasingly without any faith background and certainly not Lutheran. We have more and more students who are Jewish and Muslim.

I guess I never really thought it would be as frustrating as it is at times. I have to stop myself and ask, "Is that because I'm a woman or is it because this is the job?" Because Jason Richards felt frustrated, Matthew Lane felt frustrated. Frustrations are part of the job. I already talked about how Ingrid Peterson told me, "It doesn't matter if you're a woman, you just gotta be great." But, for such a progressive area as this is, I'm a little dismayed that we don't have as many women in really powerful positions. Especially in the Lutheran context. I suppose, not being completely content is a good thing. I would just love to see a woman be successful in one of these jobs.

CHAPTER 6

THEMES

Many themes emerge in the stories of experience that Ingrid and Samantha shared. In this chapter I will explore some of these themes and how they connect to each other.

Ingrid's Themes

Theme #1: Others Directed my Life

There are five main themes or threads of meaning that weave in and out of Ingrid's narrative and bind her story together. The first appears when Ingrid says, "My life was directed. Forgive the pun." She also says, "I particularly trusted people who knew more than I did. It makes sense to me that I would take the advice of people I admired, because I took the advice of my parents and I really admired them." In her youth Ingrid relied on her beloved parents and "fabulous teachers" for guidance. Her mother polished her shoes and sat next to her during her piano lessons. Her first piano teacher taught her discipline, as did her middle school music teacher who "carted" Ingrid and her brothers around to play for Christmas parties. Trust and respect in others led Ingrid to Concordia College, when she was offered a scholarship by Paul J. Christiansen, and then to the University of Superior when her teacher at Central State filled out the application to the master's program on her behalf. Ingrid said, "People always did things like that for me and said, 'Here, this is your life.' And I was like, 'Okay.'" It was hands-on guidance, which didn't bother Ingrid, who considers herself "naïve" and trusting. And, as she points out, "I let other people guide me because it had worked out before."

Ingrid's belief that she would be guided meant that she did not act on her own behalf to apply for positions. She said, "I was never put into a position where I had to apply for something,

where I had to compete for something, because I don't think I would have put myself in that position." Ingrid did not need to demonstrate agency by choosing to apply. Others chose for her. Instead of feeling limited or restricted by what others chose for her, Ingrid chooses to see her life as guided, and the situations and opportunities provided for her as meant to be. We see this when she uses language like, "I just very rarely didn't get what I was supposed to get."

Ingrid's trust in others, and in God, is one reason she gives for not being a "trailblazer" for herself or other women. She says, "I think I didn't have to be a trailblazer because people were blazing a trail for me." Brought up in the Christian faith and still a church-goer today, it's interesting that Ingrid never explicitly names God as a guiding force. Instead she refers to fate and uses phrases like, "I was always in the right place at the right time," and "The stars were aligned." Yet, when I asked Ingrid specifically, she confirmed that she believes that God was a divine influence who guided her life and led her to where she was "supposed to go."

Theme #2: Gifted in Music

Ingrid is not a mediocre musician. Instead, she is a highly gifted singer, conductor, and musician. This theme is not explicit in her narrative because of her modesty, but it is implied. It can be most easily seen in how others respond to her work and in how many opportunities become open to her. We see that many of her mentors were inspired to guide Ingrid because of her talents. Her middle school teacher's commitment to her sibling trio indicates their early excellence. The vignette of Ingrid's high school experience singing a solo in *I Wanna Be Ready* shows the dignified Paul J. Christiansen running after her retreating choir and climbing onto a bus to offer her a full-tuition scholarship. This speaks volumes to her musical gifts. We understand that her voice teacher at Central State filled out the application for the master's program at Superior for Ingrid because her teacher was proud of Ingrid's abilities and believed

she would excel in an excellent program. Ingrid recognizes and names the generous care her mentors showed her and the listener can discern the unspoken influence her musical talents and abilities had on their actions. Ingrid doesn't say why so many people guided her, but we must see her excellence and her abilities as unspoken influences in her life story.

Even without specific mentors steering her along the path, Ingrid's talents and abilities opened doors. For example, she talks about meeting a professor at the local University while doing musical theater, who then invites her to teach. Then someone at Rasmussen College hears of her and invites her there. Because John Kenmore sees her work at Rasmussen and hears her ensembles, he invites her to conduct at Liturgia. Ingrid is right: she is often "in the right place at the right time," in that she meets people and makes connections with those who have a musical need to fill. But this observation does not acknowledge her excellence. It is Ingrid's musical excellence that paves the way for her to be invited into these positions.

Her success comes without self-promotion and without applying for opportunities. But this makes her accomplishments all the more impressive. She is handed a career in a nationally recognized collegiate choral program. She is asked by several professional ensembles to sing and serve as Associate Conductor. And she earns a national presence as a conductor through the many high school All State Choirs she conducts.

Ingrid's choice not to use explicit language in naming her talents may well be due to her Lutheran mother's teachings. Ingrid said, "My mom instilled that in us, to not let your head get big. There are other people out there who need attention more than you do. Just because you do something good, you don't need to draw attention to it." Ingrid certainly does not draw attention to her own accomplishments, and she notes that neither do her colleagues at Liturgia College. She says that nobody at Liturgia wanted to make themselves look good or make their own group

stand out. She says, “I never had any of that feeling in 34 years.” Perhaps what Ingrid perceived as her colleagues’ alignment with her own belief in not drawing attention to one’s self helped her enjoy a sense of fulfillment at Liturgia. Excellence and humility were both required.

One particularly interesting aspect to Ingrid’s narrative is how she feels confident and secure in her own musicianship. Ingrid credits her excellence by saying, “Music is in my blood. My brothers and I didn’t know anything but music from earliest childhood…What education did for me was make me realize that I was innately musical. My confidence means that I don’t really ever doubt myself musically.” Later she says again, “At my core I don’t think I ever felt musical self-doubt.” The certainty that Ingrid experiences in performance was notable when I observed her work with a large ensemble of choir directors. Her confidence and certitude allow her to be immediately trusted by the singers she conducts. Ingrid’s musical excellence is authentic, explicit, never too proud, yet always discernable.

When I have spoken to other choir directors about Ingrid, her reputation for blending voices, perfecting tone, and being a gifted choral/vocal pedagogue has, on many occasions, been followed up with the phrase, “She has the best ears in the business.” In other words, Ingrid hears any problems in the ensembles, notices them, and the unspoken message is that she is also able to fix those problems. Ingrid herself says, “Your work speaks for itself. You don’t have to tell people how good you are. You don’t have to say, ‘I didn’t get this or I didn’t get that.’ Just go in and be the best that you can be.” Her musical abilities ensure that when she was the best that she could be, and therefore doors opened and opportunities presented themselves.

Theme #3: Collaborative Leadership and Caretaking

The first time Ingrid mentions her choral leadership style, it is in the context of leading rehearsals while she was in high school. She says:

> I got some training in how to focus people and do it without trying to come across as the boss. I tried to make it, "What do you think? What do you think?" rather than, "Do it this way. Do it that way." So, I learned some skills in how to get people to work in a positive way together.

Ingrid used collaboration to lead, a tool that women often find useful. I remember learning in my own high school choral leadership experience that decisive, directive leadership (as modelled by my male director) was ineffective, because my fellow women students responded negatively to it. Ingrid learned, as I was slow to learn, that a collaborative leadership style is effective and acceptable for a woman who is a leader. Ingrid, once again, credits her mother with lessons on how to work with others. She said:

> My mother was a servant spirit. It was a family where you make sure everybody else is comfortable. That was actually problematic sometimes, because our feelings were always diffused through the comfort of others. In other words, if you felt angry about something, you diffused the anger into something else.

While Ingrid notes that awareness of others' feelings and ensuring that they are comfortable can be problematic at times, but this awareness is almost certainly an asset in her leadership style. While she may have avoided conflict, her avoidance allowed her to ensure that others were comfortable, so that more conflicts did not arise.

I witnessed the caregiving aspect of Ingrid's leadership style at a recent conference. At the end of the concert, after Ingrid and many other well-known and beloved conductors had conducted, the group of retired conductors returned to take a final bow. During the applause, individual conductors wandered onto the stage. Some began bowing on their own, while others turned their backs to the audience to look at the choir. Ingrid was one of the last to enter, and as

the applause continued, she grabbed the hands of the conductors around her, asked the others to join, and led the group in taking a corporate bow. Then, she shepherded the aging conductors off the stage, looking side to side to make sure no one was left behind.

