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Stepping stone or career move? A case study of rural K–12 music educators and their job attrition

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

**STEPPING STONE OR CAREER MOVE?
A CASE STUDY OF RURAL K-12 MUSIC EDUCATORS
AND THEIR JOB ATTRITION**

by

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Dedicated to every educator who has taught rural K–12 music

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Abstract

Teachers of rural K–12 music education are subject to attrition rates that are higher than many other professions or teaching specialties (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014; Harmon, 2001; Ingersoll, 2001). Because of this, a large number of music teachers who are hired to teach in rural schools are inexperienced educators who are often unaware of the specific demands that are unique to these jobs. Upon earning a teaching certification, many new graduates get hired in rural locations with unfamiliar teaching conditions that could potentially lead to dissatisfaction in the workplace which could be a contributing factor to the higher than average attrition rates (Bates, 2013; Hancock, 2008; Monk, 2007; Isbell, 2005).

This dissertation is a case study of in-service music educators in the rural Western United States designed to help understand the trend of higher than average attrition rates. With a theoretical framework of utility maximization to find a satisfactory person-job fit, I observed, interviewed, and collected journals from 5 participants with current or previous rural K–12 music teaching experience to determine: 1) what reasons do educators consider influential in a decision to stay in or move from a teaching position?,

2) what changes do teachers report in their perception of job utility maximization over their careers?, and 3) what are some benefits and challenges of teaching in a rural music teaching setting?

Reasons for attrition specific to rural music education and generic to teaching were discussed in terms of a participant's perception of job satisfaction and their decisions to stay in or leave rural K–12 music teaching jobs. Participants listed five themes as influential to their decisions for attrition: 1) disproportionate emphasis on athletics and pep band, 2) teacher and student absenteeism, 3) spillover work time 4) family, and 5) administrative rapport. No individual theme was a singular indicator of attrition, nor was any theme more prominent than others in influencing a participant to keep or leave a job. Rather, the perception of each reason for attrition had a cumulative effect and jobs were maintained or sought anew based on a combination of views of each theme. Also, participants reported steady inclinations of preferred musical specialty, but the perception of each theme as a reason for attrition changed with time and teaching experience. Ultimately, participants revealed that rural K–12 music teaching jobs can be highly rewarding if a person is professionally flexible, willing to regularly travel long distances (with students and alone), and can appreciate the idiosyncrasies of living in remote communities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My first job as a music educator was in a remote Montana community. Fifty miles from the nearest stop light, it had fewer residents than my university graduating class. My public school musical experience had been similar to that of most of my classmates: a moderately sized high school with a well-established, popular, and competitive music program. At the post-secondary level, I studied Western-European music history, classical music theory, and advanced music literature on my major instrument. Neither my public school nor pre-service training experience offered preparation, much less incentive, for the unique experience of teaching at a small school in an isolated town.

The school district which offered me my first job consisted of two schools on one campus with about 400 students in grades K–12 and served farms and ranches for a 30-mile radius. Fresh from college, I was responsible for grades 5–12 band, choir, and general music courses. The generalization of musical and teaching skills for which I was responsible was a challenge, as was the excessive time spent with students at community functions, sporting events, and on buses traveling the vast distances between four-way stop signs. Compounding my overwhelmed feeling was that I was the only secondary music educator for more than 30 miles. Professionally, I was isolated and felt unsupported. When I mentioned that I was unaware of the challenges of rural music education to a faculty colleague, the response was that very few new teachers are. Anecdotally, I was told that in the history of that public school, no music teacher had ever lasted more than three years. At the end of my first year, I reinforced that trend when my contract was not renewed.

Over the next 15 years, I worked in or near rural schools in Montana and Wyoming, and began to observe them closely. Many small schools have similar teacher attrition rates to the one where I began teaching, but some have highly successful programs in which music educators spend entire careers. People who have become successful rural music teachers enjoy special interpersonal community relationships in tight-knit societies that are often non-existent in larger communities. In rural schools, music teachers also have the opportunity to build solid relationships with students, because some teachers instruct pupils for their entire public school education.

Rural music educators face low populations and wide expanses of land between communities, which can lead to challenges of social isolation, extensive student absenteeism due to extra-curricular activities, and a lack of professional collusion within the school district or community at large. Furthermore, it seems as though there is an underrepresentation of rural music education issues in academic literature. In a reference list designed for the rural music education electronic column in the Mayday Group, Bates (2013) noted that published articles on this topic are relatively sparse. Isbell (2005) echoed the sentiment by declaring that rural music education is a field with “a substantial lack of literature” (p. 30).

This lack of literature related to rural education issues is concerning in that nearly “two-thirds of all schools in this country are, by some definitions, considered rural” (Isbell, 2005, p. 30). These schools represent more than a “quarter of all public school students” (Beeson, 2001, p. 22), and “almost 40 percent of public school teachers” (Harmon, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, rural schools seem to be increasing in overall

nationwide student enrollment. Johnson and Strong (2007) reported a five-year trend that showed “an increase in students attending schools in rural areas and a decrease in students attending schools in urban and suburban settings” (p. 1).

Defining Rural

One limiting factor in the availability of research in the field of rural music education is the lack of a clear definition of the term “rural.” The United States Census lists rural areas as “all territory, persons, and housing units not defined as urban” (2013). Prior to 2006, the National Center for Educational Statistics (N.C.E.S.) appeared to concur, by proclaiming population size as the sole indicator of designation of rural or urban. In 2006, the N.C.E.S. revised its code system for the purpose of more complete educational data collection. The new classification system uses population as a metric, but also considers proximity and population density to determine cities, towns, suburbs, and rural areas. In the current N.C.E.S. model, “urban” describes a principal city which contains the primary population and economic center of a metropolitan statistical area. Principal cities are delineated into urban areas and urban clusters. Urban areas have “populations of 50,000 or more” and urban clusters are “between 25,000 and 50,000 people” (2007). Rural locations, then, are those areas with population less than 25,000 and lie beyond a recognized urban area or cluster. To identify and differentiate rural schools and school districts in more remote areas from those located just outside an urban center, the N.C.E.S. further divides rural communities into three categories. The identifiers fringe, distant, and remote are used, depending on how far the area is from an urban center or urban cluster. In this study I focused on music educators who have

experience teaching in remote rural areas which are defined as any territory “more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and more than ten miles from an urban cluster” (Quinlan, 2008, appendix A). This classification modification is important because geospatial elements may impact area residents in ways very different than when one merely considers population density. For example, a small bedroom community within driving distance of a relatively large metropolitan area has access to a much larger assortment of resources than a small town of a similar size 100 miles from the nearest mid-size city.

Rural Music Education

Considering the potential perceived hardships associated with living and working in rural schools, it would not be surprising for a music educator to become frustrated while attempting to apply a traditional model of music education to this environment. However, by embracing the cultural dynamic of the region and applying the principles of community music practices, teachers can have the opportunity to enhance their professional satisfaction, and their students will likely enjoy a more meaningful musical experience.

The camaraderie at small-town school sporting and other performance events is a defining factor of rural life. Lyson (2002) went so far as to describe rural schools as “social and cultural centers” where community members derive their very identities (p. 131). As a result, in events ranging from parades to art-walks, community organizers rely on local “experts,” which are more often than not school district employees. Hunt (2009) observed that community expectations outside of the confines of the school add to a rural

music teacher's demands. Local citizens and policy makers automatically call on music teachers because music teachers are seen as sole authorities. To a music educator the status of local expert can be daunting as well as liberating. Being regularly called to provide student work for innumerable events can be exhausting, but the artistic freedom it allows is highly conducive to independent creativity.

In addition to knowing and accepting that a rural music teacher's duties go well beyond the walls of the school, understanding the unique cultural traits associated with any school system or community can be a valuable tool for job satisfaction and longevity. Traditionally, this has been a problem for rural schools (Bates, 2013). A lack of cultural sensitivity or understanding could be a detriment to someone who is hired to teach in a small community. Even vernacular phrases used to describe the position can be off-putting. For example the phrase "middle of nowhere - think about the connotation – that some places are nowhere with nothing to see and nothing to do" (Bates, Mayday Group Weblog, 2013). Duncan (1993) also cautioned against vernacular descriptions such as "virtually uninhabited" (p. 2) which, like the definition of the term rural, derives its etymology from proximity to or existence of groups of people. This lack of cultural sensitivity has led to rural communities being places to be from rather than to go to. Rural communities, according to Howley (2009), "have been places that the ambitious, modernist individuals have, for a hundred years, learned to leave" (p. 537). For many pre-service music teachers the "ideal" teaching position is a large suburban setting. This means that their ambitions run the risk of permeating their messaging to their students. When that happens, rural students can unfairly be "(a) constructed as deficient (in

comparison with nonrural students), (b) assumed to need, somehow, to become less-rural, or something ‘other’ than they are, and (c) encouraged to master, and have their achievement measured in, a curriculum that values and prioritizes metro-cosmopolitan ways of being, while remaining ambivalent to rurality” (Roberts & Green, 2013, p. 768). If a person applies for a job teaching in a rural school, they will most likely achieve more success in their position if they understand the dynamic of the school and community as a unique entity rather than as a comparison to an urban setting.

Beyond cultural adaptations, there is a slightly less venerable hindrance to a person choosing to accept a rural music teaching job. Jimerson (2003) explained that many rural school districts face difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers largely due to teacher compensation. According to Jimerson, in general, teachers are not compensated as well as other professionals, even under the most lucrative circumstances. In 2003, the author revealed that new college graduates who were hired in teaching jobs earned an average salary 35% lower than sales and marketing, 43% lower than business administration, and 68% lower than entry-level engineering jobs. Furthermore, the author reported that “across the country, rural teachers are paid less than teachers in other locales. This is true for beginning salary, average salary, and the highest salary on the pay scale” (p. 8). States ranking lowest in salary are all states with predominantly rural communities, and rural districts tend to offer lower salaries than suburban and urban districts within the same state.

Lower salaries in rural locations are often anecdotally justified by a lower cost of living. Jimerson has shown, however, that these justifications do not explain the situation

in its entirety. While certain costs do vary significantly by location, cost adjustment indices do not capture other realities experienced in rural remote settings. For instance, the availability or lack of availability of certain goods may make some cost-of-living adjustments inapplicable. For example, adjustments for housing cost differences only make sense if good housing exists—and in some rural areas, it does not. Also, cost adjustments usually do not account for certain locale-specific needs. For example:

poor families in urban areas can meet their needs using public transportation. In remote rural settings, a functional car becomes a necessity. And in some northern rural areas, a 4-wheel drive car is necessary. Because of these factors, comprehensive cost-of-living adjustments designed to calibrate for an equal quality of life also need to account for locale differences in availability of goods and services, and extra basic necessities. In many rural areas, remoteness is a costly reality (p. 11).

As a recommendation, Jimerson suggested that narrowing the funding gap is paramount to recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers in rural areas, “if it is indeed a national expectation that ‘no rural child will be left behind,’ then the resources must be allocated to make this a reality - anything less than that is a sham” (p. 19).

For all of the potential hardships, one distinct advantage to teaching in a rural school system is that the low population numbers create a sense of intimacy and camaraderie within the community. Small schools in small communities often have only one (or fewer) full time music teacher, which can cause a sense of professional isolation. Socially, it would seem a similar trend would exist. Interestingly, there is an irony to the

social dynamic of small communities in that a majority of the people knows each other and every outing is rife with familiar faces. Duncan (1993) eloquently described this paradox:

Strangers to the contemporary frontier often experience what can best be described as a double sense of the bends. The first, a response to the landscape comparatively devoid of inhabitants, is almost physical decompression: no people, no buildings, no traffic, so much sky. You find yourself taking deep gulps of air, unsure whether you're unwinding from the press of humanity or becoming uneasy from the palpable remoteness. Paradoxically, the second is a sense of societal claustrophobia. The communities you encounter may be the most geographically dispersed in the nation, but they are also the most closely knit (p. 52).

One of the key factors of job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness is the idea of community, and this is where rural locations could have an advantage. In order for individuals to feel connected to a teaching position, Maltas (2004) expounded they must be “socialized to the cultures that surround the position” (p. 1). Bates (2010) also expressed this sentiment and noted that when rural music educators are interviewed about their teaching situation “community is usually given as one of the greatest advantages of teaching music in rural schools” (p. 90).

Attrition in Rural Music Education

One issue that is particularly consequential for schools, teachers, and students in rural music education settings is that of teacher attrition. The word attrition is used to

describe members of a workforce and their rate of leaving a particular job. In the field of education those employees who chose to maintain their current teaching position are commonly referred to as stayers. The teachers who leave a position, voluntarily or otherwise, are broken into two subgroups. The first subgroup contains those educators who acquire a different teaching position; they are referred to as movers. Leavers are those who leave the profession entirely (Goldring, Tae, & Riddles, 2014; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007).

When analyzing attrition rates, organizational management literature has demonstrated that some attrition may be necessary and beneficial. When inefficient employees sever employment, new hires can result in better person-job matches and offer infusion of new ideas and fresh insight into organizations (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984). Workforce stability in teaching has the potential, contended Macdonald (1999), to lead to stagnation and “can engender complacency and limit the possibilities of introducing new materials and approaches to a resistant teaching population thereby curtailing school improvement” (p. 841). For example, teachers who left a particular job in New York City (movers and leavers combined) in the first year of teaching were typically viewed as ineffective in regards to improving student success (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008).

Undeniably, some teacher attrition is inevitable and even needed for a healthy workforce; however, often people who leave a job do so at a detriment to the organization they leave. This is known as dysfunctional turnover that is described as a “voluntary separation of employees whom the organization prefers to retain” (Abelson & Baysinger,

1984, p. 331). The term dysfunctional is used to describe this type of attrition because these employees have made positive contributions to the organization and the loss of these employees “threatens organizational effectiveness” (p. 331).

Organizational effectiveness within a school system is displayed as a sense of community among families, teachers, and students, and has long been held by education researchers as one of the most important indicators and aspects of successful schools (Hancock, 2008; Hearn, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001; Jimerson, 2003; Robinson, 2012).

Teachers leaving or moving from a position causes a loss of institutional memory and also contributes to a loss of valuable tangible and intangible resources that are used in the re-hiring process such as advertising open positions, selection committee time and effort, and new employee induction support (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2012). Unfortunately, regardless of the type of attrition (healthy or dysfunctional), the consequences have led to teacher shortages, creating a need to hire under-prepared or out-of-field teachers; larger classes; fewer advanced course options; a less coordinated curriculum; less-experienced teaching staff; and fragmented professional development. These trends are “exactly opposite from elements that are necessary to improve student learning” (Jimerson, 2003, p. 13). Faculty instability and last minute hires of under-qualified teachers have emotional and psychological effects on children that are detrimental to student achievement (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007).

An initial comparison of teacher resignation rates with rates in other professions shows that teachers are “not necessarily unique and . . . their resignation patterns in general are similar to most other professions” (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007,

p. 777). This view is not, however, accepted as doctrine. Goldring, Taie & Riddles (2014) reported that the annual attrition rate of teachers in the United States public school system is 16 percent. A nationwide rate of total employee attrition of 11 percent reported by Ingersoll (2001) suggested teacher attrition rates are higher than other occupations. The crux of the problem, however, does not lie within the overall numbers, but with the distribution among varying demographic areas. The number of qualified teachers in the workforce is more or less equal to the demand, but some areas of the country have an excess of qualified educators, and a shortage that is “particularly acute” in urban and rural areas (Harmon, 2001, p. 2). On average, movers and leavers combined had a 15.4 percent attrition rate among educators in communities that are considered rural, which is lower than urban rates but higher than both town and suburban educators (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014). Compounding the issue of attrition rates being higher among the rural demographic as compared to suburban and town locales, is that rural school districts have lower recruitment success rates when trying to attract new applicants (Harmon, 2001).

The issue of high education attrition rates has not gone unnoticed. Efforts are being made to incite teachers to move to communities with rates of high attrition. State and national programs as cataloged by Maranto and Shuls (2012) offer monetary and housing incentives in the state of Arkansas to encourage people chose to work in rural locations. The results of these incentives were inconclusive as to their effectiveness. On a larger scale, Teach for America (2012) offers accelerated training for university graduates who do not necessarily hold teaching certificates. While this organization is lauded for offering services to students in high poverty rural and urban schools throughout the

United States, results are mixed as to the effectiveness of the teachers (Laczko-Kerr, & Berliner, 2002).

To maximize effectiveness and longevity Laczko-Kerr & Berliner (2002) recommended hiring experienced certified teachers. In rural areas, however, the trend is high attrition rates with open positions being increasingly filled with only one to five years of experience (Haynes, Maddock, and Goldrick, 2014). Formal comprehensive induction programs can be effective for these inexperienced educators in navigating their new careers to insure job satisfaction and longevity. Research has shown comprehensive induction programs can lead to an increase in teacher job satisfaction and retention, pedagogical methods, and student achievement. The problem with these programs is that they are not necessarily possible in rural schools, especially among rural music educators. According to Haynes, Maddock, and Goldrick (2014), an effective comprehensive induction program provides four elements, 1) high quality mentoring with a mentor from the same field, 2) common planning time for regular scheduled interaction with other teachers, 3) participation in seminars and intense professional development, and 4) ongoing communication and support from school leaders. In a rural community where the music educator is often the only music teacher in the district, common planning time and mentorship from the same field are not possible. Additionally, the geographic isolation makes area-specific professional development difficult.

The challenges with filling and retaining open rural music teaching jobs has led to what Monk (2007) described as a struggle to appoint qualified teachers or make do with teachers who have fewer qualifications or less experience with little opportunity for any

induction support. Indeed, research has shown that rural music teaching jobs suffer high attrition rates, and that the positions are increasingly being filled with under-qualified or inexperienced applicants (Hancock, 2008).

The higher than average attrition rates could stem from rural jobs being viewed as a stop along a career journey rather than a destination position. As with many professionals, teachers are affected by the pull of personal and professional gain, whether monetary or otherwise, as is possibly evident by attrition rates. Within the paradigm of education, rural K–12 music teaching position might be viewed as an entry level or starter job compared with a position directing a large suburban high school or university ensemble. This perceived hierarchy of jobs “increases the likelihood that rural students will be taught by beginning teachers, less accomplished teachers (relative to the standard), and teachers who lack a long-term commitment to the school and community” (Bates, 2010, p. 91). If the data reflect that pre-service music teachers desire to teach in schools that are similar to those from which they attended, and that a majority of these students come from very similar large school suburban backgrounds, then these results could be a significant contributing factor to the high mobility rates of rural music educators who view small school employment as “inferior” to their suburban “ideal.”

Another part of the problem with people leaving rural music teaching jobs may stem from impractical expectations of what the job entails. Bates (2010) wrote a critical social theory article about rural music teacher preparation. The author described societal biases toward rural communities and school music education and offered six suggestions for “preparing, validating, and supporting rural music teachers” (p. 90). The suggestions

for per-service preparation of music teachers to understand and validate specificities of rural music education can serve to promote higher job satisfaction and longer retention in these schools. The suggestions were: 1) a critical examination of current accepted visions of “deep-seated prejudices and misconceptions about rural students” (p. 94), 2) a critical examination of current accepted visions of musical biases, 3) an acknowledgment that giving priority to Western art music promotes privilege for specific groups of people. This type of prioritization “continues to be steeped in a hierarchical belief system that places suburban above rural, upper class above lower class, classical music above popular music, concert hall performances above front porch jam sessions, and standard notation above rote learning or tablature” (p. 95), 4) teaching music education students to think critically, 5) improving efforts to recruit rural students to become teachers, and 6) universities and state music associations could offer alternative festivals and develop open-access, regional ensembles to replace auditioned honor groups. To that end, Koza (2006) recommended for long-term health and curricular relevancy, music education cannot necessarily function within a standardized model. Individual communities and educators ought to have more control of their teaching environment in order to “lead to more culturally relevant, joyful, and sustainable school music” (p. 36).

Rural music teaching jobs are open more often than other public school education specialties and demographics, which is a potential threat to the sustainability of these music programs. Furthermore, this disproportionately high number of jobs needing filled has led to inexperienced and often under-qualified applicants to take the positions.