Caretaking is a part of her leadership and, once again, Ingrid credits her mother with learning this quality. She remembers her mother polishing her shoes (and the floor) in the middle of the night for the next day's performance and says, "When you say 'caretaker' that's what I think of…it's a part of my fabric." She showed a similar kind of care to her students at Liturgia. She said of her teaching, "My goal was for them to be the best human beings they could be and to help bring out their best." Even in difficult situations she showed care for the individuals involved. For example, in the story she told about the All State treble choir where one of the singers heard two other girls talking about her in the bathroom, Ingrid talked to both groups and tried to help them grow from the experience. She said, "I tried to teach people in those kinds of experiences. I tried to point out in a loving way how we could be loving people." So, even in this situation where it would have been quite possible to condemn the individuals for inappropriate behavior, she cared for them and tried to help them change and grow.

Ingrid learned how to be an effective leader, an acceptable and feminine leader, in a time before there were many women conductors. Care and encouragement are two tools she uses, and they permeate her leadership style and her narrative.

Theme #4: The Head and The Heart

When speaking about music Ingrid mentions on several occasions the balance between the head and the heart. She says she tries to "combine the intellect with the passion in what we do. The heartfelt part." She goes on:

> It's one thing to say, "I'm doing this piece and it's beautiful, and I love it this way and it feels good." But you have to always back that up with the cerebral, a historical understanding of style, and dedication to the intellect. It's that combination. There are conductors or singers or educators that come at it from the head. It goes through the heart, but they come at it from the head first. I would say I'm aware of the head I speak to it in my brain and my training, but my approach is heartfelt first. I come through the heart first. It takes all of us to make the world go round, but that's my own inclination.

She points out that one of the strengths of the choral team at Liturgia was that there were both head and heart conductors and they balanced each other. This illustrates again that Ingrid is an inclusive and nurturing leader, because she sees strengths in different styles, and believes in balancing the head and heart. Ingrid values the balance.

Because she valued this balance, she was able to see that Aurelia had an important role in the Yuletide Gala each year. Ingrid believed Aurelia could balance some of the more cerebral aspects of that event, and she found it a privilege and a natural role to strengthen the "heart" side of the balance.

Theme #5: I Chose Not to Look for Discrimination

Ingrid speaks with emphatic weight about not seeing or feeling challenges or discrimination because of her gender. She says, "I just have never had that experience. I have *never*." Yet, as she considers it, her language shifts to emphasize her outlook and perception. She goes on to say, "My brain does not say to me, 'I didn't get that because I'm a woman.' That may have happened along the way, under the table. But I just very rarely didn't get what I was supposed to get." Ingrid emphasizes the power of choosing not to worry or see problems. She said:

> Somebody said to me once, "You know, Ingrid, that's because you've never had to worry about criticism." And I said, "No, it's that I *chose* not to worry about it." I know there are people out there who say, "If that woman gets up [to conduct] again I'm gonna throw up." But you can't, you don't focus on that because then you lose your own voice. When you lose your voice and your focus, you might as well do something else. And so, I've never felt discrimination. I never felt it because I chose not to look for it.

Ingrid knows that gender discrimination exists. But she says that she *chose* not to look for it. She names naivety four times in her narrative and says, "It never dawned on me that I would need to [fight for certain things]." Yet she believes her women friends and colleagues who struggle and she is unable to account for their difficulties. Of discrimination and their experiences she says, "And I know that happens, I'm sure it happens. It's just out of my world." She actively resists seeing problems in her own experience.

A place where we see Ingrid wrestle with the disconnect between her own acknowledged experience and that of her women friends is when she considers the Brett Kavanaugh hearings. She connects the power and privilege in the Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford story with a recognition of discrimination against women choral conductors. Yet, understandably, she is unsure how to reconcile it with her own life.

There's an honesty to Ingrid's comment on other women's experiences of discrimination. She says, "That isn't a place I want to go." She explains later when asked about the hard parts of her work:

> I don't hang on to negative feelings. I don't recall those hard times. There's something in my psyche that doesn't pull those things up, because I know I couldn't deal with them if I had to. Not remembering, that's my own little coping mechanism.

The repression of difficult memories may be an important tool for Ingrid, though she acknowledges its shortcomings. She says, “I know I should remember, and I should probably deal with the memories, but I think I came to terms with it by talking to people over the years.” Perhaps the repression tool was necessary for Ingrid, because remembering is painful and suffering might mean fewer emotional resources for enjoying career satisfaction.

It is interesting that immediately after she mentions how not remembering is her coping mechanism, she turns her thoughts to the chronic pain she endured through the height of her career. She says:

> I would just have to push through in a way that only people with chronic, bad pain can understand. I just forced myself through it with a pain pill or a glass of wine. I forced myself through that time of chronic pain and came out on the other side.

The language of forcing and pushing reflects a determination seen throughout her work. Yet, it also gives a different perspective on her choice to not look for discrimination or problems. Perhaps this language hints at the work and effort required in that choice. Ingrid herself seems to make this connection.

Samantha’s Themes

Umbrella Theme: She Said There’s Nothing About Being Female, But I Don’t Find That’s Always True

Though Samantha and Ingrid did not interact within the context of this research, twice in our interviews Samantha mentioned a specific conversation she had with Ingrid in which Ingrid had said, “There's nothing about being female. That doesn't matter at all. You just need to be a good conductor and that's all that matters.” Samantha goes on to say, “But I don't find that’s

always true." These words capture a theme that permeates much of Samantha's lived experience: that her gender plays an important role in her career. This is an umbrella theme for Samantha because so many of the other themes that emerge from her stories are directly related to her understanding of her gender having an influence. Because of the interconnection between themes, I have chosen to pair them in the discussion, but I want to emphasize that even these pairings are not adequate to illustrate all of the ways in which they connect.

Theme #1: Double Standards are Still Prevalent and **Theme #2: Misogyny**

Samantha repeats again and again times and places where the expectations and social rules are different for her than they are for her male colleagues. For example, she said, "I can't count how many times I've been asked, 'How are you going to balance your family and this job?' My husband is in the same profession and he is not asked that question. It's still very 1950s-esque. That double standard is still very prevalent." The question about how *she* will balance illustrates that expectations are different for Samantha as a woman and carries the heavy implication that she, more than her husband, is responsible for her family. She notes that this was the cultural view in the 1950s and that this expectation has not changed. Research on women in academia grounds this expectation in reality. De Welde & Stepnick (2015) acknowledge that "women academics are more likely than men to be responsible for home and childcare responsibilities," (p. 104) and Kmec, Foo, & Wharton (2015) note that "mothers reported more hours toward caregiving and similar hours toward most academic and household tasks than fathers" (p. 122).

Samantha makes note of the double standard when talking about needing to miss professional responsibilities to be with a child who is sick. She says explicitly if one of her male colleagues needed to be gone:

> There was no question. Not only would he miss, but there was a whole army of people who would say, "Oh my gosh! Do you need food? Can we help? I can't believe you're taking care of these kids as a single parent while your wife's away!"

She even laughs out loud at the juxtaposition and says explicitly, "My male colleagues are seen as champions if they miss because their children are sick." Yet, when Samantha needed to miss auditions to be with her daughter, she felt judgement. She was asked, "Are you sure that you need to be gone?" She conveys her frustration at how blind her male colleagues are to this double standard when she says, "I just thought, 'Are you kidding me?'" Samantha sees the different expectations and is frustrated that others do not see them.

Double standards are also obvious to Samantha when it comes to conductors' concert dress. When telling of the Facebook interaction in which a conductor was criticized for wearing an unflattering dress she says, "If I could name for you how many men who get to perform wearing ill-fitting suits, tuxes without tux shoes, or vests that are ready to pop open! I mean come on people!" Samantha sees that a woman is quickly criticized for wearing something that is perceived as unflattering, but the standards are not the same for men who commonly wear unflattering or inappropriate concert attire. Samantha is not alone in noticing that concert attire is an area fraught with double standards. Bartleet (2008) points out that the tuxedo uniform for conductors was designed for male bodies. She says, "No such uniform has been developed for women conductors. As a result, women have had to dress cautiously, in a manner that avoids sexual objectification, but also conveys their own personal femininity" (p. 40). Bartleet goes on to say:

> On the podium, acceptability is often marked by prescriptive dress and body regulations intended to de-emphasize female sexuality through a denial and masking of the body.

> This erasure of the body is perceived as "professional," but it is, of course, inherently masculine. (2008, p. 40)

What women conductors choose to wear is a sign of how they navigate their Otherness as conductors, and both Samantha's and Ingrid's struggles and differing approaches illustrate Bartleet's analysis. Samantha's stories point out two ways this Otherness is experienced by many women who conduct: the struggle to figure out "appropriate" concert attire and the judgement and condemnation they experience related to their appearance. The statement, "I mean, come on people!" expresses her frustration at the double standard.

Samantha also notes double standards in how her students relate to her. She points out that as she ages her students now see her as "mom." While Samantha doesn't site this comparison to "mom" as explicitly negative, she notices that her male colleagues are not as readily seen as "dad."

Closely related to the double standard theme and difficult to separate is a theme of misogyny. The Oxford dictionary definition of misogyny is "dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women" (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/misogyny). Misogyny is seen throughout Samantha's story. She names it once explicitly in reference to her fellow graduate student's response to her being the teaching assistant for Dr. Johnson's choir when she says, "Is it a textbook case of misogyny? Yeah." But she also sees it elsewhere in her career. Misogyny is seen in the judgement women face for their concert dress that was just mentioned. Misogyny is seen through her student evaluations:

> Some of my student evaluations will say, "We think that she could be harder on us." Or "Sometimes she's kind of scatterbrained," Or, "She's not as serious." If I had to figure out who that was, I bet I could tell you the demographic of what kind of student that is. The kind of student who doesn't relate well to a woman who looks the way that I do.

Research on student evaluations and gender shows that Samantha is not alone in some of the difficulties she has encountered. Sprague and Massoni (2005) argue that student language on evaluations show they hold teachers accountable to certain gendered expectations and "these expectations place burdens on all teachers, but the burdens on women are more labor-intensive" (p. 779). These double standards are harmful to women, as Samantha illustrates. She goes on to name that both double standards and misogyny are intertwined:

> It's a hard balance trying to figure out how to be a female professor in an area where you also have to be able to attract a lot of different people. If I turn on my full-fledged Reggie Johnson side, then I don't know that they're going to enjoy the experience that much – they'll probably think that I'm bitchy. I think there's still the reality that as a woman you're either bitchy or you're flighty and concerned with things that don't matter as much. There is that bias that I don't think my male colleagues face.

Samantha sees only two options as a woman: "bitchy" or flighty." That is misogyny. She points out later that "you just can't win."

One final instance of misogyny worth naming is when Samantha mentions Nick, the defiant high school student. She finishes her story of him by saying:

> Then he got up and just kind of pushed the chair and was pretty close to me, from like here to that wall and suddenly I realized that, yeah if he wants to do something, he's six foot tall, I think he was probably stoned, but [*voice trails off*].

In her final word, "but," lies the unspoken message, "he could." Violence towards teachers by students is a reality. Lampman (2015) refers to Contrapower Harassment (CPH), which describes "a situation in which an individual with less institutional power (e.g., a student) harasses someone with more power (e.g., a professor)" (p. 241). While threats of violence and unwanted sexual attention are reported by all genders, "being a woman, being younger, being a member of a minority group, and having less professional experience and/or no doctoral degree" are significant predictors of student incivility and more women than men report more serious incidences of CPH (Lampman, 2015, p. 242). Samantha told the story of Nick immediately following her story about her middle school music teacher who cried and used the Nick story to talk about the challenges of being a woman in the classroom and what she sees as contempt for women, that is, misogyny.

Theme #3: There's No Crying on the Podium and **Theme #4: You Have to Wear This Mask**

Samantha's stories of experience reveal that being a choral conductor and a woman is not for the faint of heart. You need to be tough. Samantha does not explicitly use the word "tough," but instead she says in reference to how Reggie Johnson pushed the women in her program, "There's no crying on the podium." Being able to "take" having your authority questioned in front of a large group and being able to "take" humiliation are required of woman choral conductors according to Samantha (and according to Reggie Johnson). "Crying on the podium" is code for weakness in front of the ensemble, for which there is no place. You must be tough.

Samantha conveys her own toughness in two stories where she pushes back when someone threatens her territory. The first is when she objects to her colleague, Mark, insisting that he will come in to her classes to rehearse *Messiah* choruses. She plans ahead for that encounter by checking to make sure the chair of the department supports her, and she holds her

ground in the face-to-face meeting with Mark in which he asserts authority. It is important to note that Mark's reaction to Samantha's strength is to cry, which is a behavior Samantha knows would not be acceptable for her. She says, "Because if I cry, I look weak." Mark has the freedom to cry without looking weak or damaging his career, but she must be tough. She does not have that same freedom.

The other story she tells that illustrates pushing back is in the Palm Sunday story. When her boss insists that she change the processional she refuses. Even when he hits her with a bulletin and grabs her arm in front of the children's choir, she holds her ground. She says to him, "You ever touch me again and I will sue you. Do not touch me." She resists her boss's misogyny and names his inappropriate behavior. She did not cry or show weakness, but instead was tough in the face of his demands.

A closely related theme to needing to be tough or not crying on the podium is the theme of needing to wear a mask. Samantha explicitly mentions the mask when talking about her lack of community. She muses:

> Maybe it's just you have to wear this mask of trying to look so capable and put together all that time that it's very hard to be vulnerable with needing any kind of help. Especially having a family, it seems like if you're a good mother and wife you should be able to handle that. And have a clean house and everything.

Samantha names societal expectations of gender noting that the expectations are more severe because she is a mother and wife. As previously mentioned, the research on these gender expectations confirms Samantha's perceptions (De Welde & Stepnick, 2015; Kmec, Foo, & Wharton, 2015). She feels the expectations, believes she should meet them, and also believes she should hide it if she doesn't meet them. The masks she wears are those of "good conductor" and

"good teacher," but also those of "good mother" and "good wife." The irony is that wearing the masks prevents her from leaning on a community that could help her with those roles. She says, "It's very hard to be vulnerable with needing any kind of help." Samantha sees problems with wearing the masks, but also feels she needs them in order to project the capable, put-together persona that her career demands.

At other times in her narrative, Samantha omits the word "mask" but talks about the same need to cover up her feelings. Samantha learned this masking or hiding of emotions at an early age, partly because of her mother's alcoholism. She said:

> I'm a naturally guarded person, and that's directly related to my mom being an alcoholic. I wasn't very old when I realized that my mom could not be there for me in a way that I wanted her to be. Maybe I was in 6th grade when I started to go, "My mom's not like everybody else's mom." So, I learned to put on a mask and project: "I'm fine."

She also says, "As a kid I was bullied. I learned that you can't let the bullies know they're getting to you, otherwise you're screwed." She has taken these lessons with her to her adult life. For example, in talking about her regret of not applying for the DCA position at Meadowlands she says, "It has taken some soul searching to get over that. I don't want anybody to know that it affects me. Just bring it on, people [*laughing*]." Samantha conceals pain and regret by projecting an "I can handle it" or "Just bring it on, people" demeanor. While the challenges are difficult, she has pride in being able to "take" it and this is partly what makes her excellent in her work.

Theme #5: You Gotta be Better Than Everybody and **Subthemes: Really?** and **Too Big for my Britches**

Samantha is an exceptional musician and she sees excellence as imperative to being successful as a woman in the field of choral conducting. Reggie Johnson tells her, "You gotta be

better than everybody," and she knows it. Samantha conveys being exceptional first when she tells the story of auditioning for the junior high Honor Choir in Germany. Not only did her teacher tell her she "would need to be Julie Andrews" to get in, but she gets in without any help. Samantha tells another story of excellence and exceptionalism when she speaks of getting into her high school choir on the first day of her sophomore year when her teacher "never let sophomore females into concert choir." Also connected to her high school choral experience is when Stan Fisher asks her to be his Assistant Conductor. Yet another story is when she explains that she won the state Solo and Ensemble competition for sopranos when she was a junior in high school.

Two other stories that show Samantha's exceptionalism are the "Grabbing the Books" and "Giving it Away on Looks" stories, stories I retold using creative nonfiction. In "Grabbing the Books" she knows what Jack Canfield wants and is bold enough to be the one who demonstrates that she "wants it." In "Giving it Away on Looks" she was awarded the highest TA role in her doctoral program, but her colleague credits her looks, not her abilities, as winning her the prize. While this connects to the misogynist and double standard themes, the story also demonstrates her excellence.

A subtheme of the "You Gotta be Better" theme is that of "Really?" which represents Samantha's disgust that male colleagues do not need to be better in order to achieve. This is most readily seen in the story about her colleague who was accepted to the ACDA International conductors exchange. She says:

> He's one of these people who perplexes me because I've never been overly impressed by him, but he is so strategic in building his career and taking job after job. He has a wife in a different profession who makes the money and he takes whatever job he needs to in

> order to move up through the ranks. Last year he was accepted to do the conductor exchange and he has a Carnegie Hall conducting gig coming up, and I feel like, "Wow," but also like, "Really?"