Rationale and Framework for Study

Whether in the public or private sector, the employment relationship as described by Block, Berg, & Belman (2004) is one where choices are made that will ideally “lead to optimal outcomes for individuals, firms, and society” (p. 95). To put it another way, when an employment agreement is begun in a school district, or anywhere else, all involved parties benefit when the employment circumstances portray what Kwok, Adams, & Price (2011) referred to as a good person-job fit where an individual’s personality, experience, and skill sets “fit” with interpersonal and working demands of a job. Employment without a good person-job fit is more likely to end prematurely (Ableson, 1984; Kwok, Adams, & Price, 2011; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2012). Studying rural music education attrition rates in terms of finding a quality person-job fit can be described with the economic concept of utility maximization and served as the theoretical framework for this study.

From the perspective of the individual, utility is the perceived ability of something to satisfy needs or wants (Douglas, 2000). An analysis of models of human decision making shows that individuals select a course of action based on which action promises the maximum utility. In regards to employment in education, an individual will measure their utility based on perceptions of a combination of six key aspects: 1) salary/status, 2) community/family support, 3) administrative support, 4) time working beyond the standard day, 5) the availability of professional development opportunities, and 6) personal and family factors (Ingersoll, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007). In addition to the six typical attributes of

workplace utility, rural music teachers potentially face the added four issues of 1) generalization of musical knowledge to teach all students K–12, 2) itinerant or part-time working conditions, 3) professional and social isolation, 4) the perception of rural music teaching as being lower within the professional hierarchy than other demographic music teaching positions (Harmon, 2001; Isbell, 2005).

When discussing the nature of teaching employment Lortie further described the profession in terms of extrinsic awards (i.e. salary, job descriptions, and promotions), and intrinsic or “psychic” rewards (student successes, societal status). By the nature of such an objective concept, psychic rewards are unpredictable and varied and can lead to uncertainty. This unpredictable nature can “inhibit the feeling that future rewards are insured” and can be a contributing factor to high turnover rates among professional teachers (p. 211). To help assuage the issue Lortie recommended that a thorough understanding of the nature of teaching and how school districts operate can lead to higher job satisfaction.

Research provides insight into reasons that potentially affect utility maximization in rural music education jobs and contribute to the decisions to stay in a position or not. Among movers there are teachers who move to a new district with similar demographics and those who move to a different sized community. Research has not been conducted to track this sub-category of career attrition among music educators. This gap in academic literature presented a need for further study to examine factors that contribute to maximizing utility among committed music educators who currently teach in rural music education jobs and those with past rural music education experience. An insight into the

perception of maximizing professional utility can help inform the choices people make when applying for teaching jobs and potentially aid in finding a more quality person-job fit. By learning perceptions of job satisfaction among current and former rural music teachers, a deeper understanding of why positions need to be filled so often can be gained. Furthermore, this knowledge can potentially lead to applicants who are aware of the cultural and professional idiosyncrasies that these jobs have to offer which can lead to higher job satisfaction and longer stays within individual positions.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to seek understanding of attrition among music educators who have had experience or are currently teaching in rural schools. Reasons for attrition were analyzed in terms of perceptions of job satisfaction with rural teaching in order to more deeply understand why positions need to be filled so often. Three central questions guided research: 1) what reasons do educators consider influential in a decision to stay in or move from a teaching position?, 2) what changes do teachers report in their perception of job utility maximization over their careers?, and 3) what are some benefits and challenges of teaching in a rural music teaching setting?

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Attrition rates among public school teachers seem to be higher than those of other occupations, but the trend is not consistent across teaching demographics. The root of the problem, according to Ingersoll (2001), does not lie within the overall numbers, but with the distribution. The number of qualified teachers in the workforce is more or less equal to the demand, but while some areas of the country enjoy an excess of educators, there is an acute shortage in urban and rural areas (Harmon, 2001). In order to more deeply understand these patterns within attrition rates, research has been conducted to determine contributing demographic and workplace factors. From an exhaustive search of existing empirical research, I determined rural music education to be particularly effected by high attrition rates and compiled a review of literature to iterate issues facing these schools. Within the review I organized studies by matters regarding teacher attrition, specifically in rural schools and music education, and using utility maximization as an employment model.

Teacher Attrition

In a review of empirical studies of worldwide teacher attrition rates, McDonald (1999) analyzed how teacher attrition may be defined. Within this definition were patterns of attrition, influences upon attrition, the impact of attrition, and strategies employed for decreasing attrition. McDonald surmised that teacher attrition could be considered either a problem for workforce planning and resources or an indicator of the relatively poor quality of school life and teacher morale in certain locations. Conversely, teacher attrition may not necessarily be a problem in that low levels of teacher attrition

could lead to stagnation of the profession.

McDonald listed reasons for teachers throughout the world moving laterally or leaving the profession entirely as workplace stress, social and professional status, lack of parental support, and unfavorable work conditions due to salary or work load. Ultimately, some staff changes are healthy for infusion of new ideas and preventing stagnation, but excessive rates can lead to discontinuity of staff which can be a “major inhibitor to the efficacy of schools in promoting student development and attainment” (p. 848).

McDonald concluded that efforts are being made at district, state, and federal levels to help curtail excessive attrition, but noticed that “research concerning teacher attrition requires the development of more comprehensive databases on teaching personnel and increased clarity of how attrition is being framed and investigated” (p. 846).

To help grasp the complexities of teacher turnover, the National Center for Educational Statistics (1996) conducted the Schools and Staffing Survey and its supplement, the Teacher Follow-up Survey. Ingersoll (2002) analyzed data from this study with the purpose of examining data to analyze turnover trends from an organizational perspective. Of particular interest were two research questions. The first related to documenting the role of teacher turnover in staffing problems, and the second pertained to the role of school characteristics and organizational conditions in teacher turnover.

According to Ingersoll, the conventional wisdom is that many staffing problems in schools are a result of a disproportionately large number of teachers nearing the ends of careers and looking to retire. Results from the study, however, showed that school

staffing problems are largely related to younger qualified teachers leaving or moving from their jobs for reasons other than retirement. Data showed that only 12% of open teaching positions were a result of retirement, with the rest being staffing actions (reduction in force, reassignments, etc.), personal reasons, or moving to another job (either within the career of education or otherwise).

Ingersoll suggested that much of the teacher job movement was due to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the environment of the workplace and that retention could be greatly increased with large-scale changes to administrative structuring of schools. Among the restructuring ideas were four suggestions for improvement of retention in schools that are afflicted by high rates: 1) higher salaries, 2) improved student discipline measures, 3) increased teacher autonomy, and 4) induction support from state and local administrations. According to Ingersoll, “the data suggest that improvements in several specific aspects of teaching positions would contribute to lower rates of turnover, diminish school staffing problems and, ultimately, aid the performance of schools” (p. 28).

Teacher attrition in rural schools

Within the body of literature, attrition of rural music teachers has yet to gain significant consideration by researchers. There are, however, generalized studies pertaining to teacher attrition in rural schools. Harris (2001) conducted the Prairie Teachers Project, a program of support for new 20 teachers in eight rural schools, each serving 58 to 318 students, in the 1991–92 and 1992–93 academic years that was based on 2 research questions, 1) if the test of a teacher education program is the success of its

graduates, how successful are those who choose to teach in small rural schools?, and 2) if they struggle in their teaching, how could preservice programs better address their needs? Every Prairie Teacher completed a survey and participated in an interview at the conclusion of the first year. A university facilitator interviewed each teacher at least once, and in some cases monthly, during and after the first year. School professional development committees submitted annual reports of their activities. Principals and a few teachers at each site were interviewed annually. After the conclusion of the 2 year project, teacher retention was checked by telephoning school secretaries to ascertain if the teachers were still employed in their respective positions.

Of the 20 teachers who began the Harris study, only 8 remained after 3 years. One of the teachers, Lori, served as a 4–12 music teacher who had grown up in a community of similar size. She was hired to begin teaching a few weeks before the December musical program. Lori was the fifth music teacher in five years. Initially, she received strong support from an elementary teacher. However, “she lost a sense of program continuity when she was assigned the following year to the middle school as part of the larger music department of the consolidated district” (p. 19). At the time of publication, Lori still taught in the rural district.

The results of the Harris study showed that regardless of specialty, the teachers who seemed most likely to remain in rural schools had lived in and are committed to small communities. Furthermore, rural schools that appear likely to retain new teachers have ongoing programs of professional development, supportive colleagues and administrators, and stable conditions of employment.

Boyd, Hamilton, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2003) explored the concept of spatial geography and the effect it has on teaching labor market. The authors examined several state-wide demographic databases in New York and reported that a large number of public school teachers take their first teaching job very close to their hometowns or where they attended college. For example, in New York State from 1999 to 2002, 85% of first year teachers applied for and were hired to work within 40 miles of their hometowns. This trend puts schools that are “net importers,” such as urban and rural areas, at a disadvantage (p. 19). Data show that a majority of new teachers mainly come from suburban experiences and are less inclined to apply for rural and urban teaching jobs. As a result teachers who are hired into these unfamiliar situations may report lower community living satisfaction and could be more inclined to prematurely seek employment elsewhere.

To further determine how much of a factor upbringing is to long term rural teaching employment, Haar (2007) conducted a case study of a science teacher in a rural school district. This study was a comparison with what the “literature identifies as components of retaining effective, qualified teachers” (p. 28). In this particular case, the building principal was fundamental to teacher longevity. The principals studied by Haar, were a valuable component in building a sense of community among staff by paying attention to teachers' needs, establishing a culture of trust and support, and providing teachers the opportunity to grow. In other words, the teacher in this study felt appreciated, challenged, and connected to the school and students, so she was more inclined to remain in a rural teaching position, even though she had originally intended to

leave for a larger district.

Upbringing and personal experience are relevant when determining reasons for attrition, but they are not the only factors that contribute to teachers leaving, moving from, or keeping a specific job. Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels (2007) surveyed 1,799 current and resigned teachers in Florida to examine continuing teachers' plans to remain or resign and the likelihood of resigned teachers to return to teaching in the next 3 years. A research framework of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior was used to ask questions including, 1) determining factors that encourage or hinder resigned teachers from returning to teaching, and 2) do gender, years of experience, and job description influence the importance of these factors.

Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels concluded that attrition occurred more often in small schools, which may more often be rural schools, than large schools, and that there were twice as many teachers who moved from one district to another district among teachers from relatively high poverty schools compared to those from low poverty schools. Thus, new teachers tended to have higher representation in a higher poverty school than they would in low poverty schools due to the greater teacher attrition rate seen in those situations.

Factors that contributed to keeping, leaving, or returning to a teaching job were revealed to be: perception of administrative support, salary, paperwork/assessment time, family responsibilities, and perception of job satisfaction. Ultimately, the authors suggested that there was a need for "a-priori targeting of especially vulnerable groups of teachers for intervention strategies" (p. 789). Within this context, there is a need for a

focus on retaining teachers currently in the workforce rather than recruiting larger numbers into the profession.

A review of existing empirical studies relating to teacher attrition in rural schools shows that there are 6 overarching factors that contribute to people choosing to stay in or leave their teaching positions, 1) salary/status, 2) community/parent support, 3) administrative support, 4) time working beyond the standard day, 5) the availability of professional development opportunities, and 6) personal and family factors. In addition to understanding the factors that contribute to attrition rates, there is a need to target demographics to better understand why some areas of the country enjoy an abundance of available educators while others experience a dearth of applicants; specifically, retention of teachers in rural areas.

Music teacher attrition

In addition to research pertaining to attrition among the overall population of rural school teachers, researchers have contributed to understanding professional mobility among K–12 music educators. Part of the debate on how teaching employment functions should include reasons people choose to leave the field. To help, Krueger (2000) conducted a survey of beginning music educators (fewer than 10 years of experience) to determine reasons for leaving or staying in a teaching position. It was posited that “because the quality of many music programs depends on the continuity of their music teachers, music teacher attrition can create a serious problem for most schools” (p. 22). The written survey of 30 beginning music teachers sought to determine 1) challenges and problems faced by new teachers, 2) most satisfying moments in the beginning teaching

years, 3) analysis of support systems for new teachers, 4) working conditions that were deemed problematic, and 5) a professional plans over the ensuing 5–10 years. Results of the survey showed factors that contributed to the decision to keep a job or not were based on perceptions of positive administrative support, sufficient resources to perform professional duties, and a curriculum specific support network that includes experienced music teachers.

Also interested in why people choose to leave music education jobs, Madsen and Hancock (2002) surveyed alumni from a large university in the United States who had graduated with a bachelor's degree in music education within the previous 10 years. The researchers noticed that there is very little research on why music teachers leave the profession and at what point in their careers they choose to leave. To help enhance the body of knowledge they asked participants (N=137) questions concerning years of teaching, area of specialization, amount of professional development, and degrees of perceived support received from administration, school, and parents.

Results from the Madsen and Hancock study revealed that after 10 years, 34.4 % of subjects were no longer teaching at the K–college level, which, is well below the average rate of attrition for teachers in other subject areas. This indicates that teachers who choose to leave the profession do so early in their careers. When analyzing the reasons people leave the field of music, the researchers discovered that some music educators who leave the field of K–12 teaching reenter the profession later in their lifetime. Also, some teachers moved out of K–12 music education to become college-level professors, and some indicated that they moved from music education to other areas

of education.

Once the initial years of a career are passed, a teacher's experience level becomes referred to as a mid-career professional. To better understand this demographic of teachers in the field of music education, Scheib (2003) conducted a collective case study of 4 secondary school band, choir, and orchestra directors in the mid-western United States. Each teacher had between 10 and 30 years of teaching experience. The author sought to better understand the idea that various aspects, or roles, of a job can contribute differently to the perception of overall job satisfaction. The article was based on attempting to describe occupational role stress as it relates to job dissatisfaction, lack of commitment, and a propensity to leave or move from a teaching position. Scheib examined six role stressors, 1) role conflict, 2) role ambiguity, 3) role overload, 4) underutilization of skills, 5) resource inadequacy, and 6) nonparticipation.

Data from the year-long study came from on-site observations and personal interviews and revealed that the stressors with the greatest impact were, "tedious administrative responsibilities (underutilization of skills), the constant need for music education advocacy (role overload), conflicts between personal and professional roles (role conflict), and tension created by scheduling conflicts due to the increasingly busy schedules of students (resource inadequacy)" (p. 125).

Scheib viewed occupational role stress as an indicator of job satisfaction, which is a nearly identical framework to my dissertation. Scheib suggested that each music program has its own limitations and possibilities based in no small part on the culture of the school and community in which it operates, and that practitioners should be involved

in research that seeks to define that culture. To that end communication is a powerful tool in the battle of incompatible role expectations. The research I conducted sought to build on Scheib's study to help define the rural music education culture and role stressors that are involved.

Regardless of where music educators begin their careers, there is a high propensity among early career professionals to not stay in their initial jobs for very long. Killian and Baker (2006) conducted a quantitative study to examine possible causes of music educator attrition with attention to factors that might provide insight into the differences between music educators who decide to remain in the profession and those who decide to leave. Five years of data were collected from subjects who were self-identified as beginning teachers and members of the Texas Music Education Association (TMEA).

Results of the study showed that teacher attrition poses a problem to music education in that among new teachers "19.73% of the respondents, approximately one in five, intended to leave the teaching profession" (p. 45). Reasons for leaving the profession included dissatisfaction with administration, dissatisfaction with students, career enhancement opportunities, personal reasons, and school staffing issues such as reduction in force efforts or reassignments to other schools within the same district. One interesting discovery from the data was that the authors observed a tendency for teachers with lower collegiate grade point averages to stay in the teaching profession for longer durations than those with higher averages.

The Killian and Baker study was a single study in one state, so the authors

reported that the results were not necessarily generalizable. The authors expanded that perhaps the causes of teacher attrition are idiosyncratic and that they cannot be generalized in accordance with personal or situational influences, or cannot be determined by means of a survey.

Hancock (2008) used a larger sample than Killian and Baker to determine which music educators were most likely to leave or move from a particular teaching job. In the study, the author used data from the 1999 Schools and Staffing Survey to identify 1,931 practicing music teachers. A sequential logistic regression analysis determined that whether moving or leaving from a job, teachers most at risk were those who were young (under 39) and those who taught music in private schools or secondary school. The factors that contributed to these teachers' attrition were extra-curricular hours (estimated hours spent before and after school and weekend performing school-related activities), schoolwide concerns (student discipline, staff restructuring), administrative support, parent support, and salary.

In building on research surrounding the issue of music teacher attrition, Russell (2008) mentioned that the cost of teacher attrition and migration has yet to be completely grasped. Exploring the conditions, factors, triggers, modifiers, and variables that influence a teacher's decision to stay in a particular position or the profession itself may help increase teacher retention in the years ahead. The purpose of Russell's study was to examine factors that may affect string music teachers' decisions to stay, leave, or move from their current positions so that "those responsible for training pre-service teachers and assisting teachers once employed can better support and advocate for music

educators in meaningful ways” (p. 206). The study was a discriminant analysis to explore factors that may affect string teachers' career decisions over the ensuing 1 to 5 years.

Using the American String Teacher Association membership database, a random sample of 600 subjects was mailed questionnaires, and ultimately 304 participants completed the survey. Russell’s research was guided by three research questions: 1) What proportion of string music teachers are stayers, movers, or leavers?, 2) Which factors are most strongly related to the immediate and long-term career decisions of string teachers?, and 3) to what extent can string music teachers be accurately classified as stayers, movers, or leavers?

Russell indicated that factors of work culture, perceptions about music's importance in the curriculum, satisfaction with student characteristics, psychological factors, and teacher socioeconomic background may affect immediate career plans. The researcher also discovered that while a majority of respondents planned on keeping their positions the following school year, more than half of study participants anticipated moving or leaving within the next 5 years.

Gardner (2010) also drew from the bounty of data in the 1999 School and Staffing Survey (SASS) and also included data from the 2000–2001 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). The purpose of the study was to construct a profile of K–12 music teachers in the United States to help develop a model to predict attrition rates. Gardner revised the number of music teachers within the SASS and the TFS to 1,903.

Their responses were analyzed using comparative statistics, factor analysis, logistic regression, and structural equation modeling. Results indicated that music

teachers were more likely than other types of teachers to hold itinerant or part-time positions, and those music teachers generally changed teaching positions because of dissatisfaction with workplace conditions and for better teaching assignments. Music teachers' perceived level of administrative support had the most prominent influence on music teacher retention.

Administrative support had a prominent influence on music teacher retention. In other words, the more teachers felt supported by their administrators, the less likely they were to leave their position for another teaching job or to leave the profession. Gardner concluded that no matter the demographic, the perception of administrative support is of great importance, and can be delineated into two main categories: 1) teachers having control over decisions about instructional practices in their classrooms; and 2) teachers having influence over school-wide decisions. The two categories can cause a paradox in that many music teachers feel that they do not have much influence over school-wide policies, but most music teachers felt that they had high levels of control over decisions about instructional practices within their own classrooms. In general, music teachers value the high level of control they have in their classrooms, but were least satisfied with how often the principal talked with them about their instructional practices. It seems that teachers of music want to have autonomy when making curriculum choices, but they would like administrative input and support when doing so.

One area where administrative support seems particularly important is teachers who are becoming established professionally. Eros (2013) conducted a case study of 3 such music teachers. The purpose of the study was to investigate the career development

of music educators who had recently moved beyond the first stage of teaching and entered what is referred to as the second stage. In this case, the second stage is identified as a time when a person is moving beyond navigating an unfamiliar environment and is ready to settle in and most likely make a long-term commitment to teaching. There is not a quantifiable number of years when this transition happens, but Eros reported that as many as 50% of teachers leave the profession within five years, so that is a logical time to mark the end of the survival stage. Data were collected through a background survey, an email journal, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group discussion. Research questions were 1) how do participants perceive their career development from the first into the second stage, and 2) how do they anticipate their career trajectory through and beyond the second stage?

Eros indicated that second-stage teachers are a valuable part of the teaching force as they “no longer worry about day-to-day survival, have stabilized in their classroom practice and management, are considering deeper issues of pedagogy, and looking for ways in which they can make contributions to the school as a whole” (p. 72). This professional familiarity can be comforting, but it was noted that this demographic is at substantial risk of leaving due to stagnation, lack of professional development opportunities, and lack of administrative support. Eros suggested that these teachers could be a valuable resource to serve as induction mentors to younger teachers, and that administrators should be purposeful in providing and selecting professional development opportunities for this stage of career development. If not, failure to provide opportunities for the development of professional expertise could lead to dissatisfaction in the

workplace when teachers are in need of new challenges and have new concerns.