The "Wow" shows that she's impressed, but the "Really?" shows her skepticism. Though she's "never been overly impressed by him" and he lacks excellence or exceptionalism, she notes that despite this, he is still able to achieve and climb the ladder. She mentions the support this colleague has at home so that he is free to make decisions that bolster his career and this observation is also supported by the literature. Studies show that marriage has a positive effect on men's careers and salaries in academia (Barbezat, 1989; Bellas, 1992; Toutkoushian, 1998, referenced in Toutkoushian, Bellas, & Moore, 2007). She goes on to lament the difficulty she has, and what she believes other women have, at being "brave" and seeking opportunities when they don't perceive themselves as deserving enough. This comment seems to be an allusion to the 2019 book *Brave, Not Perfect: Fear Less, Fail More, and Live Bolder* by Reshma Sanjani. She says, "Only a very small percentage of women will be bold and do it if they feel like they aren't totally qualified."

Samantha even notes that Greg is given the honor of a Carnegie Hall conducting gig before she is. She qualifies her exasperation, or what she calls her "little personal crisis," by saying:

> He's great and he's really good at what he does. It's terrible for me to say that it's only because he's a man. It's not. But the more that I'm in this collegiate world, the more that you notice that it's just still an old school world.

Samantha's frustrations are with the "old school world" where women may be excellent and even better than their peers, but honors are harder to achieve. Many other women choral

conductors have found this to be true, including Margaret Hillis whose talents and expertise were vast, but whose achievements were limited by her gender (Cherland, 2005). Samantha notes that barriers, though they may be invisible, are still present.

Another subtheme of "You Gotta be Better" is seen in Samantha's words "being too big for my Britches." She uses this phrase when speaking about her confidence in diagnosing and correcting vocal problems when she was in high school. She knew she was capable and was confident in using her talents and knowledge. She later uses the word "arrogant" to describe how she said she "would only take the lectureship if Raymond let [her] conduct a choir." And, another time she says:

> You know how it is when you're just a budding conductor. I think there are two different types of people who come out of their institutions. You either feel like, "I want to come back here and teach because it meant so much to me and I need to be able to fall in line with that tradition," or you come back here with that idea that, "Maybe I could do it better [*laughing*]. I like what you're doing, but maybe I could do this." I was that way.

Samantha knows she is talented, a hard worker, and an exceptional conductor. While she sometimes describes wearing this confidence as "being too big for my britches," she also believes it is a necessary quality in successful conductors.

Yet Samantha occasionally exhibits discomfort when speaking of her accomplishments. Speaking too highly of one's self or boasting are violations of modesty norms and expectations of women (Smith & Huntoon, 2013). Samantha acknowledges discomfort and recognizes her comments could be interpreted as boasting when she explains about winning the state Solo and Ensemble and says, "It's kind of dumb that I'm saying it." There is tension for her between speaking truth and being seen as boastful. Another time Samantha echoes this discomfort is

when she talks about her brother. She says, "I remember one time he told me – this is so dumb – he said 'I am not gonna do choir! Like, if your sister is Michael Jordan, you don't play basketball [*laughing*]!'" Being portrayed as the "Michael Jordan" of choir is high praise and speaking of it pushes the modesty line. In both of these cases she uses the word "dumb" to acknowledge that her behavior of telling about these accomplishments or words of praise could be interpreted as boastful and therefore not feminine.

Theme #6: Fire of Competition and **Theme #7: The Animus and Anima**

Closely tied to the theme of "You Gotta be Better than Everybody" is Samantha's love of competition. She thrives on it and finds it motivating. She first mentions being competitive when talking about her friend in Germany. She uses a fire metaphor to describe her competitive spirit, which is effective in the hot, hungry, and all-consuming image it connotes. Reggie Johnson sees this fire in Samantha and "stoked that monster" in her. While some may balk at this kind of goading, Samantha and Reggie both knew that it was an effective tool for Samantha and brought out her strength and motivation to achieve. Not all of her mentors worked to nurture this side of her, though, which we see when Scott Danielson discourages her from abandoning her classmate and submitting an article to the *Choral Journal* on her own. She says of this incident, "I think sometimes I was more aggressive than what some of my teachers have wanted."

Samantha acknowledges that her competitive edge doesn't have a boundary at her marriage, either. When asked about her husband, Greg, she admits, "It's been good, actually, that we teach at different institutions because he needs to be able to do his own thing without me trying to overshadow him. Which I would…probably even intentionally, I would do that." She goes on to say, "I took the strengths finder test and I feel like a horrible human being because my number one strength is competition. It's kind of a curse."

Samantha is agentic, which is defined by Lampman (2015) as "dominant, strong, competitive, [and] achievement-oriented" (in De Welde & Stepnick, p. 244). These are characteristics acceptable in and even expected of men (Lampman, 2015), but they also describe Samantha. When she says, "I feel like a horrible human being" and "it's kind of a curse," she is naming the disconnect between what she feels comes naturally and societal gender expectations. She says, "I'm just a *guy*. That's the problem – I'm competitive." The "problem" is that being agentic is not feminine, and, in fact, violates social rules of femininity.

Samantha's competitive spirit is closely related to the theme of balancing "the Animus and Anima." She names her competitive nature and ego as making her "Animus" huge, compared to both her husband's Animus and those of other women. She goes on to say, "On the first day at the conference I had people recognize me and come up and talk to me. I said to Greg, 'My Animus is just so strong right now.' And he was like, 'Oh, I know [*laughing*].'" Her confidence is bolstered by being recognized, and she admits this to Greg. When she says that Greg is "not that way," she means that a big ego and pleasure at being recognized is not part of his performance of masculinity.

Yet while Samantha describes herself as a "guy" with a strong Animus, this is juxtaposed with the very feminine physical presence that she cultivates. She touches on this when talking about her students dressing up as her for Halloween:

> So, of course, they wear a form fitting dress and heels because that's my thing. They ask, "How do you wear heels every day?" I don't know, it's just what I do. I don't know if that's necessarily gender, but that's kind of who I am.

Samantha perhaps uses her ultra-feminine dress and appearance to counter-balance the more masculine, agentic parts of her personality. She shows her understanding of social gender rules

time and again through phrases like, “I’ve always been more of a guy’s girl and that doesn’t work as a straight female once you get to a certain age and you’re married.” While she understands the rules, she has difficulty following them in a way that is acceptable to herself and others.

These are themes that weave through and are seen in Samantha’s narrative. They demonstrate the sometimes-conflicted issues and complexities of her experiences as a choral conductor, as well as the other identities she holds. Seeing and understanding these themes in both Ingrid’s and Samantha’s narratives further illuminates the depth and richness of their lived experiences.

CHAPTER 7

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN INGRID'S AND SAMANTHA'S STORIES

The purpose of this research is to explore and understand the experiences of two women who have conducted in well-respected Lutheran collegiate choral programs. Each of these women's narratives portrays lives and careers of worth, challenges, and joys. Chapters 4 and 5 present Ingrid's and Samantha's meanings for their lives, and Chapter 6 explores the patterns and themes I see in their stories. This chapter considers their stories together. I reiterate that my goal in this research is to be empathic, not objective. By comparing and contrasting the experiences of Ingrid and Samantha, and by exploring what is common to both and where their stories diverge, we gain further insights into the data of their stories, experiences, and ways of telling.

Similarities

There are some obvious similarities worth exploring between Ingrid and Samantha and their stories. First, both Ingrid and Samantha are White, heterosexual, middle class, able-bodied, American-born, cisgender women. They were or are the only women on the choral conducting faculty in their Lutheran college, but other than their sex or gender they do not challenge the norms of their institution. By this I mean, their gender is the only factor that marks them as *Other* (Bartleet, 2008). We know that hierarchies in our society are interlocking and the ways our social categories intersect can privilege or disadvantage. Generally, the more one resembles a White, cisgender, heterosexual, middle to upper class male, the greater the privileges (McIntosh, 1988). Some scholars add weightism, or a bias against those who are "overweight," to the list of ways in which people experience discrimination (Bucchianeri, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2013). Yet even with the addition of this category, Ingrid and Samantha deviate from the list of

privilege only in their gender or sex. While this research does not use critical race theory, it is important to acknowledge that they both have unearned privilege that comes from being White, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied, American-born, and middle class.

Both Ingrid and Samantha come from families who loved and valued music and where several family members were musicians. While Ingrid began lessons earlier than Samantha did, they both began their musical training as children and showed an early love and aptitude for it. Ingrid told stories of her sibling trio and her parents making music together. Samantha told of definitive moments listening to her parents make music. Both also have brothers who are professional musicians, so the musical foundations of their childhoods had an effect on their siblings as well. It is difficult to imagine either of their stories without these early musical roots. It seems that in some ways they were preparing for these musical careers from childhood.