To help enhance the understanding of teachers who may be vulnerable to premature attrition, Buchanan, et al (2013) conducted a longitudinal study based on a theoretical construct of situated theory. The study was an analysis of new music teachers in New South Wales, Australia with a guiding research question that was concerned with determining reasons some early career teachers choose to remain in the profession and why others choose to leave. Data collection included interviews, a tracking survey, and a Likert-Type Scale survey designed to obtain perceptions of. More than 100 teachers were approached to participate, of which 14 completed the four-year study. The authors determined that factors contributing to a decision to keep or leave a teaching job were collegiality and support, student engagement and behavior management, professional development opportunities, workload, and isolation (physical, geographic, professional, and emotional).

Buchanan, et al determined that one of the key contributors to retention in teaching is experience. The researchers reported that “the satisfaction from teaching improves as [teachers] gain experience . . . as they learn to be better teachers this experience of personal professional improvement together with the resultant improvement in their classes contributes to their desire to remain in the profession” (p. 124).

According to results from existing research on music teacher attrition, it seems that secondary music educators are at higher risk for moving or leaving from their jobs as compared to other teaching specialties within the overall field of K–12 education

(Krueger, 2000; Scheib, 2003; Killian & Baker, 2006, Hancock, 2008; Russell 2008; Gardner, 2010; Buchanan et al, 2013). Reasons for that attrition include extra-curricular or spillover hours, perception of autonomy within a curriculum or classroom, perception of administrative support, and the constant need for music advocacy. These reasons are overarching and have painted a broad picture of music teaching, but research on music education in rural schools is scant and could help provide more insight into specific facets of themes of music education attrition.

Rural music teacher attrition

For all of the research that exists on music teaching and rural teaching attrition rates, there is a dearth of scholarly work regarding K–12 rural music teaching careers. This lack of research was a strong motivating factor in my research. Among the existing studies, Hunt (2009) noticed that educators who get hired in rural and urban settings are generally not experienced in these demographics and are unprepared for the cultural demands of the jobs they are hired to do. The purpose of the study was to learn perspectives on the role of music programs and teachers in rural and urban school districts in order to help those in higher education bear the “responsibility to better prepare preservice music teachers for the realities of urban and rural music programs by understanding the perspectives of music teachers, administrators, and parents from those environments” (p. 35).

Hunt interviewed nine participants, including music teachers, administrators, and parents, representing four rural and urban locations. From the interviews, the researcher created the Developing Contextual Awareness (DCA) model to increase music educators’

geographical and social awareness. The DCA model is based on four facets, 1) understanding the music teachers' and music programs' roles, 2) focusing on advantages and accepting challenges as opportunities, 3) creating and implementing specific professional development goals, and 4) committing to persistence with patience. The goal of the DCA is to hopefully create a deeper awareness of the wide scope of music education and better prepare new music teachers for the challenges they are about to face. Ultimately this should create the potential for greater success and retention of committed and caring music teachers.

Utility Maximization as an Employment Model

Utility maximization was initially a term given to a model that was created for determining price structures for sales of goods and services. According to Simon (1951), a seller offers a good or service for a set price. A buyer then considers the price and decides whether to purchase or not. As the research developed, the concept included the idea of getting maximum utility out of an employment relationship. The problem, Simon noted, the major concern of many business administrators is maximum profit margins, but that such a concern can leave out the vital component of human relations. As such, a mathematical theory was developed by the author to “set forth a theory of the employment relationship that reintroduces some of the more important of these empirical realities into the economic model” (p. 293).

Simon observed that when viewing an employment contract through the same lens as a sales contract, the employment contract became almost exclusively monetary in nature. When viewed in this manner, optimum value was sought by the employer in the

form of profit and employees pursued the best value of payment in relation to their services. Workplace value can be quantified in terms of salaries, overhead costs, and profit margins, but, as was noted by the researcher, this is a highly abstract and oversimplified view. The researcher proposed a mathematical model that could serve as a “bridge...between the economist, with his theories of the firm and of factor allocation, and the administrator, with his theories of organization; a bridge wide enough to permit some free trade in ideas between two intellectual domains that have hitherto been quite effectively isolated from each other” (p. 293). The “bridge” that Simon proposed attempted to quantify workplace satisfaction, or workplace utility. The researcher noted that the most serious limitations of the standard employment contract model lie in the assumptions of rational utility-maximizing behavior incorporated in it. Workers are not necessarily rational, and Simon attempted to mathematically account for that irrationality.

Seashore (1974) also tried to account for worker irrationality and wrote a critique of the nature of job satisfaction and its role as a social indicator. Seashore contended that job satisfaction was paramount to maximizing workplace utility for employee, employer, and society. A satisfied employee will have lower stress and higher self-esteem. An employer with content employees will be more productive and have less loss due to turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness. A society with a happy workforce will have a higher GDP, lower unemployment, and stronger consumer behaviors and attitudes.

Seashore wrote that job satisfaction has subjective and objective components, and both need to be addressed equally. Subjective factors include a stimulating work environment, absence of unnecessary hazards, interpersonal relationships with co-

workers and superiors, while more measurable objective components include “pay, hours of work, occurrence of job injuries, rate of promotions, duration of vacations, and the like” (p. 149). With a broad view of the concept of employment it is possible to effectively assess what constitutes a “good” job and a “satisfied” employee.

To enhance the model of employee satisfaction, Seater (1978) developed a mathematical model in an attempt to quantify workplace utility. The model was a combination of two previous theories, one based on the individual as an income maximizer and the other that viewed the employee as a utility maximizer. The author noted that the previous theories had merit, but that each the approaches ignored an aspect of the individual’s allocation decision and, therefore, deficient when applied to aggregate analysis.

When considering the idea of utility maximization as a combination of monetary and intrinsic variables, Seater contended that an individual derives utility from both labor and leisure. Leisure is defined as time not spent in working. The idea is that an individual considers labor time versus leisure time based on consumption desires. The amount of money a worker desires is based on what they wish to do in their leisure time, and how much money an employee earns is derived from time spent at work. In other words, theoretically, if a person does not have enough money to do what they want to do, they work more hours and vice versa.

Seater noted that beyond labor and leisure there is a third component of a person’s time, the job search. Seeking employment does not provide income, so it cannot be considered employment, but it is not a leisure activity. Power and Aldag (1985) focused

on the job search in a critique of a commonly accepted model of job search and choice. In their research, the authors identified four phases of a job search: 1) identify the ideal job; 2) plan a job search; 3) job search and choice; and 4) decision, confirmation, and commitment. It was noted that focus of research and interest had been almost exclusively on the decision, confirmation, and commitment phase and that the first three phases were “provocative, potentially meaningful, and possess enough face validity to warrant some examination” (p. 57). In regard to identifying the ideal job, Power & Aldag stated that people evaluate occupations they are familiar with in terms of their "personal values list" and "perceived job qualification list" (p. 49). Personal value lists are often informal and most likely unwritten and list values of primary, secondary, or auxiliary importance. Job qualifications are the job skills that people believe they have. Ultimately, job choice involves comparative similarity judgments between alternatives and the individual's ideal job.

Subsequent research on employee utility maximization was conducted by Douglas and Shepherd (2000) to investigate the relationship between current employment choice and attitudes toward income, independence, risk, and work effort. The Douglas and Shepherd study was a conjoint analysis to determine the significance and nature of attitudes in career choice and the affect these attitudes had on the intention to start a private business.

According to Douglas and Shepherd, utility models of human decision-making state that individuals will select a course of action that promises the greatest utility. This utility is measured by combining perceptions of components that are positive with those

that are negative. The authors went on to state that in the context of career choice, an individual expects to gain utility from income and either positive or negative rewards from work effort, risk bearing, independence, and other working conditions.

Douglas and Shepherd showed that employee selection and retention policies should pay more attention to the attitudes of individuals towards risk and independence. Research showed that employees with “more positive” attitudes are more productive employees (para 48). Suggestions for future research included proposing that researchers more finely “hone the model and allow recruiters, human resource managers, and investors to better measure the attitudes of the individuals whom they are contemplating hiring” (para. 51).

Building on the Douglas and Shepherd employment choice and attitude research, Levesque, Shepherd, and Douglas (2000) formulate the dynamic model and describe optimal career paths. The researchers lens was trying to better understand when and why people chose to enter self-employment situations, but their results are applicable to career movement in education as well. Within their model, the authors defined utility as the product of a person’s positive attitude towards an attribute and the absolute value of that attribute. Conversely, disutility was defined as the product of a person’s negative attitude towards an attribute and the absolute value of that attribute. The overall utility of a career choice is the combination of the utilities and/or disutilities for each of the attributes. The assumption then is that people choose a career path that maximizes their overall utility.

In their definition of utility in the workplace, Levesque, Shepherd, and Douglas revealed that different individuals experience different changes over time in their ability

as well as in their attitudes toward income, work effort, risk, and independence, and these factors have the possibility to alter a career path. To that end, the researchers surmised that “a career path is not predetermined — utility weights can be changed, and . . . attitudes can be learned” (p. 206).

To summarize, workplace utility is a measure of job satisfaction that is derived from subjective components, such as job enjoyment and intellectual stimulation, and objective components like salary, hours worked, and workplace safety. Beyond satisfaction with the workplace, a person’s overall utility is measured as a balance between hours spent in labor, leisure, and searching for work. Power and Aldag (1985) identified phases of seeking work and noted a distinct lack of research in regards to identifying, applying for, and accepting ideal jobs. This gap in the literature seems to have maintained to the present day and served as the inspiration for the framework of study for my research.

Music teacher job placement preferences

When considering maximizing utility among those in the field of music education, it is important to understand the professional motivations and desires of this group of people. Kelly (2003) was interested in preferences for initial job placement among undergraduate music majors. The author surveyed music education majors from four universities in different states. Each university was selected in part due to their large undergraduate music education populations, which potentially represented a wide geographic scope, a diversity of settings (urban, suburban, rural), and diverse socioeconomic levels, ethnicities, religions, races, and school music experiences. The

self-designed questionnaire was used to gather data from 406 students about gender, race, college status, performance area, parental economic status, types of teaching positions the individual desires, types of primary and secondary schools the individual had attended, and the individual's perceptions regarding the quality of the music programs at these schools.

Results showed that pre-service music teachers often desire to teach in schools that are similar to those of their precollege experiences. The author reported that most students (n=306) attended suburban public schools with large secondary music programs (more than 120 students). Nontraditional, and perhaps nonperformance characteristics such as a technology emphasis or programs interrelated with other academics, were among the least desired characteristics. Kelley suggested that "perhaps the subjects' previous experiences did not include these curricular offerings, and students may not be as familiar with them" (p. 48). The same logic could be applied to rural teaching positions.

Schmidt, Zdzinski, and Ballard (2006) were also interested in pre-service music teacher career aspirations. Their interest lay in motivation variables and musical self-concept in relation to measures of academic achievement and career goals. Participants were 148 undergraduate music majors from three universities in the United States. Participants were given a survey to determine their inclinations based on the variables of intrinsic, cooperative, and individual competition, ego, hyper-competition, and personal development competition. Research questions were, 1) What are the relationships among motivation variables, self-concept, academic achievement, and immediate and long-term

career goals?, 2) To what extent do preservice music teachers differ in each of these variables according to sex and class level (freshman through senior)?, 3) What factors underlie the motivation variables?, and 4) To what extent are motivation factors related to academic achievement variables, class level, sex, and career goals?

Results from the study, as reported by Schmidt, Zdzinski, and Ballard, showed that approximately 69% of the sample indicated public school music teaching as the immediate career goal, while just 49% of those responding indicated public school teaching as the long-term career goal. Differences in motivation between those seeking initial and long-term career goals in public school teaching versus other careers in music were nonsignificant. The authors inferred that musical or personality variables and “factors such as self-efficacy for either performance or teaching might better discriminate among differences in short-term and long-term career goals” (p. 151).

Robinson (2012) expanded on Kelly’s (2003) research and conducted an adaptive conjoint analysis of music education majors designed to investigate perceptions of employment preferences when considering future teaching positions. Participants were 187 preservice music education majors attending National Association of Schools of Music–accredited 4-year public comprehensive undergraduate music education degree programs. Not surprisingly, results indicated that students showed preference for higher salaries to lower salaries, excellent administrative support to little administrative support, excellent resources to limited resources, excellent facilities to limited facilities, high program sustainability to low program sustainability, shorter commutes to longer commutes, and strong parental and community support to little parental and community

support. Additionally, students “also indicated a stronger preference to teach in suburban schools than in urban, rural, and private schools” (p. 303). These preferences are consistent with previous data that showed students have inclinations to teach in situations that are similar to their personal experience. Among the participants in the Robinson study, 51.9% had attended large suburban public schools.

When teachers choose a school or district in which to teach, in essence they are indicating their preference for specific employment conditions (e.g., salary, location, administrative support, student body composition). Schools with less favorable conditions have greater difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers and consequently have higher turnover rates than schools with more favorable conditions. To that end Robinson contended that 1) every district or school has a bundle of attributes (or factors), 2) each individual has unique values that reflect the desirability of different districts’ or schools’ characteristics or attributes, and 3) combining utilities for different attributes measures the individual’s overall preference for teaching in a specific district or school. In other words, there is a “right” person for every teaching job. Robinson suggested further research regarding how best to ensure a complementary relationship between the intrinsic values of the music teacher and the employment characteristics of a specific school or district.

Summary

When considering attrition rates among the teaching profession, research shows that teacher supply is approximately equal to the number of jobs that exist. Although, a closer look reveals that there are schools and districts that are sought after and severe

shortages of applicants in others. It seems that large affluent suburban schools are the most desirable teaching jobs, especially among music educators. In contrast, rural and urban schools generally have more open positions and fewer applicants. The crux of the issue is not necessarily getting open jobs filled, but rather getting people to stay once they are hired. In order to do this, people need education about their new job from the district before accepting it, and the right person must be hired to gain maximum utility from teaching and living in a particular community.

Research provides insight into reasons that potentially affect utility maximization in rural music education jobs and contribute to the decisions to stay in a position or not. Among movers, there are teachers who move to a new district with similar demographics and those who move to a different sized community. Research has not been conducted to track this sub-category of career attrition among music educators. This gap in academic literature presented a need for further study to examine factors that contribute to maximizing utility among committed music educators who currently teach in rural music education jobs and those with past rural music education experience. An insight into the perception of maximizing professional utility can help inform the choices people make when applying for teaching jobs and potentially aid in finding a more quality person-job fit. By learning perceptions of job satisfaction among current and former rural music teachers, a deeper understanding of high turnover may be gained. Furthermore, this knowledge can potentially lead to applicants who are aware of the cultural and professional idiosyncrasies that these jobs have to offer which can lead to higher job satisfaction and longer stays within individual positions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to seek understanding of attrition among music educators who have had experience or are currently teaching in rural schools with explanatory case study research. In this instance, according to Stake's (1994) description of the method, the case that was studied was the rural music teacher with the external interest being the higher than average attrition rate within the field. With this in mind I approached ten teachers in hopes of having 5 or 6 participants, with the selections based on job descriptions and work histories. The one common theme among the teachers I contacted was experience in rural music education. To help understand common characteristics of attrition rates, I focused on established teachers' careers with varied demographic employment histories in an attempt to show different perspectives on the issue of rural music education attrition rates. Research was guided by three central questions: 1) what reasons do educators consider influential in a decision to stay in or move from a teaching position?, 2) what changes do teachers report in their perception of job utility maximization over their careers?, and 3) what are some benefits and challenges of teaching in a rural music teaching setting?

Selection of Participants

In the western United States is a region of more than 250,000 square miles (Snead, 1972) with an average population density of just six people per square mile, making it among the lowest population density regions in the contiguous United States (U.S. Census, 2013). Within this vast region are only 5 NCES recognized urban areas. As an example to help describe the vastness of this region, consider Duncan's (1993)

description of a county in the central part of one of these states:

By 1940 the county was home to only 2,641 souls, less than half its peak twenty years earlier. Every census afterward posted a small decline. Covering 4,491 square miles, Garfield County is the size of Connecticut. The current population is 1,589, a density of 0.35 people per square mile. Jordan, with about a third of the county's residents is its sole surviving town (p. 33).

People who live and work, either currently or previously, in this inherently remote rural region, served as the target population for this study. Participants were selected with a snowball sampling technique using well-situated individuals in information-rich settings within this region that served as "illuminative cases for deeper investigation" (Patton, 2002, p. 237). Casual conversations with "illuminative" individuals such as music industry road representatives and established music educators and administrators provided names of educators to be approached as potential participants.

Criterion for participation in this study included in-service music educators who either currently teach or have previous experience teaching music in remote rural communities (more than 25 miles from urban clusters). In order to effectively explore perceptions of career utility maximization, I sought educators who have enough teaching experience to draw comparisons between their professional lives and their undergraduate experiences. These individuals had a minimum of seven years teaching experience. Exclusion criteria included music educators who taught in small schools that were not in remote rural locations such as urban neighborhood or small suburban schools. Additionally, rural experience was considered in terms of professional isolation. The

rural school districts that were studied were to have only a single music teacher for all grades kindergarten through 12th grade. Finally, the “primary criterion” (Stake, 1994) was the opportunity to learn, so participants were asked to volunteer and ultimately selected to participate in the study based on faithfulness and reliability for timely correspondence. At any time after initial contact, participants had the option to leave the study without punishment or recourse.

Participant selection for this study began as many social, academic, and professional endeavors do, at a regional National Association for Music Education (NAfME) convention. While in attendance at the convention, I initiated casual conversations with well-situated individuals who were knowledgeable of music educators and the communities that they served. These individuals included music industry road representatives, collegiate professors of music education, and in-service music educators with a long history of teaching in the area. Throughout my scouting, each person to whom I spoke reflected a similar sentiment, that music educators from all size communities and teaching levels in this part of the country are well-connected socially. Large distances between communities are certainly a reality but the relatively small population allows for personal connectedness. One collegiate band director who was new to the area spoke enthusiastically about how personalized the NAfME conventions were compared to similar conventions in other parts of the country. A local colloquialism is that this area is not a large state but a small town with really long streets and locals know how many miles are between stop signs. Against this backdrop the annual music education convention is as much a social reunion as it is a professional development

opportunity.

While discussing my research project with these well-situated individuals, several names were repeated by multiple sources as potential participants who could offer insight into the careers and attrition motivations of music teachers with rural experience. With those names in mind I began to compile a list to narrow my search area. Ultimately the people I chose to approach were educators with experience teaching students in a rural K–12 setting, but I also took into account regional proximity and the possibility to conduct personal interviews within a reasonable time-frame. With my search area narrowed to a 500-mile circumference area, I contacted the ten possible participants with the closest proximity to each other. Ultimately five teachers agreed to participate.

Data Collection and Analysis

For this study I sought music educators who have previous experience with or currently were teaching K–12 music in rural schools to volunteer for participation. Once potential participants were identified I sent an initial contact email to ask for their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix A). When I gained a sufficient number of volunteers who agreed to take part in the study, rapport was established with phone and email conversations which led to formal data collection through semi-structured one-on-one interviews, on-site observations, and participant journals.

Interviews

I visited each participant for an interview and to observe their teaching environment. Interviews were conducted in person and recorded with a battery powered Zoom H2 digital .mp3 recorder. Before each interview new batteries were installed to

help safeguard that power would be maintained throughout the entire conversation. Interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes in length, depending on the amount of time available by the teacher participant, and were conducted in teacher participants' music rooms or at mutually agreed upon outside locations (e.g., coffee shops). Prior to the semi-structured interviews, each participant was given a consent script which expressed anonymity and confidentiality and informed them of their rights as a research participant (see Appendix B).

After verbal acknowledgment of consent, I began the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C). Each interview followed a line of inquiry constructed from the literature review. The structure of these interviews was targeted and focused directly on the topic of rural music teacher attrition based on an outline of topics and issues to steer the conversation, but parties had the opportunity to explore related avenues that might not necessarily have transpired through a rigid, scripted response technique. This fluid technique allowed the inclusion of anecdotes and other connections for which I might not have prepared questions, leading to what Patton (2002) called a more conversational interview that increased the comprehensiveness of data.

After the interviews were recorded, the .mp3 files were transferred to a home computer and then transcribed by the researcher using Audacity 1.3 Beta, a free, downloadable program that allows for adjustment of rate of speech during playback. I analyzed and coded interview recordings while transcribing, as well as after the data collection phase concluded. The coded data analysis served a means to guide and shape ensuing journal prompts and subsequent data reporting.