In part because of the early and rooted exposure, both women are exceptional musicians and singers. Both have piano skills, but their successes as vocalists – sopranos – is particularly notable. Ingrid's story of receiving a scholarship to Concordia College because of her solo and her successes at both Central State and Superior University demonstrate her abilities. Samantha, too, received her master's in both vocal performance and choral conducting and won the state Solo and Ensemble contest when she was a junior in high school. These accomplishments demonstrate her gifts. Both Ingrid and Samantha are not just excellent musicians, they are exceptional in their vocal abilities.

In considering the demonstrated excellence of both, I remembered an email exchange I had with my mother in 2002. She was a professor and administrator at the University of Regina and was writing a report on women administrators in higher education. She told me, "Senior administration is full of mediocre men. We'll know we have achieved true equality when more

mediocre women get these jobs" (M. R. Cherland, personal communication, March 7, 2002). This is a humorous statement that names a truth about gender equality that I have often felt: that women don't need to be simply as good as men in order to succeed, they need to be better. This is a spoken truth in Samantha's narrative. While Ingrid does not articulate this sentiment (and may not agree with it), we can see her exceptional talents that opened opportunities to her in a time where women were not commonly achieving in the same way. Their gifts, talents, and efforts make it easy to understand why Ingrid and Samantha are successful. One must wonder if exceptional excellence is a required trait for successful women conductors in the Lutheran collegiate context, or other contexts as well.

Ingrid and Samantha share, too, a passion for teaching. This passion is seen in many ways. First, both want to influence students' lives. They use very similar language around music being a "vehicle" to make an impact. Ingrid said, "Music is my vehicle, but ultimately, I'm interested in the students." Samantha explains further, "The amount of people I can reach and change their lives through music or be the vehicle through which their lives can be changed, is significantly higher as a conductor [than as a solo artist]." While they both love choral music and constantly strive for excellence within it, the music itself is not the goal. They use music as a means to reach and make an impact on the lives of their students.

In this passion for teaching, both use the text of the choral literature they program to convey meaning and give their students transformational experiences. When asked how she brought her hopes for her students into her teaching, Ingrid said, "It usually came through the text of the music…There are fabulous texts that give so much room for musing." Samantha goes more in depth and tells of using texts in a similar way, specifically with the piece *Love Arrives*. She speaks of helping her adolescent women students know that they are both worthy of love and

that they are enough. The piece helped them to talk about these struggles. The importance of text and helping their students connect with meaning illustrates Ingrid's and Samantha's passion for teaching.

This passion is further seen in desiring transformation for their students through their choral experiences. Samantha talked about writing cards to individual students. She wants all of her students to see that they are connected to others and the world. She talked about this specifically when referring to the power of thematic programming. She said of her recent peace and justice theme, "I told the students, 'I really want you to see how music can be a force for social change, and have you realize that you're part of something bigger than just this here.'" She wants them to be influenced and changed by encountering her choir.

Ingrid, too, sought to transform her students. She wanted them to be the best they could be, to teach them how to be gentle and kind to each other, to be "curious of spirit," and attended to issues the students were facing in their lives. She would try to "be reflective of things happening in our daily lives and try to draw it in and connect it, to make safe places for them. We had lots to address. And we did." Interestingly, this is the only time in Ingrid's narrative where she seems to promote one sex over the other. She says, "Those are the times that I think it's important to have a woman conductor for a women's group. Because…it just is." She is unwilling or unable to explain why women are better for women's ensembles in this way beyond "There's a different awareness," but she doesn't shy away from insisting it's true. Their love for their students and their hope for transformative, powerful experiences is something both Ingrid and Samantha share.

Before leaving the similarity of how both women love and seek powerful experiences for their students, it's interesting to note how they both talk about the shedding of tears being a sign

of this power and impact. When Ingrid told of a powerful moment in her teaching when she gave a space and platform for her anorexic student to talk with the Aurelia singers she said, "It was really interesting because there wasn't a dry eye in the house." Crying and shedding tears demonstrated the positive impact the experience had on her students. Similarly, in both the All State Treble Choir *Love Arrives* story and in the thematic programming explanation, Samantha mentions tears. She says, "They wept. And the adults, they wept," and "I think that was the most life-changing program I've ever done. The kids just wept." Tears in this context are a sign of success and impact for both Ingrid and Samantha.

Marriage is something these women also have in common. Both Ingrid and Samantha married quite young (ages 19 and 22, respectively), shared their college experience with their spouse, and have remained married for many years. But beyond these early and lengthy unions, both Ingrid and Samantha also shared or share their professional lives with their husbands. Jack, Ingrid's husband, worked in the music department at Liturgia College, so they worked quite closely together. He preceded her at the institution, and while his job was not strictly musical, he was trained as a choir director as well, so he knew Ingrid's work and world very well. Samantha and Greg are both choir directors, completed all of their education together, and even shared a musical non-profit together. Being married to men intimately involved in the same work has meant for both women that their personal and professional lives are deeply embedded and integrated. At the recent national convention that Ingrid and Samantha and I attended, Jack and Greg were also present. This is notable because having marriage partners along at the conference is not the norm for the majority of attendees. A truth for both Ingrid and Samantha is that their working lives overlap and connect with their personal lives so that they are almost indistinguishable from each other, and their marriages are a sign of that.

Another similarity that has been noted from the very beginning and is unifying in this research is that both women conducted and taught in excellent Lutheran collegiate choral programs. Both women conducted the first-year treble ensemble. At both institutions this ensemble is the only choral option for first-year women and at both institutions the choirs are large (approximately 100 voices) and excellent. It should not be ignored that they are both responsible for women's choirs because this has traditionally been a more acceptable place for women choral conductors (Hansen, 2009). It is common for women who conduct at the college or university level to have treble choirs and sometimes this is the only ensemble they conduct (VanWeelden, 2003). What goes unspoken in Ingrid's narrative and is seen only briefly in Samantha's narrative is that women's ensembles are often the "lowest" in the hierarchy of choral groups. Samantha says,

> You're automatically put in the first-year treble choir. And I did not want to do that, I really didn't. Even though I was a performance major, choir was all that really mattered to me. I was not excited about having to be in what is now Bella Voce, which is hilarious because now I conduct it.

A key aspect to Ingrid's story in particular is that her work within the collegiate, academic context was almost exclusively with a women's choir. VanWeelden's (2003) work made note of how common it was for women conductors at the collegiate level to be confined to women's ensembles, and Ingrid's career reflects that common occurrence. While there may never be a clear answer, I wonder if Ingrid's success was perhaps aided by the fact that her collegiate conducting was confined to a "less desirable" ensemble and was therefore less threatening to her male colleagues. Ingrid worked with professional ensembles that were both SATB groups, so her

efficacy and acceptability was not confined to treble groups, but her role was always Assistant or Associate Conductor to a man, and therefore, perhaps, still non-threatening.

Another commonality between Ingrid and Samantha is that neither had women as conducting mentors. Instead, both name excellent male conductors as having major influences on their lives. However, while they didn't use the term mentor as a label, both had women in their lives that they modeled themselves after and who influenced them. Ingrid's mother had a profound impact on her life and in how she seeks to be in the world. She loved music and taught Ingrid to care for others, to not seek attention, and to change bad feelings into something endurable in order to make sure others were comfortable. These traits are seen throughout Ingrid's leadership and how she relates to others. So, while her mother was not her conducting mentor, her mentorship permeates all aspects of Ingrid's leadership and the ways she interacts.

Samantha, too, modeled herself after singers and musicians who were women. She named Barbra Streisand, Julie Andrews, and Sandy Patty as women she mimicked. She also named her middle school friend in Germany and another high school student, Amy, as being people she wanted to be like. So, whether it was conscious or not, Ingrid and Samantha found women who they could model themselves after and see as mentors. Research on women in the conducting field shows the importance of women mentors (Grant, 2000; Jackson, 1996; Bryan, 2016; Brenneman, 2007).

Though they use different language, both Ingrid and Samantha also stress the importance of a balance between intellect and emotion in music-making. Ingrid calls this the head and the heart. She says that the cerebral, mathematical approach to music making is critical and essential, but that this needs to be combined with a heartfelt approach. She says that for her, music goes through the heart first. Samantha admires the heady, left-brain approach to music that she sees in

her mentor Reggie Johnson and in William Jones, and also sees the connection so many people had with the "touchy-feely approach" her mentor Raymond valued. Like Ingrid, Samantha values a balance of the two, recognizing that neither approach is complete on its own. It seems fair to assume that this balanced approach contributes to their success as conductors.

The final striking connection between Ingrid and Samantha was perhaps the most surprising for me. Neither woman seems to see the Lutheran College aspect of their setting as particularly important. Ingrid briefly mentions "the refinement we think of in the Lutheran tradition" when she is contrasting the solo-voiced choral sound of Superior University. When asked specifically about the Lutheran context she says, "The Lutheran part of Liturgia wasn't so much about being Lutheran. It was a context of spiritual awareness. Being purposeful wasn't so much about God as it was about the spirit." Samantha appreciates the strong culture of singing that comes with the Lutheran context at Meadowlands and the numbers and excitement of her students who sing, but she is frustrated by what she sees as a lack of interesting or innovative programming in the Lutheran schools. She says, "I'd like to see a Lutheran choral program with a vision that pushes [the programming model] a little bit." The last point Samantha makes on the Lutheran context is that the student body is diversifying and therefore the choir's participation in traditional Christian worship feels limiting to the students.

A truth that we see for Ingrid and Samantha is that the Lutheran context is not at the forefront of their minds or something they see as having a major influence in their working lives. They both identify as women, choral conductors, teachers, mothers, singers, and musicians, but their Lutheran identities don't cut through their narratives in the same way that it does in mine. Perhaps my surprise lies most in the fact that because this is an important piece of my identity, I assumed it would be for these well-respected, talented women as well. Their stories reminded me

that what it means to be an American (or Canadian) Lutheran has shifted greatly in the last fifty years and I see that a strong identification with what it means to be Lutheran isn't a requirement for great choral conductors – even at Lutheran Colleges.

Differences

Though Ingrid and Samantha have many aspects of their work in common and come from similar contexts they have different experiences and different realities. Rather than attempting to resolve ambiguity by seeing the differences as discrepancies or conflicts, my goal as researcher is to see how these women who are choral conductors see and experience their lives. I focus on the multiple realities presented (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). While the similarities in Ingrid's and Samantha's narratives of experience give valuable insights into their lives and work as choral conductors in the Lutheran collegiate context, the places where their experiences diverge offer depths worth exploring. There are no simple commonalities or conclusions that should be drawn about how women experience their lives, even in the same career and in similar contexts, and we are forced to consider why some of their experiences and truths seem to conflict with each other's experience.

Ingrid and Samantha are part of different generations. Ingrid, born in the decade following World War II, can be considered a baby boomer and Samantha is part of Generation X. Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins (2005) argue that when it comes to studying people's values, "both gender and generation are important variables" and should be considered together (p. 762). It is difficult to know exactly how this difference in age and generation impacts how their experiences diverge. My research is not a quantitative study designed to compare and contrast generational differences but being mindful of the difference is still important. For example,

Ingrid may conform more to gender stereotypes than Samantha because that may be more typical of her generation. Another impact of the generational difference is that Ingrid is retired. While she still conducts from time to time, she is at the end of her career and can look back on it as a whole. Some of the difficulties along the way may be forgotten or smoothed over as she has more of a grand narrative about her journey. Because Samantha is still in the middle of her career, she may not have the benefits of distance or hindsight to be able to clearly see its trajectory or anticipate every step. There is not one, grand, unified story, and there won't be for many years. Generational differences should be acknowledged, but without drawing simplistic, causal conclusions about its effect on their stories.

An essential place to see the differences between Ingrid and Samantha is in their willingness to see gender at work in their lives. This is encapsulated when Samantha tells of an interaction that she had with Ingrid a few years ago: "[Ingrid] said, 'There's nothing about being female. That doesn't matter at all. You just need to be a good conductor and that's all that matters.' But I don't find that's always true [*laughing*]." Ingrid repeated these same words to me in one of our interviews, and reiterated time and again that she was not limited by gender. Ingrid gives a very clear message of "let's not go looking for trouble" and resists seeing gender as an influential factor in her life. As previously discussed in her themes, she insists that being a good conductor is really enough. I must underscore that for Ingrid, being excellent was enough. She enjoyed a fulfilling career and achieved in an area and at a school where few other women had. This was Ingrid's truth.

Yet Samantha's experience is that it is not enough to be an excellent conductor in order to achieve what you want. Samantha sees gender everywhere, even when others do not. She sees double standards and injustices, and spends time considering her own performance of gender.

When I asked about gender her first sentence was, “There’s a persona that you cultivate when you stand in front of the group.” By naming the persona she articulates that gender is a performance (Butler, 1990). This performance is difficult for her because “appropriate” feminine performance at times feels out of character. She says, “I’m just a *guy*,” by which she means she’s competitive, she’s strong, and she knows what she wants. She knows that because these are stereotypically masculine traits, when she acts on them she is breaking gender rules. Samantha feels the consequences of not performing her gender well-enough or consistently. In talking about her student evaluations, she quotes a student as condemning her for being too heteronormative in the way she deals with people.

Notice that though Samantha feels like “a guy” she is essentially accused (by a student who is in her Bella Voce ensemble and who presumably identifies as a woman) of being too feminine and heteronormative. She feels the “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” phenomenon when it comes to performing her gender and teaching, and says, “That student evaluation made me feel, ‘You can’t win.’” Perfect gender performance is a losing battle, one that can’t be won, and Samantha sees evidence of this battle all over her life.

In continuing to consider gender performance and their ability or willingness to recognize it in their lives, we see a stark difference in how these two conductors dress and physically perform gender. Samantha is very feminine in her physical performance. On a typical day she wears a flattering, form-fitting dress, high heels, careful makeup, and styled long hair. She says, “I love to dress up,” and this extends to her performance attire. She talks about her desire to draw attention to herself as a performer, believing it is her job to guide the listener through having their attention. She clearly states, “I don't want to hide the fact that I'm a woman.” Consciously or unconsciously, Samantha perhaps uses an ultra-feminine physical performance to balance

elements of her personality that are more masculine. The feminine physical presentation feels natural to Samantha and not at odds with who she is. Yet there are down sides to meeting norms of feminine attractiveness. In her discussion of the ideal artist archetype Miller (2016) says that the evaluation and perception of women artists is gendered, and that some "may attribute women's success to their physical attractiveness rather than their talent" (p. 125). Samantha's story of her grad school colleague saying, "I guess they were giving it away on looks," directly supports Miller's analysis.

While Ingrid projects a feminine "enough" physical appearance, she takes the opposite approach to concert attire and wishes she didn't have to perform gender on the podium. By wishing for a tuxedo and working for a gender-neutral appearance in concerts, Ingrid laments the need to perform gender as a conductor. But, because Ingrid has feminine leadership and teaching styles which are collaborative, kind, and always conscious of other people's feelings, there is perhaps less of a need for her to perform her femininity physically. She, unlike Samantha, is able to balance her performance of femininity in a way that is acceptable to those around her without going to extreme measures with her looks.

Ingrid's lack of scrutiny regarding her performance of femininity is also, I believe, related to her age. Ingrid is more than 20 years older than Samantha and finds that the social rules for her are less rigid than they are for Samantha. While there are plenty of down sides to this (e.g. older women actors may have difficulty in finding roles in film. See Lincoln and Allen, 2004, referred to in Miller, 2016), the lack of scrutiny regarding feminine attractiveness ironically may mean more freedom for Ingrid.

A quote from Monroe et al. (2008) comes to mind when I consider how Ingrid and Samantha physically perform their gender. They say:

> Cultural cues tell women to minimize or ignore their own needs and personalities and twist themselves to fit another's model for them, or endure subtle forms of harassment and denigration. One woman told of being given a cup by a female colleague that summarized the secret for female success in professional life: *Dress like a lady. Act like a man. Work like a dog*. (Monroe et al., 2008, p. 228)

Both Ingrid and Samantha pick up on the cultural cues as to what is acceptable behavior for them as women choral conductors, and Samantha absolutely fulfills the three directives above. The irony is that Ingrid does not. In the continuum of femininity, Ingrid's dress leans towards the feminine side but is much more neutral than Samantha's. Ingrid doesn't push the "dress like a lady," directive very far and she certainly doesn't "act like a man." Except for the "work like a dog" directive, which both women certainly do, the mug's directives for success do not ring true for Ingrid, nor did they for many other women who were trailblazing choral conductors. Early women orchestral conductors like Margaret Hillis and Sarah Caldwell were known to be rather masculine in their physical presentation, which may have helped them be accepted as conductors (Jagow, 1998). Ingrid deemphasizes and Samantha exaggerates physical femininity.