Observations

In addition to the recorded interviews, during visits with participants I documented direct observations of events and actions “as they actually occur[ed] in a local setting” (Yin, 2013, p. 322). Prior to my visit I coordinated a convenient time of day with each participant and communicated my arrival and intent with school administrators. For the observations I spent approximately 2 hours with each participant at their school of employment. These observations included watching before and after school routines and interactions as well as class instruction time. I documented each observation with handwritten notes and digital photographs.

Journal prompts

In order to enrich and clarify interview and observation data, the educators involved in the study were asked to complete journal entries in the form of emailed prompts based upon coded data from the interviews (see Appendix D). Respondents had the option to reply in whichever method was most convenient; written, recorded I-phone message, short video, or other method of their choice. All participants chose to email their responses for every prompt. After the final journal prompt I sent a concluding email thanking each teacher for their participation and offered them the opportunity to provide any amendments or concluding thoughts.

Data analysis and reporting

Data generated from interview transcriptions were interpreted, coded, and categorized according to themes and constructs that surfaced over the course of the study. Analysis procedures for the qualitative data consisted of coding the data for emergent

themes as well as for a priori themes based on general factors of workplace attrition and specific rural concerns from existing research. The interview coding provided what Yin referred to as “perceived causal inferences” (2003) that led to a thematic analysis across the cases to establish trends and theories which informed the next phase of data collection.

After the interview and observation phase, coded data were further enriched with participant and researcher journals. After 5 weeks of journaling, I contacted each participant to thank them for their participation and presented them with an amazon gift card to express my gratitude. Data from interviews, observations, and journal prompts were coded with Microsoft Word colored fonts and then separated into individual electronic folders using Scrivner, a word processing program and project management tool. Data were analyzed in a constant comparative method that explicitly coded all relevant data while analyzing the information to systematically generate theories (Glaser, 1965). I sought themes within the coded data not for generalizing beyond the case, but for understanding the complexity of the case and to “pose competing explanations for the same set of events and to indicate how such explanations may apply to other situations” (Yin, 2003, p. 5).

In the data reporting, pseudonyms for people and places were used to ensure anonymity, and an email address was created exclusively for all electronic communication to help maintain confidentiality. During data collection, study data were maintained on a cloud-based, password-protected storage drive. A key connecting the participants to the pseudonyms, which contained contact information for participants, was

kept on a separate, password-protected spreadsheet on an external hard drive. After data collection was completed, identifying information was destroyed by deleting and electronically shredding computer files and shredding any hard copies. When quoting participants in the study, reference is made to the source document. Citations listed the participant pseudonym initial, the data source and number (I = Interview and J = Journal Prompt), and the line number of the quote.

Trustworthiness and validity

I corroborated the data generated from the participants in order to further clarify and correctly represent the participants' responses. Using multiple sources, (interviews, observations, and participant journals), I was able to triangulate data to establish converging lines of evidence for robust and rich data used for causal investigation. By triangulating the data from the interviews within the study and through corroboration with the participants themselves in the form of member checks, I was able to evaluate information to acquire a more comprehensive view of each participant's exclusive situation and verify its accuracy in representing their experiences. According to Yin (2003), despite researchers' attempts to "deal with phenomenon and context . . . their ability to investigate the context is extremely limited" (p. 18). Therefore, relying on member checks helped to establish greater data trustworthiness.

Member checks were conducted in a two-step process. The first step occurred immediately after the interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions of each interview were sent to each individual participant so they would have the opportunity to amend or further clarify and statements, enhancing trustworthiness of conclusions. Following formal data

collection and after I had completed thick descriptions of each participant (reported in chapter four) I again emailed each participant with a copy of the writing to ensure that each person was being accurately represented and data were sufficiently interpreted.

Interviews were conducted until a point of diminishing returns was reached regarding the identified common patterns and resultant themes. Participant feedback through member checks supported interpretation of the data once completion of transcriptions occurred. Transcriptions of each participant's interview were sent to each individual participant so they would have the opportunity to amend or further clarify any statements, enhancing trustworthiness of conclusions. Furthermore, extensive researcher field notes provided a means to roughly analyze collected data and provide thick rich descriptions of each teacher participant's experience. These experiences were presented in a way to build explanations and to enhanced transferability among similar settings to provide perceived causal inferences and generalizability.

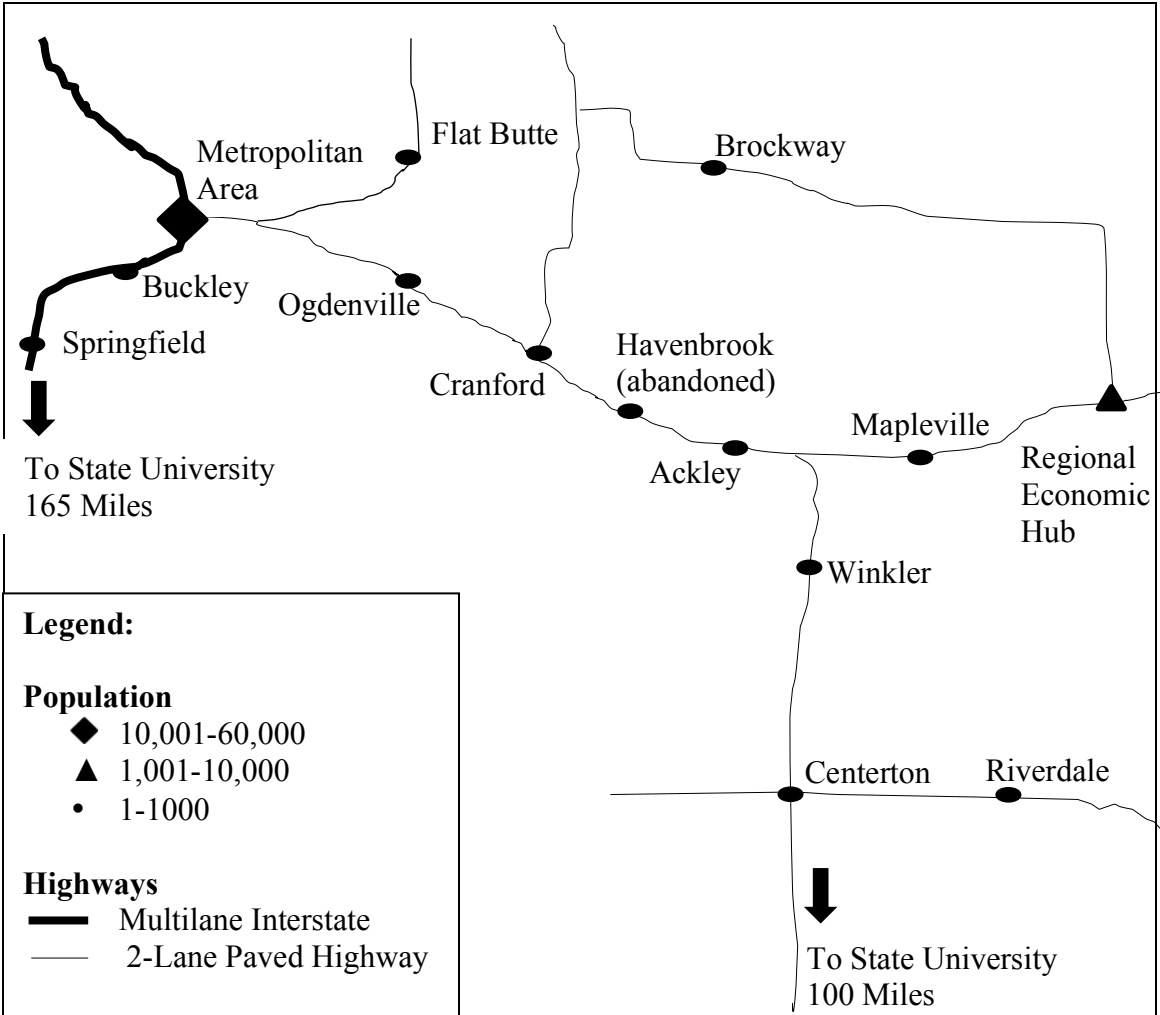
Chapter 4: Participant Careers and Communities

The five participants in this study currently teach or previously taught public school music classes in an area where mule deer outnumber humans and the only stations that can be received on a car radio are crackly AM talk shows with distinctly Christian and politically conservative content. The landscape displays distant snowcapped mountains which border wide, dryland wheat farms and cattle ranches. During the stifling hot summer months, the year-round snow atop the grey-blue mountains serves as a reminder that cold and windy winters are never far away. The people who call this harsh landscape home do so along a two-lane highway where, aside from a few widely-spaced towns, the only signs of occupation are the occasional farm house and the seemingly endless barbed-wire fences. The only other signs of development are occasional wind farms with dozens of 100-meter tall wind turbines. These wind farms silently collect the prairie breeze to light up cities and towns on the other side of the country. The wheat and cattle are loaded onto trucks and trains to feed unseen masses. Distances between the communities and outlying homes whose inhabitants tend to these wheat and wind farms will “stretch your conceptions of the term neighbor” (Duncan, 1993, p. 2), and intervals between stop lights can be more than a hundred miles.

The participants who teach, or taught, in the schools in these remote rural towns live among fewer than 900 residents (United States Census, 2013) and are a minimum of 25 miles from a metropolitan area of 50,000 or more people. For a comparison, the distance between Mapleville and the metropolitan area (see illustration 1) is approximately equal to the distance between New York City and Philadelphia. Along this

stretch of 100 miles of secluded road, only five small rural towns exist. Current school enrollment numbers in these towns are, as reported by the participants, between 300 students grades K–12 in the largest and 55 students in the smallest. Each rural school employs a single teacher for all music instruction kindergarten through 12th grade, and some job descriptions include teaching other subjects, such as math or health classes, to maintain full-time status.

Figure 1: Map of Research Area (not to scale)



Dave

The tuneless rumble of the metal grate at the bottom of the off-ramp noisily announces that 1) cows cannot navigate the path and walk on the interstate, and 2) the town of Springfield (see illustration 1) is just beyond the bend in the road. After driving three blocks down a shady and empty main street, a wind-blown tilted yellow sign with only the word “school” and an arrow pointing to the left stands adjacent to one of the town’s only stop signs. Beyond the sign at the end of a two-block long road, a gravel parking lot borders Springfield School – a non-descript brick building on the edge of the prairie where Dave teaches music. Dave grew up and earned his high school diploma and Bachelor’s degree in the bustling college town where the state university is located, but once he began his teaching career he found that he identified with the rural lifestyle and spent the last 32 years enjoying its virtues.

At 7:30 in the morning Springfield School’s narrow hallways seem crowded as nearly 300 kindergarten through 12th grade students file in the double doors to begin their day of instruction. Dave extolls his luck in having two soundproof practice rooms next to the music room, but begs forgiveness for the mess caused by construction workers replacing the rooms last winter after a frozen water pipe burst and flooded the area. Meanwhile, a dozen high school students were moving Wenger chairs from their stacks against the off-white wall into two rows to begin class. Upon stepping on the faded grey carpet of the all-purpose music room, Dave tried to engage several of his students in a conversation about the previous week’s district music festival. A majority of them, though, seemed more interested in talking amongst themselves about the struggles that

arose during weekend chores of delivering newborn calves and fixing fences. “This is half of my high school band,” Dave explained. “This year’s schedule required me to split the band into two sections. The hard part is we never get to rehearse as a full group. We get together on the day of a performance and hope for the best” (D, I, 15–16).

For the last 22 years, Dave has taught music in Springfield. Some years he was the sole music teacher, and sometimes there was another half-time teacher to share the load. He said that he is currently teaching K–12 music due to the fact that his former colleague retired, and her half-time elementary music teaching job was not filled. When she retired her position was advertised, but there were no applicants so Dave was asked to cover the extra workload. He said “it’s tough....Who wants to move, or can afford to move, way out here for a half time job” (D, I, 111)?

Until this year, in addition to his music duties in Springfield, Dave also drove to Buckley, a small community 15 miles north, to teach beginning and middle school band 3 days per week. The drive was “about 20 minutes in good weather” (D, J1, 5). In his 21 years driving between schools he had “as many as 15 or 16 students in one class and as few as 2” (D, J1, 9).

Buckley only serves grades K–8. When entering high school these students have a choice to ride the bus 15 miles north to one of the large high schools in the metropolitan area or to ride the bus 15 miles south to Springfield. Most choose to go south. When talking about the time it takes for these students to get to and from school every day Dave said, “70 percent typically of our students are bused to school from out of town. It’s a long time on a bus. That’s the thing that always struck me. Kids spend a lot of hours

sitting on a bus. And that's just to get to school, say nothing of the activities and stuff' (D, I, 112–115). Dave admitted missing the students from the Buckley, but he was not shy about saying that he was glad to not have to negotiate the commute in the winter months any more.

Before moving to Springfield, Dave spent the first 10 years of his career teaching K–12 music in a small town in the far corner of the state, nearly 500 miles from his hometown. Having grown up in a community of 20,000 people (which is the home of the state university), this new town was a bit of an adjustment:

From a social perspective it was of course way different. But the people are so nice we felt welcome right away. My wife had a good job in town 14 miles away, and that worked out really well for us. We liked the place. We had to drive a lot more to go grocery shopping or anything than what we were used to. [That community] was self-contained, but you didn't want to buy everything there, cause of prices and whatnot, but school wise, I had student-taught in [a rural community] so I knew a little bit what to expect from a small school. I had been in a big school program and I thought it would be better for me, since most people start out in a smaller place, I saw what it was like, so, it wasn't a huge shock, I'm sure there was some things I was wondering about at the time, but, you learn to adapt when you're young and you don't know any better, you just do it (D, I, 37–46).

The original plan for Dave and his wife was to stay in their first community for 3 years to build professional experience and then try to get hired in a larger community

similar to the one where they both grew up. After a year of living where they did, the young couple came to enjoy small town living and ended up staying for a decade. Dave noted that being married contributed to his longevity in his first teaching job:

A lot of it in fact depends on if you're married or single, too. My wife and I moved to [my first teaching job] and we both had good jobs that we liked, we had neighbors we liked, the people, we felt like we fit in fairly soon. Not totally in the small community for a while, some circles are cliquish, but we still felt comfortable. And we got involved with the community and felt a part of it fairly soon (D, I, 282–286).

He went on to say that unmarried teachers often don't last very long in rural towns. He said that living alone is hard and young unmarried teachers, regardless of gender, soon find that "there's a limited social life, and socially they just are frustrated, even if they really like the kids in the school. It's just harder for them" (D, I, 282–289). Interestingly, when talking about this social isolation, Dave pointed out an irony that exists in a small town. Due to the small population, a person living in a rural location tends to know and be known by a vast majority of the community, especially a person as publicly visible as a music teacher. As a result, a K–12 music teacher tends to be a music teacher whether they are at school, at home, or in any social situation. He said that there is no way to separate the school from the community with personal interactions, but according to him that is part of the appeal to living and working in a small town. "When you see people whose kids you teach, a lot of it is going to be related to the kids," he said, "I don't know if in a small town you can have total separation. For me, it's not that big a

deal” (D, I, 294–296).

Dave ultimately left his first job to be closer to his and his wife’s parents. Compared to the 7-hour drive from the northeast corner of the state, the 165 miles from Springfield to his home town was manageable. In addition to family proximity, he took the job in Springfield because the job description was strictly instrumental music. Upon arrival, though, he realized that there was no general music at the kindergarten level, and his daughter was entering school that fall and “she *had* to have music!” (D, I, 60). From that point on, music teachers retired or moved to other jobs and he gained their classes due to a lack of suitable replacements. When his most recent colleague retired her position was twice advertised without a single application. Now Dave is teaching all of the music classes at the school.

After 22 years in the same school, Dave is largely satisfied with his career. He doesn’t necessarily recommend that a person stay in a teaching job for as long as he has, but he has noticed a trend of people only keeping K–12 music jobs for 1 or 2 years. He generalized that when a person only stays in a job for a few years they never get the opportunity to feel comfortable where they are and student morale and skill tends to suffer. Dave noted that when he came to his current job, the program was in “shambles” due to a high rate of teacher mobility:

I was the seventh band teacher my seniors had had, and one of those teachers had been here two years! So there was incredible turnover. It was just really sad. They sounded bad. I recently listened to a tape of one of our fall concert songs, something that my junior high would play comfortably now, the high school band,

it was unrecognizable for the beginning sections. And that was after working for several months. So, turnover is a big factor (D, I, 242–247).

In order to establish healthy student and community relationships and promote long term musical growth, Dave’s opinion for the optimal number of years to serve is “not less than three...’cuz it takes that long for a teacher to feel like it’s their own program. Five would be even better” (D, I, 250–252). Dave also mentioned that it might be easier for a person to teach longer in a rural K–12 job if their own personal experience included attending a rural school as a student. He also said that he has had very few of his students pursue music education as a career, so for enough viable candidates to match the demand of open jobs, students from larger communities would have to learn to adapt to rural teaching. With the proper exposure and mindset he did not see the transition as problematic:

I had a student teacher here this fall that came from [a large community], went to school at the state university. She wanted to teach in a small school so she came here. And after a couple weeks she adapted pretty well. At first it was like, why I am I here? We got this awful schedule where half the band rehearses at different times, the choir had six students in it, and we hadn’t had one at all the year before, and just a lot of things not working well. But by the time she left she was very comfortable and she was doing an awesome job (D, I, 262–270).

Dave is confident that his most recent student teacher will have the skills and experience to enjoy her first job, which will most likely be in a rural setting. He did say, however, that undergraduate music education programs could do a little more to prepare

students for these kinds of teaching situations. Particularly, he noticed that there is a disparity between the musicality that is taught at the university level and that of the rural schools where so many new teachers end up being hired:

I think it would help if in college there was more teaching to the college students about what to expect in a small town. If they could somehow focus a little bit less on making music as musicians while they're in school and more about teaching the students to show them how to learn how to make music, it might not be as much of a culture shock musically, if the teacher went to a small school.

Watching my student teacher this fall, she was just horrified at some of the sounds coming out of the bands. And, well, it's never pleasant the first week, we had a bad schedule and this was a really small group. I mean here you are in college, you're learning to make music yourself, which is important. You have to be able to make music before you can teach it, at least to a certain point. But yet here she was having been in wind ensemble and a big marching band with all these awesome musicians in school, coming out here and seeing, hmmm, these kids haven't learned this yet. But she caught on to it and whether she teaches in a small or large school she's gonna do really well. Because she could see it and caught on to what's important with these kids, that it's not always about the results, it's about progression (D, I, 368–380).

Regardless of their training and personal experience, Dave feels that rural K–12 jobs are great for an individual to gain experience and hone skills in a wide variety of areas; but, from the perspective of the school and the students, the perception of small

schools being professional stepping stones is not necessarily fair:

As far as the school program goes, it's nice to get someone with some experience rather than someone starting from scratch all the time. Cause they know the basics of what they're doing and where they need to go. So from the school's perspective it will always be nice to have someone with several years' experience (D, I, 335–338).

One of the challenges with attracting experienced teachers to rural K–12 jobs is a perception of career hierarchy implying that small towns are places to build experience for when a job in a larger school opens. Dave said that, “I don't think it is just a perception that small schools have more turnover. Because the large schools, I've watched, and people stay there quite a number of years” (D, I, 349). He related an anecdote about that perception of status from a friend, who was currently teaching high school band in the metropolitan area 25 miles away:

I remember [my friend] when he moved back to the state taught in [Flat Butte] for a number of years. Did a good job there. Liked it pretty well. But he remembers when he'd be introduced and, so, where do you teach? Oh, [Flat Butte]. Okay, that's nice, good to meet you. Soon as he moved and got one of the big jobs, people would want to talk with him more - Ask him his opinions and things more. You know. And, this is the same guy. Two different schools. So there is still that same perception out there. Some of us don't buy into it anymore (D, I, 225–231).

The idea of rural music jobs being lower on a career hierarchy seems reinforced with the way salaries are structured. Of his salary Dave said, “it's not the main issue with

most of us but it has to be factored in. We live in the real world” (D, I, 257). Salaries in public education in this state are controlled at the district level and vary by amount between school districts, but they all function similarly within each district. Dave explained that school budgets offer salary increases for each year of service and for educational advancement (see appendix E). When a teacher is hired into a school district, the teaching contract determines how many years of previous experience will be allowed to determine a salary. He also reported that a majority of the school district contracts he was familiar with offered a maximum of five years on the salary scale for new hires, regardless of experience. Dave said when he left his first teaching job and moved to Springfield, he lost five years of experience; however, due to the variety between districts he “had ten years’ experience there, and even with the loss of years, was making within \$500 of the same amount. So the salary scale [in my first job] was pathetic compared to what I’m seeing now” (D, I, 100–103). From what he could glean from his personal relationships with educators around the state, there is a trend that the larger schools pay more than the smaller schools. Additionally, less experienced teachers are more likely to get jobs in the small schools. Within a state where districts typically do not offer more than five years of experience on a salary scale to newly hired employees, there is a disincentive to change jobs after the first few years. Although salary is not always a major contributing factor, it does have an effect on the overall decision making process. This causes a situation where teachers are eager to leave small schools. Dave said:

if you’re looking at your income as a professional, you get longer than six years at a school you’re going to have to take an experience cut when you go to the next

school. So ... if you stay too long in any one community you have to put up with the pay cuts (D, I, 250–257).

In addition to salary schedules causing teachers to want to leave jobs prematurely, Dave said that the nature of the K–12 job itself can be exhausting due to the wide range of skills needed to teach all of the classes and the time required to do so. He said, “I think one thing people don’t like about K–12 teaching is how scattered your focus is. There’s just so much to do all the time” (D, I, 186–196). He has come to enjoy the nature of the job, but wishes that he could be as focused as when he first came to Springfield and was primarily an instrumental music teacher:

Now that I’m back to K–12 again, I have to split [my focus] between the general music classes, the choir, and the band. It’s just harder to get everything done.

There are some things that get done just like 85 or 90 percent of what I would like to do with them instead of being able to spend more time and focus (D, I, 190–196).

Another issue with being responsible for such a wide range of subjects and skill levels is that K–12 music teachers rarely get an opportunity for specialty-specific collaboration. As the only music teacher in the district, Dave doesn’t often speak with other music teachers. His school is a part of a curriculum co-op of “20 or 30 small schools, I think, and we get together, not very often, it’s every fifth year we start reviewing” (D, I, 142–143). Beyond that, every October is the state NAFME convention which is as much a social reunion as a professional development opportunity. Dave attends the convention every year and very much enjoys the experience. Additionally, he

says, “we talk with each other a few times at the ensemble festival and basketball tournaments, but on a daily basis you have to do mail or call or something, to ask questions” (D, I, 144). In the modern era electronic communication is making collaboration for rural teachers easier, but without the convenience of having a colleague in the district, the onus is on the educator to reach out for collaborative ideas:

When there’s a specific issue that someone’s struggling with, they’ll get on the email bandmasters’ list serve, that’s really, really good. When I first started there was no internet. Telephones and post office were the only way. I was fortunate enough to have a teacher 30 miles away who had good experience who I could call if I needed some information. But you know, you don’t see them all the time. You have to make the effort to ask. Be comfortable enough. So that’s a little hard (D, I, 154–159).

He does wish there were another music teacher in the district to help share the teaching load, but Dave has been in Springfield long enough that he is comfortable being professionally isolated.

Professional isolation can be a contributing factor to negative job utility in a rural school, but Dave said that more often people get burned out with the emphasis and time commitment associated with athletics and pep band obligations. Dave is regularly asked to provide a pep band for football, basketball, volleyball games, and occasionally wrestling tournaments. The state bandmaster’s association has put forth recommendations that sports bands should not play more than 16 home performances. Tournament travel and performance is up to the discretion of school activity directors. Dave said that with

his 22 years of experience he has been able to gradually get his administrators to understand and accept the bandmaster guidelines:

In addition to tournament travel, I try to stick to the general bandmasters guidelines for pep band, do about 16 home games a year. I try to do four boys basketball, four girls basketball, four volleyball, and then football and wrestling. Typically, we only host one regular season wrestling meet. I try to do that at senior night, then three football games (D, I, 170–174).

Dave admits that pep band can be overwhelming at times, but he considers himself lucky in that his wife is employed as a substitute teacher and secretary in the high school office. When their daughter was in high school, she participated in the Springfield band program and the three of them always traveled together when the band was on the road. It was nice, he said, “band was a family affair” (D, I, 57).

Related to the number of athletic and other activities that occur throughout the year, Dave talked about high numbers of students missing lots of school to participate. Dave said that in a small school this kind of absenteeism is inevitable, and that the key to all teachers and advisers having equal access to a small group of students is proactive communication:

It’s a small school, we know each other, and we also know that we have to talk to get things figured out if possible. Like, the Future Farmers of America club used to schedule their state conference during one of the district music festivals on some years. When that was going to happen I knew that it would take a good chunk of my kids. If it was close, we could work around each other and make the

events work together. If FFA was somewhere else, several times we petitioned and went to a different district festival which solved that problem very well. But we had to look ahead and talk with each other, communicate (D, I, 131–140).

Part of the success Dave has with communication is having a good working relationship with fellow teachers and school administration. After teaching 22 years in Springfield, Dave was very complimentary of his administration. He said that he has “always had good support, at least verbally, from the superintendents and principals” (D, I, 121). As he elaborated, however, that support seemed more perceived than actual. This year, two other classes with only one section had been scheduled at the same time as the high school band. As a result, and without consultation from Dave, the high school band had been split into two periods with no option for pull-out time to combine rehearsals. Last year, scheduling conflicts created an issue where not one student was able to register for high school choir. Things were not much better at the middle school level, although Dave hinted that he had finally worked out some lines of communication to help with the scheduling process:

Schedule wise, for a while it was pretty challenging to give band and choir priority. So the result was a struggle the last few years to get the band together. They also don't see that it's a six-year problem if you mess up the junior high schedule, and the kids get out of band, it's hard for them to get back in. They rarely come back. It's six years' worth of students that could be musicians (D, I, 121–126).

Within the district, Dave has been in his job long enough to have developed lines

of communication that have been beneficial to his students and his overall job satisfaction. Another avenue of conversation that he has successfully taken advantage of is the state-wide music education organizations. Dave extolled the virtues of the choral association, the bandmasters, and the string teachers and the fact that they all had electronic mail list-serves. He was not aware if there was a similar resource for general music teachers, but Dave spoke highly of the existing list-serves:

When there's a specific issue that someone's struggling with, they'll get on the email bandmasters' list serve, that's really, really good. You might have something similar to that. When I first started there was no internet. Telephones and post office were the only way. I was fortunate enough to have a teacher 30 miles away who had good experience who I could call if I needed some information. But you know, you don't see 'em all the time. You have to make the effort to ask. Be comfortable enough. So that's a little hard (D, I, 146–159).

Dave has enjoyed his time in Springfield and has no plans to retire any time soon. His experience is, however, not without its challenges. Scheduling and staffing issues tend to frustrate him. In his “perfect world” scenario he said that things would be similar to what they are now except with another music teacher in the building:

My job would be teaching general music to grades K and 1, band for grades 5–12. There would be class every day for the bands. The middle school band would have 30 students or so. The high school band would be 40 to 50 members. I would teach six classes most days in a seven period schedule. Monday and Friday would have 30 minutes or more of extra prep time. Beginning band in the fifth grade

would be split up so smaller groups would come to me on a rotating basis and also meet all together as they were needing for the full band experience. Sixth grade would be mostly full band but with occasional small group times for more concentrated, individualized instruction. Grades 7 and 8 would be together every day. There would be enough practice rooms and computers that students could rotate and work with Smart Music once per week for individualized instruction. High school band would meet every day and we would be able to work on solo and small ensemble skills (D, J3, 7–22).

Whether or not Dave will ever have another teacher in the district to share the music education responsibilities remains to be seen. Either way, he continues to enjoy the advantages of watching the musical and personal growth in his students. When teaching grades K–12 a teacher has a unique opportunity to be a huge part of the life a student. He says rural music teaching provides an opportunity to “know the kids personally, at a professional level but know them on a one-to-one basis...learning life skills as well as musical skills” (D, I, 272–274). He says that the right kind of person can find career satisfaction in a rural school as long as they have the right expectations of the job:

I think it has every bit as much to do with the personal situation, the life outside of school, as it does with the teaching. It depends on the person. If you are not comfortable living in a small town, if you feel bored all the time outside of school, if you just don't feel accepted, then you aren't going to stay long no matter how much you like teaching those kids. Are you going to be able to meet your personal goals and be satisfied with what you hear? Is it important to you to

know the students personally, on a personal level you need to decide if you can live happily in a rural setting with not very many social things compared with a big town? Some of it depends on the combination. I've seen that a lot with a lot of successful K–12 teachers in a small school. That's because they're comfortable living there. And they like to teach there (D, I, 314–322).

Teaching life skills and enjoying large growth of musical skill are among the key reasons Dave stays in Springfield. There is, however, also a more altruistic rationale. Dave is keenly aware that rural music jobs are hard to fill and he is doing his part to ensure that the students of Springfield have someone to share in their musical journeys. Other small towns are not so fortunate. There is, according to Dave, a definite shortage of music teachers in this region, “it seems that every year has several music positions that go unfilled. I've heard that a few schools (very small ones) have quit looking for a music teacher and just canceled the programs all together” (D, J2, 13–15). Struggles with attrition and finding adequate numbers of applicants is not a new problem in rural music education. Dave said that when he was hired in Springfield 22 years ago he was the “seventh band teacher my seniors had had” (D, I, 240). He went on to say that, “there are always more job openings in small schools than in the large schools” (D, J2, 7–11), and that “I don't think it is just a perception that small schools have more turn over. Because the large schools, I've watched, and people stay there quite a number of years” (D, I, 349).

When addressing attrition rates, Dave mentioned that a person should be willing to stay in a job, regardless of place, for long enough to understand the nuances and for the

students to develop relationships. He did, however, offer the caveat that a person should only spend multiple years teaching in one place if they are a good “fit” for the job. Some students are lucky enough to have the same music teacher for their entire public school experience:

If they got a good teacher who was teaching them good things, there’s nothing wrong with having the same teacher all the way through [grades K–12]. If it’s someone who’s not really very good, then it’s a detriment to the kids. From the teacher end of it, an entire career in one spot sometimes works but you have to be lucky and find one of the right spots. I’ve seen a lot of people who are good teachers but that job for them it didn’t work. So they were there for a little while went somewhere else, and they quit. You can’t be afraid to try different jobs if you aren’t happy with what you’re doing (D, I, 346–351).

He concluded his thought with the advice, “teachers in rural/small schools need to recognize when they are happy with their job situation. Don't be afraid to stay in a small school if you are happy there” (D, J1, 19–21). Dave certainly recognized that he was happy and is content with his career choice.

Lisa

Like Dave, Lisa left the college town where she earned her degree to begin her career in a remote rural community. Unlike Dave, she did not feel as connected to the job or the lifestyle. After 5 ½ years, she left rural music teaching and is now in her third year teaching K–4 elementary music in the busy suburban community where she grew up. The county seat where she attended the state university and earned her Bachelor’s and

Master's degree in music education is eight miles away.

Lisa is known and respected by Dave as well as among music educators throughout the region. Large distances between communities in this area are a reality, but the relatively small population allows for personal connectedness between music educators from every corner of the state. Since her time as an undergraduate, Lisa has embodied that personal connectedness and has been socially and professionally active among student musicians and music educators. She has served on state music education association boards and is currently director of a summer music camp for middle and high school students.

While serving on the state music education board Lisa was involved with pairing new music teachers in rural communities with a mentor teacher. This state mentoring program was started and is administered by several retired music educators who spend hundreds of hours driving back roads visiting rural schools and assisting first year music teachers. The mentors only ask for mileage reimbursement, and the program is funded by donations through the state bandmasters association. Lisa started teaching before the mentor program was initiated, but she has been involved with arranging meetings between mentor and mentee. She has also talked to many people who have been visited and calls the mentoring program one of the “greatest things the bandmasters have ever done” (L, I, 280).

After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in music education, Lisa's first job was in the community of Riverdale. Riverdale is a half-mile square area of dusty one-story buildings with 260 people that live more than 50 arid and virtually uninhabited miles

from the nearest interstate highway. Riverdale School has a total of 55 students grades K–12. Lisa was assigned to teach kindergarten through 5th grade general music, 5th–6th grade band, 7–12 grade combined band, and 7–12 grade combined choir. In addition to her music duties, she taught remedial reading, web page design, independent study music history/theory, assisted with preschool duties, directed a pep band, the school play, and was a speech and drama coach. Lisa was responsible for all speech and debate tournaments and more than 40 performances with her concert, pep, and theater students. She was hired for this job in the middle of a school year to replace a teacher who had been teaching there for more than two years with a provisional teaching certificate.

Towards the end of her second year in Riverdale, the administrators in the neighboring school district of Centerton successfully recruited Lisa and her husband. Centerton High School needed a basketball coach and a history teacher, and Lisa's husband was both. The school would also need a K–12 music teacher within two years to replace a half-time retiree, so they asked if she would teach math and secondary music and then transition to full time K–12 music. The allure of teaching and living in the same community as her husband was a strong draw for Lisa. When she taught in Riverdale, she and her husband taught in different school districts while living halfway between. The commute for each of them was 80 miles per day, in opposite directions. Centerton would allow them both the opportunity to focus more on work and not have the added stress of a long drive in all manner of weather conditions from driving winds to scorching sun to blinding blizzards. The new job allowed them to move to Centerton and live in a house mere blocks from the 100-year-old brick schoolhouse. The school, like much of the

community of Centerton, is larger than it needs to serve its population. Decades ago, Centerton was a bustling town with a thriving railroad industry, but modernization resulted in trains no longer stopping and the ensuing jobs were no longer available. Now this town on top of a windswept hill overlooking a vast river valley has only 900 residents and much of the infrastructure is abandoned, dilapidated, or underused.

For the first 2 years in Centerton, Lisa taught secondary music and math classes. She admitted to being “very good at math”, but not having “the skills or qualifications to teach it” (L, I, 51). After this time with a provisional teaching license and taking coursework to become certified, she was offered the opportunity as a full time K–12 music teacher in the music room which was a noisy converted boiler room at the bottom of a narrow staircase under the stage at the back of a dark gymnasium. The job was still not ideal, but she was finally teaching music full time and her husband was teaching and coaching in the same building so they stayed for 2 more years.

Lisa spoke with a beleaguered tone about the amount of time she spent before and after school with her students in that room and on a bus traveling to athletic tournaments and music festivals. She mentioned 2 times of the year when she felt most overwhelmed with the workload. The first was during the district large group and solo festival preparation time. Being the only music teacher in the community she was called on to help prepare student performances:

From note learning to polishing my hand was in all of them. I had to train them all because there is nobody else to help you. Everyone just kind of assumed that I would teach everyone in town privately on my own time. That is not something

that I enjoy doing and it is not something that I had time and energy for. It was fine in the beginning, but soon I found myself hoping that they would just forget and I wouldn't remind them. I coached every single solo and ensemble that came out of [Centerton] (L, I, 307–312).

Admittedly teaching a 7–12 grade ensemble can be a daunting task, but if the job is viewed from a perspective of authority and being in charge of musical destiny it can be a highly rewarding endeavor. Lisa said she was often overwhelmed by the duties of her employment, but it was not without reward:

From a teaching standpoint it is the best thing I have done. Now that I am in a bigger position and a more focused position and have all of this time to do elementary stuff I can look back and say I am really glad to say that I didn't start anywhere else. It gave me the opportunity to start understanding how kids develop from really small to high school. I was able to control my own program. If my sixth graders did not know how to count it was my fault, if my high schoolers didn't tongue it was on me as the beginning band director that it didn't happen. That is a lot of pressure but it also a great learning opportunity for a beginning teacher. In figuring out children's behaviors and learning what behavioral strategies work and don't work when you have the entire school and it's a small community and small class sizes you can experiment a whole lot more that if you just jump into a 500 kid program (L, I, 330–339).

In addition to solo and ensemble festival season, the other time of year that was particularly difficult was during basketball tournament season when the band was

expected to travel with the teams for tournament games. With the large distances between schools, she reported that one week every year she traveled “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and that was, well, five hours a day just bus travel time, say nothing of the games themselves” (L, I, 19–21). One year a mid-winter storm made one of the trips particularly harrowing. Lisa reminisced having to stop every 20 minutes to pull the bus to the side of the road so she and the driver could alternate stepping out into the sub-zero temperatures, dumping snow, and gale force wind to scrape ice from the windshield that was accumulating faster than the defroster could melt.

If the teams were successful and earned spots in as many as three more advanced tournaments, the band students would travel far enough to warrant staying in a hotel rather than driving back and forth every day. She said that it was nice to not have to spend so much time on a bus for these tournaments, but it meant more time away from her young family:

There are people who are extremely successful with that time commitment for their entire careers, but that a lot of them that I have talked to, those that really spent years and years in rural schools – I had trepidations about being a mom and doing it – that was what they said was their biggest concern was that they didn’t have enough time with their kids and I just couldn’t give that up. You have to make that decision. I would have stayed in rural schools forever if it hadn’t been so time consuming outside of school (L, I, 349–353).

After four years teaching in Centerton, Lisa was burned out from, among other things, the extra time spent working beyond the school day. “The first year,” she said, “it

was okay and even the second year, but then I had my son and it wasn't okay anymore. Things change" (L, J4, 172–173). So she sought employment elsewhere and was hired to teach as an elementary general music specialist in the suburban community where she grew up and attended public school. In her new position, she says:

I jump out of bed every day excited to go to work. That was not true that last year in [Centerton]. I was ready to go work in a gas station. That's actually what I told my husband. I was going to quit my job and go work at a gas station, and I was serious" (L, J4, 203–205).

In her current job, Lisa is highly satisfied due to having time for both family and work and a balance between "time spent rehearsing for upcoming performances and time spent teaching units based on the foundation of music" (L, J3, 18). Lisa currently teaches elementary music and coaches a high school flute choir. Her extra-curricular obligation is "an extra 45 minutes per week and I don't do anything beyond that." She did acquiesce that "Christmas season is a little different. We do about 7 or 8 Christmas concerts in the course of a week, but that is nothing. I am busy in December and April and that is it" (L, I, 165–167).

In addition to being more content with her extra-curricular time demands, Lisa feels much more connected to and supported by her administration. Her impression is that principals and other administrators do not need to have the same background as their teachers to be effective, but the ability to understand the other's experiences is paramount. Lisa talked about her current building principal in her suburban elementary music position as having that trait:

My current administrator spends an awful lot of time developing relationships with the community and spends an awful lot of time studying brain based research on education and understands that a diverse education is valuable in elementary education and understands that music is a component of that. He's not a musician, and had never had that experience – he did the sports thing, but he is immensely supportive; immensely supportive of all teachers and of all kids (L, I, 211–215).

By contrast her previous principal in Centerton was an active three-season coach and her perception was that he did not find the time to reach out to any of the members of the teaching staff who were not athletically oriented:

I felt like the administrator in [Centerton] was immensely supportive of athletics and the kids that were in athletics and not much else. I don't know if he ever – I can safely say then he never spent time in a faculty meeting talking about best practices in education (L, I, 210–212).

She went on to say that “probably half of my decision to leave [Centerton] was based on my last year working for my principal” (L, I, 209).

The high school principal that Lisa worked for in Centerton was athletically focused, as was much of the community, which made social engagements unappealing. She said that she found very little in common with parents, other teachers, or community members:

Living in such an athletic town and not being into it myself - I appreciate it and I of course cheer on any kids doing whatever but I don't ever talk about college ball or anything like that so there was a lot of loneliness on my part” (L, I, 319–321).

In addition to not feeling a sense of belonging within the community, the intense athletic focus of rural music education can be a stressor to a person who does not place the same emphasis on sporting events. Lisa's perception is that rural music teachers are intricately involved with the athletic department in that they are expected to provide a pep band for football, basketball, and volleyball games. According to Lisa, the state music education association has recommendations that high school bands not perform for more than 16 home games (not including travel to post season) tournaments, but not all administrators adhere to the recommendation. In Centerton, she regularly performed for dozens of home games. Compounding the schedule challenge is the reality that many rural schools do not have enough students for complete teams, so athletic co-ops are commonplace. While she was in Centerton, that school and Riverdale entered into an agreement to share students for games, and the pep band duties ultimately fell on Lisa. She tried to find a benefit to the co-op, but mostly it just ended up being more work:

The first year of the co-op, we co-directed. After that, I just did it because I had the most students. [Riverdale] would send a "chaperone" (not always the band director) to watch their kids outside of the performances. Was it good for me as a professional? I'd like to think that I grew a lot from my experiences as a director of the pep band. I was forced to be caring, and organized. But, no, I feel as if I was more burned out from pep band than aided by it. The co-op stressed me out. Getting music to kids at two schools, t-shirt orders, travel arrangements, it's a lot of work (L, J1, 4-36).