What we learn from these opposing approaches to gender performance is that there is no one right way to do it, no silver bullet to the perfect approach for women who are conductors. We see this in Samantha's, "You can't win," comment. For women who are choral conductors the rules are unclear. But while, "you can't win," you *can* lose. Samantha describes the woman on Facebook who is told that her purple dress makes her rear end look big. Along with facing weightism and misogyny, this woman is told that she's not performing her gender well enough because she is not meeting the social rules. This is the nature of gender performance, and we see

Ingrid and Samantha navigating gender performances in different ways and with varying levels of success.

Motherhood is another aspect of feminine identity, and this too is a role to be performed. Both Ingrid and Samantha have children, both consider motherhood to be an important aspect of their identity, both worked while parenting, and both share some feelings of guilt surrounding parenting. Yet the difference in their experience comes with the amount of outside support they had or have and the sheer amount of guilt they experience around this role. Samantha feels quite alone in her role as a parent and lacks community or outside support. She talks about the two and a half years that she spent as a single parent before Greg was able to get a job close by and notes that this was a hard time for all of them, especially her oldest daughter. The times Samantha mentions guilt all surround parenting. She said of Meadowlands not helping Greg find a position, "I felt like in a way – I'm totally projecting, it's probably just my own guilt of bringing the kids out here by myself – that they were saying to me, 'Well, you did this.'" Again, later she says, "There was a lot of guilt. You know, 'I can't believe I did this to my kids.'" Samantha takes on more feelings of responsibility and guilt than her husband, and feels the burden, hostility, and judgement from others around parenting. Her brief story of needing to find a babysitter for 18-month old Kyle who has the chicken pox during *Messiah* performances encompasses many elements of Samantha's parenting experience. She feels guilt, she feels responsibility to her job, she feels she has no one familiar to call on for help and therefore a lack of support, and she feels hostility and judgement from others. Ingrid inadvertently sums up Samantha's experience by saying:

> Young moms with young children have it harder than we did. Because they have to find people to care for their kids, and it could sometimes be someone you've never seen before and they live 15 miles away and you get desperate. And we just never had that.

This is a stark difference in their experiences. Ingrid mentions guilt once in relation to parenting, but guilt is not the dominant emotion in Ingrid's experience of motherhood. Instead, her dominant emotion is gratitude. Ingrid's mother moved to live nearby and help with child care, which made all the difference for her. Because of the support she enjoyed with three adults acting in parenting roles, Ingrid's experience of motherhood was very different than Samantha's.

One more point is worth noting about Samantha's experience of motherhood before moving on to another area where their narratives diverge. Samantha says that because she feels she was treated poorly and judged as a mom, she now holds other moms to the same standard. She says:

> So, you don't bring motherhood in to work. If you try to use that excuse, suck it up. Somehow that rubbed off on me. It's sort of self-imposed. Like, "*I* did it." There's part of me now that says, "Don't use that excuse because you set us all back." But I know that's stupid. We're parents first.

Samantha internalizes the societal expectation that women will care for their children and that regardless of outside work commitments, mothers bear the responsibility for their children's health and happiness. This is an expectation felt by many women and the expectation itself has not shifted enough to accommodate the increase of women in the work force. We see damaging guilt and self-judgement in Samantha's experience and an internalization of the messages that make her almost believe that the negative attitudes towards women are justified. She struggles against adopting these values and holding other moms to unreasonable standards.

A closing comparison about motherhood between Ingrid and Samantha is an acknowledgement that their own mothers were very different. As previously discussed, Ingrid relied on her mother to show her how to behave and interact, and used her as a model for how she wants to be in relation to others. Samantha names her own mother as an alcoholic and says, "I wasn't very old when I realized that my mom could not be there for me in a way that I wanted her to be." Both women were profoundly impacted by their mothers, but in very different ways.

The differences in how Ingrid and Samantha see gender and are willing to engage with it are also reflected in how they mentor women students. Samantha consciously encourages her women students, specifically. She notices when they do not seek opportunities like conducting the Brahms. She gives them opportunities to sub for her church choir. She sees this as an important role she can play. Ingrid, instead, encouraged her women students to not play the "poor me" card or blame their misfortune on "other things," meaning gender. Instead of complaining about differential treatment she encouraged them to make the best of what they got. Both women mentor in a way that is consistent with their own experiences and beliefs about how gender affected their careers. Samantha believes her gender has made her road more difficult, so she offers more help to her women students. Ingrid doesn't believe it had an effect, so she downplays its importance to her students, even when they make note of challenges.

We also see a difference between Ingrid and Samantha in how they trust and relate to mentor figures. Ingrid trusted teachers and mentors and let them guide her life. It seems Ingrid rarely, if ever, pushed back against authority figures or those she trusted to know more than her. Samantha, on the other hand, projects much more independence than Ingrid does in this way. Particularly notable is her willingness to critique mentors or people with authority or see how she could do something better. Of her conductor at Northwest Lutheran College she tells her high

school mentor, “I can’t believe it. He just conducts the pattern.” And of her mentor at Meadowlands she said, “I didn’t always agree with him.” Particularly significant is when she says:

> I think there are two different types of people who come out of their institutions. You either feel like, “I want to come back here and teach because it meant so much to me and I need to be able to fall in line with that tradition,” or you come back here with that idea that, “Maybe I could do it better [*laughing*]. I like what you're doing, but maybe I could do this.” I was that way.

Samantha’s “too big for my britches” approach means she is willing to critique, is skeptical of authority, and has confidence and trust in her own abilities and visions. This is a noticeable difference between the two women.

Related to how they deal with authority figures is how willing Ingrid and Samantha are to push back against unjust treatment. As previously explored in her themes, Samantha tells two stories of pushing back against authority and shows her willingness to engage with and resist unfair treatment. Ingrid, on the other hand, never names a specific instance, but gives a hypothetical example of how she would react in an unjust situation. She says:

> If, when I was teaching at Liturgia, there had been a student run thing where they tried to get me out for some reason, I would not have fought it. And it’s not because I don’t believe in myself, it would be because if I had lost the confidence of other people, I wouldn’t want to be in that position.

Note that Ingrid says she would not push back, even if she believed herself to be in the right. One interpretation of this hypothetical example is that Ingrid succeeded by getting along with others, something she learned as a child. Always being conscious of how others were feeling and being

willing to change something about herself or her approach allowed Ingrid to have positive relationships with little or no confrontation (because she avoided it) and "never a cross word." A truth for Ingrid is that getting along with others was incredibly important in her successful career. Yet, lest we assume this is a universal truth, Samantha alternately shows that confronting conflict and pushing back has been necessary to her successful career.

Without exploring them to the same extent, I will present a few more areas where the two women differ. The two women have different relationships with their colleagues. Ingrid talked about her colleagues as feeling like brothers. While Samantha says she has good collegial relationships, she doesn't feel close to her own colleagues or like she can open up and use them as supports. Instead she sees the privileges they enjoy (being seen as champions if they stay home with a sick child, etc.), doesn't feel supported by them, and has occasional conflicts.

Ingrid and Samantha talk about competition in very different ways. Samantha describes herself as highly competitive and this being a place where she thrives. Ingrid says she would never compete or put herself in a position where she would need to compete. She goes as far as to say that, "If I had to apply for a job at one of these schools today, I would never get hired. I wouldn't have put myself out there." This sense of competition is closely connected to their sense of ambition. Neither woman names ambition directly at any point in their narrative, but Samantha indirectly talks about it quite often. She sees the traditional choral conducting career ladder and takes every opportunity to climb it. She asks to teach Advanced instead of Beginning Conducting, she asks to teach the University Singers instead of the Chapel Choir. She applied for, and was granted, tenure. Perhaps the most obvious place where we see ambition is when I asked Samantha about her career goals and she said she would like to be a DCA at an institution where she can work with graduate students. While there are different measures for success, DCA

positions at institutions with graduate programs are arguably the highest position a choral conductor can attain. Samantha names this. She also names two moments when she did not "put herself out there," as Ingrid would say, and she regrets them. The first is when she does not submit her application to the International Conductor Exchange. She blames the internalization of gender for not applying and points out societal teachings for boys to be brave and girls to be perfect. The second time is when she does not apply for the DCA position at Meadowlands. She believed she would not get the job so she didn't apply and she now lives with both the benefit of not having been rejected and the regret of not having tried.

Ingrid ignored the career ladder and benefitted from that avoidance. By being named "Artist in Residence" at Liturgia she was able to side-step doctoral degree requirements and tenure-track jobs. By not competing, she avoided rejection. By not seeking out other opportunities she avoided experiencing discontent in her place in the hierarchy. Ingrid was pleased to accept what came her way and succeeded without ambition.

As painful as this point is to make, it must be noted that in the overall picture of life satisfaction and "happiness," Ingrid is more content. Samantha experiences more difficulties and challenges. She suffers. It is too simple to say that her ambition and success as a collegiate choral conductor cause her suffering. More likely, it is her willingness to see and recognize power struggles and injustices that leads to her discontent. This is a major difference in their narratives and a truth that I see.

Before concluding, let us briefly return to the generational differences between the two women. In following Ingrid's lead, we can see that her career was fulfilling and successful. Samantha is still in the middle of her career and we don't know how the challenges that she names will play out. We don't know if she will follow and achieve her dreams of teaching at an

institution where she can be the DCA and have graduate students. We don't know if she will look back at her career and call it successful. I hope that Samantha will have the career she desires and will look back with satisfaction and fulfillment at its conclusion. Yet, perhaps Samantha's willingness to see gender at work in her life is also a burden. Perhaps the kind of fulfillment that Ingrid enjoys is not the same kind of fulfillment that Samantha seeks.

CHAPTER 8

CODA

"Hence, it is important for us to recognize that personal narratives are never simply 'personal.' They are crucial entry points or portals for examining one's lived experience in relation to historical, social, and cultural contexts." (Kim, 2016, p. 126)

"The personal is political." (Hanische, 1970, p. 1)

"When no road exists, the footsteps of those who pass begin to show a way."
(source unknown, quoted in Barrett & Stauffer, 2012, p. 1)

The purpose of this narrative research was to examine the stories and experiences of two women who conduct or have conducted in respected choral programs at Lutheran colleges. The lives and experiences of Samantha and Ingrid, and how they see them, are the entry points to examining what it means to be a woman choral conductor and how this role fits into historical, social, and cultural contexts. Let us briefly look at their lives in these contexts.

Ingrid and Samantha see the world in different ways partly because they are women of different generations and their careers began and took place in different historical moments. Ingrid began her career in the 1970s when the Women's Movement, the second-wave of feminism was blossoming on the east coast and flourishing especially in cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Though the Women's Movement gained traction during her young adulthood, Ingrid cooperated with mainstream Midwestern cultural expectations of the time by

following her husband, taking care of others, yet still managed to be a choral conductor. Samantha began her career around the turn of the millennium when the second-wave had been around for 30 years and the third-wave of feminism was beginning (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Resistance to patriarchy was more pervasive in the culture. Women were more aware of inequalities and were being raised to believe they could do any job they wanted. More young women were angry about facing the old battles they thought had been won. Samantha had their permission to be angry. These different historical contexts contribute to the differences in their stories.

Ingrid's and Samantha's narratives also shed light on social context. Today, both Ingrid and Samantha are aware of new ways of thinking about gender. In our interviews they both talked about having transgender students and they both sought to be fair to their students and supportive of those who are transgender. They are both aware that young women suffer and may be vulnerable to eating disorders. Yet Ingrid still says that gender doesn't matter in conducting. West and Zimmerman (1987 & 2009), Erving Goffman (1976), and other sociologists say that gender matters in *every* social act, including conducting a choir or working in academia. These sociologists would endorse Samantha's awareness that things are different for men and for women who are conductors. The research on women in choral conducting and women in academia as explored in Chapter 2 shows that gender inequalities are persistent and unlikely to fix themselves. We see it, to give just one example, in the fact that fewer women conduct choirs in Lutheran colleges in the United States.

Samantha's and Ingrid's narratives also provide an entry point into examining our current cultural context. By cultural context I mean the often unstated beliefs and assumptions about the world that shape how we interact with the world. These cultural beliefs are often subtle, difficult

to pinpoint, and may even be inconsistent, but they are present and contribute to how we relate to the world. We see culture at work in my own story when Joel Anderson wins "Most likely to be the next conductor of the Concordia Choir." He was the "obvious choice" because in 2001 (and perhaps still today) the assumption was that a man, not a woman, is most likely to be in a desirable and prestigious choral conducting position. Most people don't articulate these beliefs aloud, but that doesn't mean they aren't present. We see culture at work when women are hired more easily or frequently as conductors of women's and children's choirs (Kushner, 2017). Anthropologists would say that what is obvious, what is assumed or taken for granted, what everybody knows is true is the belief system that constitutes a culture. For centuries the belief that women's subservient role was the natural order of things was a part of the culture. That has been changing since the second-wave began in the 1960s. But some people still cling to the old cultural beliefs, while others embrace the assumption that women can do anything men can do.

Samantha and Ingrid show us that women can be excellent, artistic, and impactful choral conductors. They show us that their excellence is not dependent upon a Lutheran identity, even in a Lutheran collegiate context. They show us that they see gender in different ways from each other and that recognizing the effects of gender is not necessary, but that recognition perhaps impacts contentedness as well the ability to address inequalities. Their stories and experiences are entry points for us to examine gender in our own lives.

Recommendations for Further Research

This exploration of Samantha's and Ingrid's stories leads to areas where there is a need for more research. First, there is a need for further quantitative research centered around gender and choral conducting. Though instrumental conducting shows even greater gender disparity, gender inequality remains a problem in choral conducting as well. We need more recent

demographic information on the numbers of women teaching music at all levels, the numbers of women in graduate choral conducting programs, and the numbers of women represented on music faculties, specifically in choral conducting. These numbers should be noted and tracked by individual schools as well as nationally so that individually and collectively we may see the problems and seek solutions.

Second, while these quantitative studies can show numbers that indicate problems, more research is needed on the stories behind the problems. As discussed and demonstrated in this research, qualitative studies give unique perspective into the individual lives of those who are less represented. As Kim (2016) contends, these individual lives are essential entry points into studying what is behind the numbers.

Third, more research centering alternate ways of looking at gender is needed, as well as research that centers any group that may be at a disadvantage. We need to examine race, sexuality, gender identity, ableism, and social class in relation to our conducting field and be open to seeing beyond traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity. How these categories and identities intersect for conductors is essential to consider and explore.

Fourth, we need more research on the Lutheran choral context. This is a unique subset and culture within the American choral tradition, and it deserves further exploration that looks beyond individual schools and explores it as a collective. My initial research suggests that the gender disparity in this context is significant and studies must include explorations of gender within this context.

Fifth, this research addresses the lived experiences of an emerging conductor and I join with Brenneman (2007) in calling for more research on the emerging generation of women who are choral conductors. As previously mentioned, looking back at a whole career is important, but

there is much to be learned from looking at the experiences of conductors who are emerging or mid-career. More research in each of these areas will help to keep the disparity and challenges of gender in this field from being obscured or ignored.

Closing Thoughts

This research was conducted at a time when gender representation – both inside and outside of higher education – is still disparate and notable. In the May 2019 email newsletter sent to members of the College Music Society, President Eileen M. Hayes wrote about closing the gender gap on music faculties in academia. She discusses data seen in Chart 13 from the Music Data Summaries 2017-2018, a report I refer to in Chapter 2. President Hayes closes her message by articulating the importance of using both quantitative and qualitative data to address problems and what lies behind them. She says that "without empirical evidence and anecdotes of lived experience," the chart does not offer the full insights needed to make change ("Monthly message from CMS President Eileen M. Hayes" email, May 1, 2019). We need the insights and stories of Ingrid, Samantha, and others in order to show ways of moving forward and making substantive change.

As I conclude this research I'm also packing boxes, sorting through choral literature, and writing syllabi in order to prepare for my first fall teaching and conducting at Gustavus Adolphus College. I feel reflective, and while folding my collection of performance wear yesterday I found myself considering what I have learned in this process. The research questions I asked were: What meanings do women who have conducted in the Lutheran collegiate choral context find in their work? What are the challenges they face? How do they see their gender impacting their experiences? These questions have been answered in ways that cannot be neatly summarized with facts, figures, and charts. Stories have the power to answer questions of meaning and

experience, and provide a way forward through the challenges of our time. Ingrid and Samantha told rich stories full of wisdom and complexities. These women and their stories give me hope in moving forward and facing the future.

I've learned that Ingrid is right: you've just gotta be great. And, I've learned that Samantha is also right: there's more to it than that. The lived experiences of Ingrid and Samantha remind us that the personal is political. Larger issues of gender in academia and in the field of choral conducting are present and played out in the personal lives of those who live and work in these contexts. They show us that there is not one obvious way to navigate the world as a woman who is a choral conductor. There is no clear map to success. But both Samantha and Ingrid have walked and are walking this road, and their footprints and stories begin to show a way.

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