More so than the added work of providing students to perform at games, the high

number of athletic and activity events has a large impact on student attendance. In a high school with only 75 students, a high percentage of them are involved in many activities and sports. Furthermore, in a state as large as this one, the distance between communities requires long driving times:

I had about 25–30 students in my middle school choir and band classes. Of those, I'd say 95 percent of them participated in at least one extracurricular activity causing them to miss school. The spring was the worst, as this was the time when the most students missed for events like track (which were all-day events), Academic Olympics, and FFA. Middle school students would miss my class 1–3 times per week. When track was gone, I would have about 3 students in my middle school band and choir classes. Not much you can 'rehearse' there. As for high school, 100 percent of my band and choir students were involved in some sort of extracurricular. Basketball, track, golf, and FFA took the most of my students out of my rehearsal times. My band hovered around 20–25 students. Choir was from 20–30. Basketball would take out about half of my ensemble when they were gone. Track and golf would take about 70 percent. FFA took about 70 percent. Again, springtime was the worst. I would have students miss my class between 1 and 3 days per week (L, J4, 21–36).

Students missing this much time out of school made routine teaching duties difficult. Lisa talked about one particular semester when she was trying to prepare for the upcoming large group music festival. She was getting frustrated with the number of days students were missing from rehearsal so she kept a personal journal and discovered that:

Between the first of February and our District Music Festival (early April), I saw my entire band as a group ONCE! Yep, once. No wonder we scored low on balance and blend, my group had only heard each other play all together for one rehearsal. The absences from class were mostly school or sports-related, so I tried not to take my frustrations out on the students, but it was certainly a huge challenge (L, J4, 9–14).

She went on to elaborate that the results of frustration from student absenteeism were not merely musical:

When most of the students are absent from any given rehearsal, the motivation for all involved suffers. I always felt as a teacher that it was tough to come up with something to teach when more than half of my ensemble was missing, because I would most likely find myself repeating everything the next day anyway. For the students, the days with fewer students were tough because they felt that rehearsing was a waste of time. They wanted a ‘free day.’ I hate to admit this, but I did not have anyone checking up on me, so there were definitely days where both the students' and my time was wasted. There were days when I could have taught so much more one-on-one but I was too unmotivated, stressed-out, and discouraged to do so (L, J4, 14–20).

Although there were high stress moments which ultimately led to Lisa leaving rural music teaching, she is glad she began her career in these schools. She said that when she started her career she “really wasn’t sure what [she] wanted to do as a music teacher and K–12 let [her] experiment and that was really good for [her]” (L, I, 416–417). She

admits not being prepared for the broad set of skills required for the job, but she had a diverse musical background which helped. Lisa played saxophone and sang in choir when in high school. When she went to the state university, she was asked to specialize and said that she had a better personal relationship with the vocal professors than with the director of the saxophone studio, so she earned a degree with a choral focus. She maintained her instrumental studies, and when she finished her coursework and went into student teaching she said that she felt reasonably prepared for the rural classroom. Even with her confidence she soon realized that “the amount of time and flexibility and energy that is required of you is insane” (L, I, 350). She mentioned that possibly more could be done in undergraduate preparation:

I think that there is something to be said for the universities encouraging students to have more experience in both band and choir. I student taught in a k–8 school for half where I taught band, choir, general music, string orchestra, and percussion ensemble so I had a little of that, and the second half I taught high school choir and 6th grade band. So to have that much diversity in student teaching, I felt pretty well prepared. More so than my current student teacher who will be teaching K–12 next year. His experience is K–4 general music and high school band and that is it (L, I, 359–364).

In addition to having a broadfield student teaching experience, as a college and public school student Lisa was involved with instrumental and vocal music. She said that her public school and collegiate experience were a major contributing factor to her ability to negotiate the demands of a rural K–12 teaching job:

I was lucky that my entire life was band and choir all the way. From sixth grade on I never had a year of just doing one. And then I chose in college and I chose based on whether I liked the saxophone teacher or not so I chose a choir major, but I still feel very connected to both band and choir. I like both. I value being in both (L, I, 369–374).

Lisa is concerned for her student teacher because she knows he does not have a generalized musical training, and more than likely he will end up teaching a wide range of ages and specialties in a rural school. Her observation is that people generally begin a music teaching career in rural schools then move to a larger community. According to Lisa, more often than not the first jobs only last a few years which leads to a high number of open positions every year. In her estimate she counted 20 open music jobs within the state (as of early April), and all of them were in rural communities. According to past trends she surmised that a majority of them would be filled with new graduates and acquiesced that “there are fewer than 20 music education graduates in this state planning on pursuing those jobs for the fall” (L, J2, 16). She pointed to a few examples of the challenges of filling rural jobs from around the state. She is an active adjudicator for district large group and solo festivals, and spoke of judging “several” ensembles with provisionally licensed teachers. From a personal perspective, earlier in her career she was recruited during student teaching for her first job in Riverdale to replace a provisional teacher who had been teaching there for two-and-a-half years. Having people teach without training or experience is less than ideal, but she said with a sigh, “well, you have to have either somebody or nobody, you know” (L, I, 56).

Part of the reason for high numbers of open rural music teaching jobs every year, Lisa says, is that there are many more rural schools than larger ones. Another part of the reason is that the larger schools tend to pay more so people are more inclined to stay. Lisa admits that salary was “not even an issue” (L, I, 134) when she left Centerton but she did comment on the discrepancy between salary scales in differing districts. In her current job in a suburban community, she initially took a small pay cut due to loss of salary scale experience, but after one year she earned a Master’s degree and moved a lane on the pay matrix and was back to where she started:

If you were to stay in Centerton forever, the max you can make is around \$50,000. If you stay in [her current position] forever you can max out around \$80,000. They pay more experience and the base is higher. Starting salary in Centerton was around \$24,000 when I left and here starting is around \$30,000 (L, I, 145–152).

Lisa had many great relationships with her students in Riverdale and Centerton. She said that small classes and lots of time on a bus allow for deep personal connections to be made. It can be a highly rewarding job for the right person. When talking about what it takes for a person to have a long career in a rural school, Lisa quickly and emphatically said, “that’s easy, marry a rancher!” (L, I, 420). She listed several names of teachers around the state who had lengthy and satisfying stays in rural schools and said that each of them had largely contributed their longevity to marrying into established local ranching families. Not being from a small community herself, though, she did not

feel the connection and was glad to have the opportunity to return to a familiar community.

Kate

Seventy miles northeast of Centerton, the residents of Cranford live within one of dozens of counties in this region labeled by the United States Census as “frontier,” which means that there are fewer than 2 people per square mile (2013). With just over 2,000 residents, the land area of this county is nearly the size of the state of Delaware. The people who live here are mainly wheat farmers or cattle ranchers. Those who do not own farms or work in agriculture are typically employed in the service industry or work for the school districts, which are the largest employers in these small towns.

In the heart of this county are 220 people who call the town of Cranford home. This sleepy nine square block town with more gravel roads than paved is 59 miles from the nearest stop light and features three churches, three bars, a post office, a gas station, and a school with 80 students K–12. On the outskirts of town are a seldom used grass air strip and a railroad track that has not had a passenger train in decades. These tracks stand as a reminder of a time when the residents of these communities were, as Woodard (2012) described, completely dependent on the railroad for transportation of goods, people, and products to and from far-off markets and manufacturing centers. Now, no public transportation exists and the people who live here are used to driving great distances on two-lane highways or gravel roads on a regular basis. For example, the school administrators have set up a co-op with the two closest schools in order to have enough students for complete athletic teams. These students regularly drive with coaches

as many as 60 round trip miles for practices.

Kate is finishing her first year teaching in Cranford school and had taught music in several other similar size schools around the state. She had also recently spent time working as a secretary at an insurance agency and as a server at the ‘local’ (40 miles west) restaurant and gas station. The daughter of a cattle rancher, she grew up in a frontier county a hundred miles north of Cranford and, after graduating from high school, earned an elementary education degree with a minor in music from a branch of the state university in the north-central part of the state. Four years ago, she came to the Cranford area with her husband and two daughters after finding relatively cheap land to buy outside of town to start a cattle ranch. She enjoys living in a small town and appreciates the relationships that can be forged teaching in these schools:

These small schools you see the little things in all kids not just the cream of the crop. You are molding and educating. You are trying to teach them to be better people. The things you have to deal with are so much more because there are so few kids. You get pretty close to these kids and they get pretty close to you. A lot times you are a mom or the adult not just a teacher in this situation. So there is a lot more to it than just teaching your field. I think you wouldn’t get that so much in a bigger school (K, I, 187–192).

Kate began her teaching career in a K–8 school house in a Tamarack tree-filled valley deep in the mountainous west teaching general music and band. When talking about that position she said, “it was the only time I’ve ever had just music. Oh how I loved that job because it was just music. Just concerts - no festivals, you didn’t have pep

band, oh it was nice. But we were living a ways away, so it was 90 miles I was driving every day. So we decided to move” (K, I, 25–26). They moved to her home town in the north-central part of the state. After a fruitless attempt of looking for land to start a new family ranch and teaching K–12 music and other subjects, they moved once more and settled in their current place in Cranford. Currently, Kate teaches in a small room at the end of a long dark hallway. Her job description includes K–12 music, middle school math, and is an advisor for the junior class. The creaky warped wood floor leading to her room is as old as the building, but nobody could say exactly how long ago it was built. The closest approximation was, “It’s been a here a long time” (R, Q, 126). Kate feels lucky to have a classroom and a 100-seat auditorium across the hall, but she is frustrated with the declining enrollment and the extra classes added to her course load in order to maintain full time employment in such a small district.

Cost of living was one of the main reasons Kate and her family settled in the Cranford area. She said that salaries in rural schools are hard to live on and that salary is a “huge thing” (K, I, 77–80) when considering whether to stay in or leave a job. According to Kate, salaries are similar between rural schools, but dwelling expenses vary significantly. Depending on the budget of the school and the size of the community, subsidized homes known as teacherages are sometimes provided for teachers. She told me about some rural communities with very few houses for sale or rent, so the school districts owned modular homes that were provided for teachers at an “affordable rate” (K, I, 85). Cranford School does not own any such housing, nor did the school where Kate had her first teaching job. In towns without teacherages, real estate can potentially be

very expensive. In the region hundreds of nearly empty miles to the northeast where Kate lived before moving to Cranford, dwelling expenses are driven up by oil and gas workers overflowing the market and by tourism brought in by Autumnal deer, antelope, and bird hunting. With a hint of bitterness in her tone, she talked about the challenges in trying to find a plot of land:

We thought that land wouldn't be that expensive because it was out in the toolies. Well, it was because there is river-front property and a lot of hunting so you have really wealthy land-owners driving up the price. The only time they are there is when they are hunting and that is it (K, I, 8–11).

When talking about the move to Cranford, she said that having a family is paramount if a person is going to make a career in a rural town. She said, "If you come alone out here to the toolies, to such a desolate area, I just don't think it could last. If you are single and looking for a job, a lot of small, rural areas are not very appealing" (K, I, 61). Small towns do not offer a lot of social opportunities so a person without a spouse or roommate will spend a lot of time alone in the evenings. In addition to having someone to talk to in the evenings, having a spouse and children while teaching music in a rural school makes the long hours more social and family oriented. Kate's two daughters are "very involved with music and they are involved with sports so we are all here together a lot of the time anyway. That becomes the time you spend with them" (K, I, 93–94). In an interesting side note, Kate went on to say that she values the time she has with her children, but extended family can be overwhelming. Among the reasons she left her hometown and moved to Cranford with her husband and children was to get some

physical distance from her extended family, “sometimes living close to your family has its own set of problems, too” (K, I, 59). Before Cranford, she had been living in the same town where she grew up and said with a laugh that living so close to her parents and siblings was not a desirable situation.

Kate’s experience with her extended family in her previous community illustrated the social irony that exists in rural life. There are very few social opportunities, but small numbers of people mean that every outing is rife with familiarity. Anonymity is hard to come by, especially with music teachers who are regularly in the public eye at athletic and musical events. Kate grew up in and felt very comfortable with this kind of community relationship, but she cautioned that having such a high profile relationship with members of a small community can be daunting, especially if personality types are not compatible. She said that politics in rural communities can have wide reaching effect and that one or two vocal members can dictate large-scale policy. She said that just after moving to Cranford, she took a job in Brockway for two years. In Brockway, she had gotten along with a majority of the members of the community, but “the school board was a different story” (K, I, 99). Her perception was that two of the members of the school board were trying to subversively eliminate music from the school as a cost saving measure. She had been the sixth music teacher in seven years, and when she left, the position was reduced to part time status and is currently filled with an unlicensed provisional teacher. According to Kate, all of the previous teachers had been “forced out” (K, I, 123) by these school board members who created unworkable conditions and displayed a complete lack of support.

With so many teachers coming and going in Brockway, Kate found her students unmotivated and unwilling to engage in relationship development. She said it takes a long time for a level of trust to be developed so is advantageous for someone to stay in a teaching job long enough to develop that trust. Kate said that a music program has to be developed and built up “over years and needs constant work at improvements. If there is a constant turn over in teachers students will lose interest for sure and that is all the more devastating for the music program” (K, J5, 28–29). She went on to say that high attrition rates are not unique to Brockway:

There are more and more schools that are ‘getting by’ with using other teaching certificates so they can cover areas in the curriculum (like music) when they can't find any teachers to hire... downfall to this is that kids then don't get the best education in that area because either the person they hire isn't even a teacher, or has no experience either teaching or teaching that area (K, J2, 23–27).

She posited that part of the problem was a lack of suitable candidates entering the workforce. She said, “I don't think there are as many people going into school [for music education]. Also with a lot of the music minors being taken out of colleges, that's all I've ever had” (K, I, 53–54).

Due to the lack of certified teachers coming out of the state university Kate said, with near disbelief, that some schools are hiring applicants from out of state. It was hard for her to comprehend why anyone who did not grow up in the area would even consider moving there, but she said, “I have heard a lot of stories about people getting out of state applicants for music positions” (K, I, 55). People from out of state or who do not have

experience living in rural communities can be successful in a K–12 music teaching job, but it is ideal if they have some education as to the living and working situation for which they are about to embark:

If they had some kind of, I don't know, if they could somehow come out and visit and become familiar with the area. I think a lot of times they've done a lot of interviews by phone. People don't even come out and look before taking a job. If there is a solution, I don't know. If they are forward and honest with [the applicant] and tell them how many students and say how desolate the area is. I guess if they are willing to come and make if work for a year I guess that's good to, I think a lot of times the district is just happy to have somebody apply and have a warm body in the job (K, I, 69–74).

If she had been given the opportunity she would have stayed in Brockway for the foreseeable future, but she was asked to resign for unclear reasons do to the actions of two school board members. With the notable exception of these school board members in Brockway, Kate said that she has always enjoyed good working relationships with her administrators, “all of the superintendent/principals I have had have all been supportive” (K, I, 99–101). Kate was of the opinion that the administrator-teacher relationship is most effective when it is not confrontational. She said:

I'm the type of person who I talk to them. I discuss things with them. Some people I think talk about them, but not to them and they don't communicate and they wonder why there are issues. They have a job to do and I have a job to do, and sometimes their job effects what my job is. They need to tell me certain

things and I need to follow their wishes. They are the administrator and I think some people have a hard time with that. I don't try to be confrontational but you have to have an open line of communication (K, I, 115–120).

After her second year in Brockway, Kate resigned her position after hearing that her contract was not going to be renewed. She then spent a year working as a server at the restaurant and gas station 40 miles to the East while she waited for the job in Cranford to come open. She enjoyed her time in the restaurant but was relieved with a job offer to teach again. Kate knew the previous music teacher in Cranford who had been there for more than a decade and resigned her position when she was hired as the K–12 guidance counselor. This previous music teacher wanted to stay in education but was tired of the evenings and weekends spent with pep band and festival duties, so she gladly accepted the new position. She and Kate were friends before they worked in the same building, and the rapport has continued into their professional lives, “it’s been awesome to have her help even though she doesn’t do it any more she is there for help if I ever need it” (K, I, 124–129).

In addition to having a former music teacher in the building for professional collaboration, there is an annual one-day regional honor band and choir festival where 14 rural schools combine their students into ensembles of approximately 60 members so they can have an experience performing with large ensembles and have a “complete experience of high school” (K, J2, 15). Kate values this festival because the 14 music teachers watch rehearsals and “get to be around other music teachers” (K, I, 127).

At the state level, there is a gathering of music teachers every summer that Kate

finds highly valuable. This clinic is hosted by a national music publisher that features workshops and a reading band and choir to perform newly published music. Kate enjoys the three-day long clinic because the interaction with other music teachers is a rare but valuable opportunity. She said that attending the clinic was her only formal music-specific professional development of the year. She reported that “it’s just easier in the summer than the teacher’s convention. The convention is hard being way over in the west and it’s expensive to get there” (K, I, 150).

One of the hindrances for Kate to get to the state NAfME convention in the fall is that she feels too busy with class preparation and teaching duties. Kate made the point that regardless of enrollment, teaching a class requires a certain amount of time to prepare. In small schools where music teachers teach vocal, instrumental, and general music, they are asked to prepare for a lot of classes which is time consuming. She said, “when you have such low numbers in school, teachers are used in any area they can be to save on hiring more staff. Preparation is just as much for classes whether there are 5 or 20 kids in the class” (K, J2, 8–18). Her classes are small, but her teaching load is full. Her job description includes teaching K–5 general music, 7–12 grade band, 7–12 grade choir, middle school math, and serves as the junior class adviser. Beyond daily teaching duties there are festival and pep band requirements. Kate said, “not only are we expected to prepare our students for at least 3 concerts/programs a year, pep band for every home game, and then tournaments for both boys and girls, music festival and sometimes state music festival, we have to teach other curricula as well” (K, J2, 11–14).

Developing and teaching a curriculum in this setting can be difficult. One

significant challenge is finding musical literature that is inspiring enough to motivate the oldest students without overwhelming the younger ones. During a rehearsal with her 7–12 grade band, Kate was joking with her 12th grade tuba player. She asked him how long he had been playing the same exercises out of the same beginning band book. When he replied that he had the music in his folder for six years, she laughed loudly and asked with a sarcastic tone why he could not play it yet. It was a lighthearted moment, but the issue of motivation is a constant factor for older students and the educators who are trying to retain and inspire them.

With her busy work schedule, she longs for her first teaching job as a K–8 music teacher. According to Kate, “the best part of that was that I didn’t have all of the extra. You didn’t have your weekends taken up and you could spend evenings at home” (K, I, 195–196). Many of the evenings and weekends spent at school in her current job are spent with her pep band. Athletics seem very important in these rural communities, and, as a result, students feel pressured to participate. Kate’s daughter will be entering 9th grade next fall and when she does, she will be one of only four girls in the high school. As a result, Kate’s daughter was under “intense pressure” (I, 112) from peers and community members to play basketball. According to Kate, her daughter was not particularly skilled or motivated about athletic endeavors, but she would probably end up caving to the pressure and playing basketball for the team. At first, Kate had a hard time with the collective emphasis put on athletic events, but she was coming to terms with her feelings:

Sports is a very high priority and it used to really bother me because it would be

all about that and the music kids wouldn't get a lot of recognition and that didn't seem fair, but I guess that's just the way it is and I do the best I can with it (K, I, 103–107).

In order for athletic teams and the supporting cheerleaders and pep bands to have enough students to be functional, schools like Cranford are trending in the direction of local co-ops. Cranford, Brockway and another nearby school have entered into such an agreement. Kate explained that, “our numbers are hindering our students from a high school experience of a larger school; it is inevitable that our pep band would co-op as we don't have enough numbers to play sports, let alone have enough ‘left over’ students to fill in for pep band” (K, J1, 15–16). Students in the pep band do not rehearse together. They gather for games which rotate between the three schools and play a set of established music that has remained largely unchanged for several years. The music teachers are responsible for arranging student transportation, organizing t-shirt ordering and distributing, and setting the performance schedule. Kate said that the arrangement had its merits because she and one of the other teachers work well together. The teacher in Brockway, however, was a part time non-certified teacher and was not able or willing to participate, “I get along pretty well with people,” Kate said, “but it was difficult for the two of us as [Brockway's] music teacher wasn't at any the home games or tournaments” (K, J1, 19–20).

Another challenge with small numbers of students and an emphasis on athletics and activities is that a high percentage of students are involved with multiple sports and activities, and long distances between schools leads to these students missing a lot of

school:

Usually the percentage is at least half if not more when these times are scheduled.

I try to accommodate. My choir class 7–12 is 16 students, and my band is 22 students 7–12. Depending on whether the activity is junior high or high school makes a difference for my classes as most of my students are in junior high. When basketball is going on during the fall, a lot more class times are lost because games are scheduled during the week instead of just Friday and Saturday.

Sometimes kids will have up to 3 games a week. November through January are really full of days missed and then in the spring for either FFA (Future Farmers of America), BPA (Business Professionals of America), or track (K, J4, 6–13).

She advised that when students are absent from this much school, planning and communication are necessary to help students be successfully involved in school, athletics, and activities. A new teacher coming in to a rural teaching job who has not experienced these kinds of regular interruptions could have a hard time adjusting:

For new teachers that are not familiar with how the schedule changes during the year, it can be very frustrating. Of course I've taught long enough I have accepted the fact that sports is high priority in the small schools and kids are spread very thin with all the activities. Being willing to adjust and change your class schedule needs to be always in our minds (K, J4, 13–16).

Kate has learned to adjust to the athletically-oriented school system and is content with her teaching situation. Her family ranch is becoming established, and they have no plans to move. She mentioned that she would love an “elementary music position where

you can have a limited amount of programs in your year, no pep band, or music festivals, and you would only have to teach music” (K, J2, 21–24), but those kinds of jobs are not available anywhere near Cranford. For now she is professionally content, but is keeping her options open if the local restaurant is ever looking for a manager.

Carl

East of Cranford, the highway runs past the abandoned town of Havenbrook, a several square block area of empty grain silos, wooden store fronts with peeling paint, and a few dozen uninhabited houses. At the edge of town stands a two-story white building, formerly Havenbrook School. Its broken windows keep watch over what was once a thriving ranching community. In its heyday, the school was open to all local school children as well as for crop management education to dryland wheat farmers through land grant university funding. According to the historical information sign on the highway, the town suffered several devastating fires and fell prey to a homesteader bust in the mid-20th century. When the school closed in 1966, the few remaining inhabitants moved to neighboring communities and Havenbrook was left to the elements.

Ten miles past Havenbrook are more grain silos and quiet railroad tracks that border the community of Ackley. For a reference of scale, the mileage between Ackley and the closest metropolitan area is approximately the same as the distance between New York City and Philadelphia, but in this region there are only three small towns between the two locations. The 220 residents in the town of Ackley are mainly school district employees and ranch workers who have lived in the same general area for generations.

One exception to the longevity of most Ackley community members is Carl, the

music teacher for Ackley School. This school's 103 students come from the town of Ackley and the agrarian area for a 20-mile radius. Carl teaches K–12 music and has been assigned to direct the elementary school Christmas play. Carl is now in his third year in Ackley and feeling comfortable in his position, but it took a while for that comfort to be complete. One of the major obstacles he had to overcome was his theater directing duties. This activity was not advertised in the job description and no mention of it was made during the hiring process:

They told me the day before I started here that there was the elementary Christmas play. And I was like, excuse me? And then I thought well, okay, it's just a little thing where the kids walk up to the microphone and say a little thing but no, it's lights, sound, everything. So it was a little more than, well, they kind of pulled one on me there" (C, I, 62–65).

He has come to accept his theater duties and even enjoys aspects of directing the play; however, being responsible for such a wide spectrum of specialties is not an easy job. Of his daily duties Carl said that he has to play or demonstrate skills in various instruments as well as vocal skills. He also plays piano and/or guitar for class "every single day - something that people who are very specialized in one area like band aren't necessarily prepared for" (C, J5, 20–21). He admitted with a laugh that he rarely feels organized for his classes:

I am spread really thin. And I don't have time to sit down and write an elaborate lesson plan. I would be here 24 hours a day if I tried to do that. I try to be concise and make notes, I use Evernote a lot, today I'm going to do this, this and this, I

keep a framework in mind, and I do the best that I can. These are different subjects. Whenever you're teaching band, it's very different than choir, which is very different than elementary music. It's all music, but those are different disciplines. I don't have time to focus on the nitty gritty when I'm writing my lesson plans. And I don't always feel like I'm able to one hundred percent dive in because it's big gear shifts throughout the day. Right now I have, on Mondays it goes, high school band, kindergarten is 20 minutes later. Then I'm exhausted. And I can't stop thinking about high school band, because soon as we're done I'm analyzing, then kindergarten comes in. That's another major challenge. I have been so tired at the end of the day I can't reach the steering wheel. That's a challenge. But that's something I learned early on. You aren't going to be able to write lesson plans (C, I, 314–329).

Before moving to Ackley Carl earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees from universities in the southeastern United States. Twice before leaving his home state, his public school music teaching jobs were terminated after music programs were eliminated. He had never been west of St. Louis, but he was frustrated with his professional luck:

I was looking for a big change so I looked all over the country, and there seemed to be a real need in [this region], and I really liked the superintendent/principal whenever we Skyped. We just kind of hit it off and went from there" (C, I, 3–12).

His initial reaction when he finally got to Ackley was to say with a warm laugh:

I was terrified. Absolutely horrified. We drove out here and my parents flew back after we moved me into an apartment. Before we left I was in tears. I was so

scared. The funny thing about it was that it was 103 [degrees] when we left, so we were wearing shorts, t-shirts, nothing. When we got out here it was 55 degrees, and this was in July. So we got out and we were shivering. And we were like, holy cow. And we had to change clothes and we just laughed for about an hour after we got here about how rural it was and seeing like belt buckles and cowboy boots and hats and we were like, where are we? But we kind of laughed at that. But it was fine. Beautiful. We took pictures like tourists the whole week that they stayed. We enjoyed that. And there's no humidity which is nice. That's very nice (C, I, 21–29).

Ackley is a beautiful place with dynamic contrasts. It is part of a landscape with wide plains leading to steep mountains that are subject to weather extremes from 100 degrees in the summer to -20 with driving winds and snow in the winter. Ackley is known for its beauty, but it is not known for being a place with shopping opportunities, which can lead to higher than expected cost of living expenses. One of the first things Carl realized after moving was that significant travel was required for basic goods and services. He lamented that “the idea of having to drive an hour and a half to get to Walmart is obscene” (C, I, 230). Because of this, gas becomes a more significant budget item, which can negate lower rent or mortgage rates:

Cost of living is higher here than it was [in the Southeastern United States]. Gas is higher, food is ridiculous here. Rent is cheaper. You can find cheaper places here for sure. When I was in my first job rents were just ridiculous. It was \$800 a month for a one-bedroom apartment. And it just made no sense. But my rent here

is \$375 for a three-bedroom house. So that's a plus. But everything else is a little higher. Utilities are higher here, food, food is the killer for me. I'm a single guy and I usually spend up to \$250 a month sometimes on food just for me. If I had a whole family I don't know what I'd do (C, I, 86–97).

Whatever the cost of dwelling and basic amenities, a person is dependent upon income to procure them. According to Carl, rural schools “tend to pay very little for something that actually requires a great deal of work and preparation” (C, J5, 28). He has observed that “bigger schools have more funds, they're going to be able to pay more, the wages in rural schools are not that great” (C, I, 71–73). He went on to say that when he left his job in the Southeastern United States he was “making \$45,000 and took about a \$14,000 pay cut to come here. The pay is barely enough to make ends meet, sometimes not even that” (C, J5, 31–32).

Not only are salaries low and cost of living comparatively high, Carl talked about one of the challenges of living and working in a rural community as a single person being very lonely. He said bluntly, “it's an undesirable location for a single person” (C, J5, 31). He went on to say:

I think, to live in a place like this, you have to be pretty introverted. And I am. You have to be happy with after work, most nights, going home, reading a book, playing video games, whatever. If you're married, then obviously you have somebody to talk to and everything. That's something for me, being single, that I, I am pretty introverted, but it does get a little lonely sometimes, so I would caution somebody before they came out single to try to do something like this in a

place like this, I think that would be hard. (C, I, 267–272)

Aside from how being married or single effects longevity in rural communities Carl also mentioned rural towns not offering many social opportunities. Interestingly, there is an irony to the social dynamic of small communities in that a majority of the people knows each other and every outing is rife with familiar faces. Carl talked about being recognized by parents, students, and administrators everywhere he went, even in communities three hours away:

I have to be careful, places I go, somebody's going to see me, wherever I go. Even in [the metropolitan statistical area] I ran into somebody on the school board. And kids. On the street downtown. But I live a pretty normal life. I wouldn't say there is constant pressure or anything. But yeah, people are going to know, everywhere that I go. It's just one of those things you have to be aware of (C, I, 197–204).

He did, however, say that for the most part a high profile relationship with a community is manageable:

It's important to have a personal life and other things you do besides just this, but it's not too bad. It's not as bad as I thought it might be. I thought everybody would know all my business, but it's not quite like that. I've just noticed in this state, I knew it's a conservative area, but people tend to live and let live. I like that. In the South, it's not like that. People are in your business, talking about you, gossiping about you, they know what's going on. Here it isn't like that - pretty independent people. It seems like everyone kind of minds their own business. (C,

I, 209–218).

Partly due to large distances between communities and partly due to lack of consistent music personnel in neighboring school districts, Carl admitted that one of the hardest social adaptations in moving from a larger community to a rural one was not having the opportunity for time to develop personal relationships with other musicians. Mostly, Carl is dissatisfied with his personal music performance options due to the large distances between schools and the high attrition rates of music teachers in the region:

It seems like it's a new person every year around here, but I would really love to get together about five or six music teachers and do a quintet or something, to get that fix, but it's so hard to do something like that, because we're so spread out, and it's a new person every year. Yeah, and I miss it. I do. I miss playing. And whenever you're working with kids and teaching them how to play, I think sometimes you really need to get with other people who are at your level and play and enjoy that and get that musical fix. Cause the pitch is never going to be quite perfect when you're working with seventh through twelfth grade band. It's going to be good, but you're not ever going to get that 'ahh' moment (C, I, 140–151).

In the years Carl has taught in Ackley he has noticed many of the neighboring rural communities have new music teachers every school year. Conversely, the music teachers who live and teach in the regional economic hub consistently stayed in their positions. The high mobility is frustrating for Carl due to not being able to forge many long-term relationships, but it is also hard for the students in those schools. Carl said, "I think [attrition] is bad. Usually always bad – sometimes not. I'd say 90 percent of the

time turnover is bad. Just for the growth, the stability of the program and it just kind of keeps things uncertain” (C, I, 255–258).

Another challenge to high attrition rates is a lack of suitable candidates. Carl said when he was applying for his job in Ackley he learned about the job from an advertisement that had been posted three times before an applicant came forward that the hiring committee was satisfied with. Whenever a rural music teacher leaves or retires Carl said that school principals and community members “panic because it is so hard to find somebody...and usually they have to settle for someone that has no musical background. I don’t know what the rule is on that. But yeah, it’s unfortunate” (C, I, 79–81).

Due to inconsistent personnel in neighboring communities and large distances between towns, Carl does not get many opportunities to play his trombone with other adult musicians, but he has had the fortune to have professional interactions. The former music teacher for the Ackley School still lives in the community and is willing to “talk shop” whenever Carl requests it; however, Carl explained, she taught in the community for more than two decades and in her retirement she decided to allow the new music teacher the opportunity to teach uninhibited and not worry about her presence undermining Carl’s role. By her choice she limited her time and involvement with the school district and its students. Carl understands her opinion and values her decision so he does not speak with her very often.

With a lack of other music educators in a school district that only employs one K–12 teacher, building-level collaboration tends to be more generic and is conducted with

teachers of all other subjects. Carl talked about the teachers in the school where he works as being approachable and a valuable professional resource for developing the craft of teaching:

I always try to find an older teacher that I get along really well with and I try to talk to that person if I'm struggling with a class cause I just feel like if you have a teacher that's done this 30-something years, and they're still teaching, they know, you can't do that and not pick up something along the way. So I always try to latch onto someone like that and go to them for advice and support and I think that's wonderful. Teaching is one of those professions where you've got people who are very experienced and people who are new so there is a lot of opportunity there to grow (C, I, 163–169).

In addition to consulting experienced teachers in the building, Carl had the opportunity to be visited by one of the two retired music educators from the metropolitan area that run a state-wide rural music teaching mentor program. These mentors travel throughout the state offering advice to new teachers on classroom management and navigating the specific regional and state-wide music events. Carl said that was visited several times throughout his first year and was grateful for the assistance. Of the mentor who came to Ackley, he said:

had been extremely helpful to me from the beginning when I moved to the state and became acclimated to the music education world here. He did come my first year and listen to my band and choir prior to our performance at festival and was very helpful. I had some questions about festivals and such here so I called him

because his number was listed on the website. That was our initial contact. His help has been quite valuable (C, J5, 1–7).

In small rural schools much of the music specific collaboration time happens with schools in neighboring communities. For the purpose of music performance opportunities, the schools in this state are divided into 14 music regions. Each region puts together annual solo and ensemble festivals in the spring and honor band and choir festivals in the autumn months. The honor ensembles rotate in location and typically take place over one or two days during a school week. In addition to being an opportunity for these students to perform in ensembles with complete instrumentation and large numbers of voices, teachers value this opportunity to be among professionals who share similar teaching experiences. Beyond regional events, there are annual opportunities at the state level for professional development. One of which is the state NAFME conference held every October. Carl looks forward to this event every year:

Oh, I just love [this state's] conference. It's wonderful. The one in [in the southeast] was so huge, and there were so many people there, and it was so much networking and politics, and I hate that stuff. I hate it. But here I feel that every workshop I went to I feel that I learned, and grew, I took something away. I just think it's wonderful. I look forward to going to conference (C, I, 191–195).

One of the advantages of attending the state NAFME conference for rural music educators is that for two days people who are professionally alone have the opportunity to share stories with other people in the same situation. Carl enjoys the camaraderie that is felt at the conference. He says it is a time when small school teachers can reflect on their

jobs and not feel professionally isolated. When he returns to Ackley he always feel good about his teaching position. He enjoys being a “one-man show in terms of a music educator” (C, J5, 20). In a town like Ackley, a music teacher does not have a “feeder” or anyone to take credit or blame for the abilities of the students. Carl says every note of music is his responsibility:

I make sure my kids know what they need to know. When I taught high school I had high schoolers come into my program that did not know what a whole note was, I mean, nothing. And I just wanted to grab whoever the crazy person was that was their music teacher. They can't even teach this music! That was a frustration. Here, I make sure that when they are that old, that they can read, rhythm, you know, that for me is the biggest plus, that I'm my own feeder program (C, I, 223–228).

Beyond being responsible for music instruction at all levels, Carl mentioned the close personal relationships that can be developed between teachers and students in small rural communities. He has enjoyed “forming strong, cohesive bonds with...students and getting to know them and seeing them as they mature and grow and everything” (C,I, 275–280). The caveat, however, is small schools and small classes mean that the talent pool is smaller. With a hint of longing Carl said:

If you like doing huge stuff, like you want to play Alfred Reed, this is not the place for you. If you want to try to do Hindemith, or Holst's first suite in E flat, or something, that's not going to happen here. That's just not going to happen, ever. I don't know, maybe. Probably not. That's something also, if you're wanting to

tackle that kind of stuff, or do really high-powered huge concert band stuff, it's just not going to happen at a place like this. So you have to be aware of that, what you want, what you value (C, I, 280–284).

On a personal level, Carl has had the fortune to forge a friendship with the K–12 music teacher with whom he shares his students in a pep band co-op. Carl said with a smile that the other teacher, Roger, works in a school that shares an athletic and pep band co-op with Ackley so they get ample opportunity to collaborate and discuss their tragedies and triumphs. Outside of their professional interactions they also create time to get together beyond the school environment. Carl said, “we’ll have dinner every now and then and, it’s funny, we just unload. My turn, your turn. It’s very similar situations so we have a lot of the same frustrations and a lot of the same positive things” (C, I, 173–175). Carl values the time he gets to spend with Roger and feels that their friendship has been a contributing factor to his 3-year longevity and happiness in his current job.

Although Carl enjoys his social interactions with Roger, a majority of the time they spend together is centered on pep band and sporting events. Pep band is time consuming and Carl wishes that he were able to work in an environment that did not place such a value on athletic competition. He said, “I get sick of sports. I get sick of the glorification of sports, so that’s frustrating to me” (C, I, 354–358). In addition to the time and emotional commitment, the combined pep bands have proved less than ideal. In theory a pep band co-op could be a chance for professional collaboration, but not in this case. Carl said this is one of the few areas of disagreement that emerged between him and Roger:

[Roger] and I get along really well, but we have definitely had our disagreements in regard to pep band, and they have been pretty big disagreements. It was all part of the difficult process of transitioning to a co-op. [Ackley] has had pep band figured out for a very long time and we had much different policies and procedures/traditions and expectations than [Mapleville] did. This is where we had the most issues - combining two very different cultures (C, J1, 15–20).

For the time, Carl and Roger have seemed to have worked out a compromise and their co-op is as functional as they can make it. Carl reports that basketball season is a very busy time and is glad to have Roger to help share the physical and emotional stress that accompanies it. With an air of pragmatism, Carl said that the time commitment is significant in a K–12 setting, but that such a commitment is not necessarily unique to rural teaching. He talked about his time as an assistant director of a competitive marching band in a large southeastern high school as being “an every day after school ordeal” (C, I, 55). In addition to daily after school rehearsals in his previous job, Carl was involved with marching band performances every Saturday throughout the fall competition season. When he compared the two jobs, he said that the extra-curricular demand was comparable depending on the time of year:

It depends on the time of year. There are times when this job requires more out of class time than I’ve ever seen. I’d say this job is probably more intense and more work than the others that I did. If I’d done high school band in [the southeast] I probably wouldn’t say that. Because they have so much with the marching band and all of that. But this one, especially around the time of the play, when you get

down to set construction and painting and lights, and programming the lights, and the sound, that all gets to be a lot of time. I don't have a lot of rehearsals after school. If I do it is one-on-one stuff because the kids go everywhere after school. They go 50 different directions, this practice and that practice. It is hard to do anything after school (C, I, 127–135).

He views his job as being hard, but Carl enjoys what he does and has no immediate or long term plans of leaving Ackley. He admits to missing his family and being lonely in such a small community, but professionally his outlook on what being a music educator means has evolved. When he began teaching he:

idolized band directors at huge schools, that had these huge programs, big bands, that's what I wanted to do. But I don't know if I would go for a job like that now. I know there's a job open [in my home state], second largest school... They win state finals every year at marching band competition. I don't know if I'd want to get into that now. I know what all goes into that and how much of a challenge it is. That's what I saw when I was a young teacher (C, I, 344–350).

Having come from a large school and now teaching K–12 rural music, Carl said that he has been subjected to that perception of status. For example, he is regularly asked how long he is going to stay teaching in Ackley. Community members and colleagues often say that he is “too good” and that they don't “deserve to have [him] teaching in their little town” (C, I, 245) Carl does not see it that way. He revels in seeing such a wide range of students and values the close relationships he has been able to forge with small numbers of students in each class. He said that there is a perception among music

educators that rural jobs are a place to begin a career due to the fact that teaching all grades and specialties can give a person the opportunity to find his/her passion. In Carl's experience, however, he talked about skill transference and said that the opposite career move, from a large school to a small school, was a desirable career path. He said that teaching in a larger school made him more inclined to stay in his current rural position:

There were a lot of things I picked up at the first job, and even at the second job that I use here every day. When I was in college, I had piano class like every other music major. That does not teach you to teach high school choir behind a piano. That's a joke. I had to do a lot of on-the-job training on piano and that kind of stuff. I had to get really good at that to be able to do that job well. I worked hard at that. Just all the things I picked up along the way, and the theater stuff, I had no background in theater. But it was kind of a good thing because that was a really weak program. So we all kind of grew together. I would say I would do it the same way because the things I do here every day, those jobs prepared me for everything here, because this job requires everything that I know how to do, every day, from kindergarten up. Middle school band, high school band, choir, middle school choir, high school choir, elementary school music, theater, everything. (C, I, 289–305)

In addition to feeling comfortable with the skill set he has built to teach in his current job, Carl is very satisfied with the principal for whom he works. In fact, Carl said the primary reason for his decision to move to Ackley was “the support of this administration...when I talk to people who quit jobs anywhere I think that's usually the

number one issue – whether the administration was supportive of the arts and music” (C, I, 102–104). Carl feels fortunate to work in a school where the principal values the arts as well as academics and athletics. His principal appreciates the teachers who work for him. According to Carl, he values the work of Ackley educators and does everything in his power to reward their efforts. This outreach does not go unappreciated. Carl said, “I think a lot of the teachers here take for granted the little perks that we have. I never forget how nice it is. We have free lunch here, for teachers. I still do not take that for granted. I still understand how nice that is” (C, I, 307–309). Carl went on to explain that his principal:

really believes in the power of music education and I just think it’s so wonderful to work in a place where you have that vision at the top. Both of the principals I worked for in my previous jobs were former coaches and P.E. teachers. And that was their priority. That is what they cared about. That and test scores - and numbers and that kind of thing. He’s not like that, and that’s wonderful (C, I, 105–110).

After teaching in Ackley for three years Carl has come to enjoy the camaraderie and close relationships that are indicative of small classes in a small school, however, near the end of the school year he applied for and was offered a 6–12 band job in a suburb of the largest city in the state. Having the opportunity to work with larger ensembles and perform more advanced music made the new job “hard to turn down” (C, J6, 13). Teaching in a bigger school is appealing to Carl mainly because his passion lies with high school bands and he will relish the opportunity to work with accomplished music students. Also, with 100,000 people in the city Carl will have more opportunities

to play his trombone with adult musicians and to “have a life outside my job” (C, J6, 11–13). He is sad to leave Ackley and will miss his superintendent/principal and his students, but he is excited to embark on the next phase of his career.

Roger

In this region are two athletic and pep band co-ops. The first, where Kate is a member, consists of schools in Cranford, Brockway, and Ogdenville. The other co-op also has three member schools: Ackley, where Carl teaches, Winkler, which has been without a music teacher for several years, and Mapleville, where Roger teaches. As a child, Roger attended Winkler School and has returned to his home county after earning a Bachelor’s Degree from the state university and then teaching band and choir in three different large schools in the state.

Similar to Carl, Roger started his career teaching in large schools and then moved to a rural K–12 position. After graduating from the state university, Roger mainly taught middle and high school choir, but also had a short stint with high school band. Before teaching in Mapleville, his most recent position was director of choral activities at one of the high schools in the metropolitan area. Roger had taken that job with the intention of staying for the rest of his career. To teach in a larger school in one of the few metropolitan areas in the state was a privilege and Roger was honored to have the “status associated with teaching in a large school” (R, I, 262). Unfortunately, professional differences developed between Roger and the music supervisor in the district:

There was too much pressure on performance and not on education. Our ensembles that were advanced had to get superior ratings, which they

did. Sometimes dealing with a music supervisor isn't optimum. In this particular district they loomed over you and made your job uncomfortable because you could never just "do" you always had to be putting on a dog and pony show for them to stay in "good standing". My students always did really well. The last year I was there my students got 34 out of 35 on their prepared performance and a perfect score from another judge. At the end of the year I was asked to take another position teaching class guitar throughout the district. There was no explanation except for "you are not good enough" (R, I, 249–257).

In addition to being reassigned from his choral teaching position in his final year in the metropolitan area, Roger was coping with the strain of divorce proceedings. The two issues were overwhelming so he quit his job and moved to the Mapleville area and did not teach in a public school for a year. About the year off he proclaimed with a smirk that, "we choral people always bring drama upon ourselves in every area of our life" (R, I, 294). The drama that led to not teaching also led to a difficult year emotionally and financially and soon he found that he "needed a stable job and wanted to try something new to experience the entire vast nature of music education" (R, I, 208). He is now employed full time teaching K–12 music. In addition to his work schedule, Roger accompanies the choir at a local church and runs an itinerant vocal studio. In the summers he assists his brother and parents with the physical and administrative duties associated with their family's cattle ranch.

After resigning from his job and having a sense of instability in his personal life, he chose to move to the Mapleville area to be closer to his parents and extended family.

Being near to his parents and brother “helped with the ‘security’ of just leaving a stressful situation” (I, R, 269). Being close to his family was emotionally valuable, but the move was not a perfect scenario. He had wanted to return to teach in the Winkler school where he grew up, but they no longer have a music teacher on staff. Low school enrollment numbers and a lack of applicants have caused the district to remove the program completely, although there are still a few students with instruments that join the pep band co-op. Roger said that they tried to get a non-licensed teacher to fill the part-time position several years ago, but no acceptable candidates could be found. The ancient two-story brick building on the edge of a massive wind farm now has a dark music room and Roger fears that within a few years the entire school will be shuttered. Just like the abandoned town of Havenbrook to the North, “the building will be closed for good” (R, I, 240).

According to Roger, many schools across this state have similar staffing issues as Winkler. He mentioned several schools in the area that have half-time music teachers or no music programs at all. He said that of the 14 schools in this regional music district with full-time music teachers, all but four have been in their position fewer than three years, and most of those will have new people teaching in another year. Roger is of the opinion that a person should teach in a place for at a minimum of three years. That amount of time is, “a good length of time to learn what your specialty may be or how it may change and what position might suit you best for the future” (R, J5, 16–17).

Rural K–12 jobs can be a suitable place to begin a career because those jobs provide an opportunity to find a specialty. “I would encourage younger individuals to apply for rural jobs just for the experience to find where their strengths are” (R, J5, 14–

16), however, “I would also encourage people to consider the location of the town, and the size of the small district. Schools with dwindling enrollment may be more apt to lose their position because of budget cuts” (R, I, 220–222). He went on to say that if it is a stable community and the position remains funded; a person still has to be able to function in an isolated location. He said, “I know that a lot of younger people are not going into teaching because they lose so much social life, and being in a small town or area is not ideal for them” (R, I, 279–284). For now, Roger is content with not having a “social life” and values the time he gets to spend with his family.

After moving to Mapleville and spending a year teaching private voice lessons at a local church, the music job in Mapleville opened and Roger was one of very few applicants. He was glad to have steady employment again, but K–12 music proved a challenging job description. For example, being one of the few non-core subject teachers in the district, Roger reports feeling overwhelmed and under-appreciated:

The General Music schedule is insane. I do not subscribe to the Silver Burdett or Feierabend curricula so most of what I do, I create myself. It’s exhausting. I also know that I am the only specialist and I am the only contractual prep that the teachers have every day. Our art teacher teaches history and English, so there is one period of art. We have no librarian or foreign language teachers. There is no place for kids to go but me. I only have a 35 minute prep period per day, so that is pretty exhausting trying to get anything done (R, I, 238–244).

Fortunately, the administrators in Mapleville are not blind to his fatigue. Roger says that he enjoys as much support from a principal as he could ask for. Foremost, Roger

reports having a good personal relationship with his boss and feels that the magnitude of his workload is understood. In Roger's opinion, administrative support is largely shown when an employer displays empathy. The ability to relate to subordinates on a personal level helps teachers feel valued. In this aspect Roger feel that he has been lucky with most administrators in his ten year career. He said, "I have really enjoyed having administrators who know that in addition to a teacher, I am also a person. This makes personal issues, when they arise, much easier to overcome in the work environment" (R, I, 125–128).

On this topic of a personal rapport with administrators, he has not had many complaints; although in both large and small schools, he has had trouble with scheduling conflicts. From his perspective as a teacher of singleton elective classes, minimizing scheduling conflicts is a form of support that administrators can show. Regardless of where he taught, he has consistently had to "compete with upper division classes to keep high school students in ensembles" (R, I, 240). In Mapleville, this issue was compounded by teachers not showing a desire to work with each other to create a workable schedule, or anything else. Roger described a dysfunctional inter-staff relationship as a contributing factor to schedule conflicts and his own personal dissatisfaction with his working environment. He said, "they have all been here for a very long time and they do not get along with or like each other at all" (R, I, 144–145).

The lack of positive relationships among the teachers in the Mapleville School is frustrating to Roger but he is highly complementary of their teaching methods and with the small school environment in general. One of the reasons Roger is choosing to stay in

his current job is the close personal relationships that he has built in his small classes. He said it is a place where he has been able to build relationships with students and parents because “small class sizes are advantageous for learning, and small schools provide great education—especially [Mapleville]” (R, I, 279–281).

The teachers in Mapleville seem to be effective educators, but with only 15 of them in the entire school district, any discipline-specific professional development would be cumbersome and difficult to provide. With no local collaboration or professional development opportunities, Roger must travel to talk to other music teachers. He reports enjoying his time at the regional honor band and choir festival where he has the opportunity to watch rehearsals and connect personally with other K–12 music teachers. In a state with a small population people with similar interests tend to find each other, even over long distances. For example, Dave in Springfield talked about driving nine hours one way to attend the state music educator’s conference when he was teaching in his first job. Unfortunately, these distances can also be prohibitive. Roger gets no financial assistance from his employer to travel to conferences or continuing education. With low rural school salaries the financial aspect of a traveling can make such a trip burdensome. The entire time Roger has taught in Mapleville he has never attended the state NAfME conference.

Part of the reason Roger has not attended the state conference in the past several years is that he is unable to afford to travel long distances. His financial situation is due to legal fees from his divorce and from the low salary that Mapleville School pays. Roger took a \$17,000 annual pay cut when he left his job in the metropolitan area just 100 miles

to the west. Salaries are “at near poverty level, in [Mapleville] our starting salary is \$25,300” (R, J2, 12). Roger admits that his salary is a large part of his motivation for seeking employment elsewhere. Additionally, the low salary, especially compared to schools in more populous places, is part of the reason that there are fewer experienced teachers in rural schools. According to Roger, there are “very few beginning teachers at larger high school programs” (R, I, 97). He continued that he feels as though there is a higher status associated with teachers in larger communities, “in fact, often I feel that the talent of teachers in smaller schools goes particularly unnoticed” (R, I, 256). Roger said that his career path is opposite from most people he knows, and that it would probably best serve a person to follow the path from small school to large. He said, “I would encourage younger individuals to apply for rural jobs just for the experience to find where their strengths are, as you will have every opportunity to test your skills across the curriculum” (R, I, 217–220).

Rural K–12 music education can be a place for a young educator to hone a wide range of skills, but the time devoted to each area of expertise is not proportional. A large amount of time and energy in these positions has to do with pep band duties. Roger unabashedly said that his least favorite and most time-consuming part of his job is the evenings and weekends he spends directing his pep band. Pep band is a high time commitment and stressor, but there is a little serendipity in Roger’s situation. Through the athletic co-op between Winkler, Ackley, and Mapleville, Roger has had the opportunity to forge a personal and professional friendship with Carl. They spend time together organizing schedules, planning travel arrangements for tournament play, and

performing with their co-op band. Roger said that between the three schools there are so few students that, “most of the time we both play. I play trumpet and he plays trombone” (R, I, 166).

With nine students in his high school band, even one absence is palpable. Roger said that in his band:

there are three [students] who are in FFA, BPA, and they miss four times per year for a total of at least 8 days. I had a few football players [in my large school job] but my music class was not at the end of the day. It is not as noticeable in the bigger schools because your ensembles are much larger (R, J4, 9–11).

Often so many students were gone that academic and musical pursuits were difficult or impossible. When more than half of the students are gone from a class it is difficult to teach a lesson or run a rehearsal, and in Mapleville, that level of absenteeism is commonplace. By his estimate, Roger said “once or twice a month in the K–12 school it’s difficult or impossible to have class” (R, J4, 13–14).

An additional challenge for Roger is that his students lack the ability to perform music at a level comparable to that in larger schools. Roger used to sing in large community choirs and had an active solo schedule. In Mapleville, he says, “I do not do that in this small community” (R, I, 166). He also said that when he is in public he is regularly recognized as he has a “high profile” relationship with the community members of Mapleville. He said that he is always recognized as the music teacher wherever he goes and cannot separate his professional and social lives. Having grown up in a similar community the social relationship does not bother him, however, that someone who is not

familiar with that kind of lifestyle should be aware of the social dynamic of a small town before moving there.

Roger is professionally burned out and dissatisfied, but he does enjoy living in a small town and values the time he has been working on his family cattle ranch. Within this personal conflict he is exploring local employment options outside of education, but is also looking for jobs at churches to work as a music director in larger metropolitan areas. Roger has also entertained the idea of serving as a school administrator. When he began his career 10 years ago Roger was passionate about being a choir director in a large program and was soon hired to do just that. Within a few years of running a large school secondary performance program, he felt that he had “approached the high school choral job far too soon after being married. It was too stressful. Although the program was successful, as a person I diminished because of the intense stress of the job and the stature of such a choral program” (R, I, 202–204). Roger misses the caliber of musicianship associated with the larger high school, but he does not miss the pressure that he perceived as a large high school performing ensemble director. If he continues to pursue music education, Roger will most likely choose to not specialize in a high school choral program again.

Chapter 5: Discussion

For the overall health of a school and its music students, it is advantageous for school districts to hire a person who is not only willing to stay for several years, but will be satisfied in doing so. Ultimately, according to Tye & O'Brien (2002), a person makes a decision to stay in or leave a job or career based on how much they have invested in it and how much satisfaction they derive from it. The higher the satisfaction and greater the investment a person makes, the higher the perception of workplace utility. From the perspective of the individual teacher, the administration, and the students, all involved parties benefit when the employment circumstances portray what Kwok, Adams, & Price (2011) referred to as a good person-job fit where an individual's personality, experience, and skill sets "fit" with interpersonal and working demands of a job.

When making a decision to stay or move from a teaching job, people seek to maximize their utility by weighing the benefits and costs involved in making a change versus staying where they are, based on a number of reasons. In the field of education, some of the reasons for job movement, or lack thereof, are applicable to any teaching situation and some are specific to job type and location. The purpose of this explanatory case study was to examine factors that contributed to the decisions to stay or move from teaching positions among committed music educators who taught rural K–12 music education. Three central questions guided the research: 1) what reasons do educators consider influential in a decision to stay in or move from a teaching position?, 2) what changes do teachers report in their perception of job utility maximization over their

careers?, and 3) what are some benefits and challenges of teaching in a rural music teaching setting?

Discussion of Findings

Of the five teachers who participated in this study, four had between 7.5 and 12 years of total teaching experience. Total time served in individual rural K–12 teaching jobs for these educators was between 1 and 4 years. The fifth participant, Dave, had been in his current rural teaching job for 22 years and his previous rural job for 10. When discussing job satisfaction and the utility of their employment, participants reported a combination of five key components to workplace utility in rural K–12 teaching jobs: 1) spillover work time, 2) disproportionate emphasis on athletics and pep band, 3) teacher and student absenteeism, 4) family, and 5) administrative rapport.

In terms of how participants view the evolution of their personal job utility, it seems as though after people begin working, the concept of an “ideal job” changes with life experience; however, even though ideals tend to change, teachers maintained more or less constant inclinations as to favored areas of focus. Regardless if they stayed or not, all five of the participants reported valuing their time spent teaching rural students.

Currently, Dave and Kate remain in rural K–12 teaching jobs and report being satisfied with their positions. Roger teaches rural K–12 music but is seeking other employment, and Kate and Carl have left for more specialized positions in larger communities.

All of the participants described rural K–12 music teaching as exhausting work but with definite advantages. Teachers listed three benefits to teaching in these schools: 1) small classes and long-term student/teacher relationships, 2) large steps in student

musical growth, and 3) rewarding professional interactions and development in spite of long distances between schools. The reported challenges of these kinds of jobs were more numerous: 1) spillover time, 2) salary, 3) generalization of skill, 4) geographic isolation, and 5) career hierarchy.

Research question 1

The first research question pertained to reasons participants consider influential to a decision to stay in or move from a rural K–12 teaching position. Within the discussion there were five themes: 1) disproportionate emphasis on athletics and pep band, 2) teacher and student absenteeism, 3) spillover work time 4) family, and 5) administrative rapport. No single theme was a unique indicator of attrition, nor was any theme more prominent than others in influencing a participant to leave a job. Rather, the perception of each reason for attrition had a cumulative effect and jobs were left or kept based on a combination of views of each theme.

Pep band and athletics

When discussing rural K–12 teaching jobs, one emergent theme was dissatisfaction with the amount of time and energy required for pep band duties. According to participants, having traditional team sporting events (football, basketball, and volleyball) is a high priority of rural school districts, and great effort is taken to ensure that athletes and musicians are available to perform for these contests. With the exception of Springfield, all of the rural schools where participants taught were involved in athletic and pep band co-ops. These co-ops consisted of two or three reasonably close schools and were established to muster enough students for complete athletic teams and

supporting pep bands. Unfortunately, the music teachers who were charged with providing pep bands were not as enthusiastic about athletics as the communities they served. When asked to describe a perfect-world teaching scenario, every participant said that they would prefer to have no pep band duties. For example, Dave, a 32-year veteran of rural music education, is not enamored with the amount of time he spends with his pep band, but is altruistic about that part of his job. He said, “ideally I would not have to deal with pep band; although I like the way kids get excited about the music we play” (D, J3, 24).

The state’s bandmasters’ association has established recommendations as to the number of athletic events for which a band should perform (Conway, 1985/2001). The guideline is 16 home games evenly split between boys’ and girls’ games. The issue is that the state bandmaster parameters only apply to home games, post-season tournaments do not count toward the total, and not all school administrators adhere to the game limit suggestion. All of this means that some months within a school year pep band is a highly consuming part of rural K–12 teaching. To illustrate the point, Lisa talked about the end of basketball season one particular year. After nearly 3 months of performing for home basketball games between 1 and 3 times per week, it was time for the annual regional tournament. That season she traveled with her band to and from tournament games for 6 straight days.

Of the five participants, Carl had the most positive opinion of his pep band duties. He reported the tiring nature of coordinating the logistics of the co-op, but his experience as a competitive marching band member when he was in high school gave him a level of

satisfaction with supporting athletic events. His main frustration with pep band was having enough students to have complete instrumentation. Even with combined schools in a co-op there are a limited number of students between the teams and the band. As a result he and Roger often played with the band rather than directed in order to have all of the parts covered.

Existing research on rural music education and music teaching attrition does not specifically address pep band as an indicator of or reason for attrition rates, although Koza (2006) and Russell (2008) each reported extra-curricular duties, assigned or assumed, as possibly contributing to burn-out. Ultimately, participants were vocal in their dislike of the time and energy requirements of pep band, but they were pragmatic about their expectations in the schools where they served. Only Lisa left rural music teaching in favor of not having pep band duties in a K–4 teaching job. Carl left Ackley for a larger community but took a job teaching secondary band so is still expected to participate in pep bands. Dave, Roger, and Kate continue to teach in rural schools and spend lots of time in their respective gymnasiums.

Student and teacher absenteeism

In a rural school, pep band is a major component of a music department. From coordinating with other teachers in the co-op on travel and administrative duties, to the hours spent in a gymnasium lending support to the athletic ambiance, music teachers and students spend a lot of time together at all hours of the day. For all of the time and energy that pep band demands, it is only one of many extra-curricular activities that contribute to student absenteeism. This excessive absenteeism is another emergent theme relating to

reasons for attrition in rural K–12 teaching jobs.

Student musicians and teachers are regularly involved with regional and state-wide large group honor ensembles and solo/ensemble festivals. Additionally, students who attend a high school with only 40 to 50 students feel an obligation to be involved in as many activities and sports as possible. Exacerbating the issue is the immense distances (and time) that need to be traveled for these students to participate. With such a high percentage of students involved with so many activities, daily classes are often interrupted or challenging to teach. Lisa talked about her middle school band and choir missing as many as half of her students one to three days per week during track season. Dave said that one year all of his high school band kids were in the Business Professionals of America club (BPA). When BPA had its state competition, he had no students in that class for two days.

Having such a large percentage of students regularly absent is not something that teachers in larger schools deal with, and it is a factor in a teacher's feeling of effectiveness and overall job satisfaction. This theme was prevalent in the data, but did not appear in existing research.

Spillover time

Music teachers in rural schools report spending many hours working beyond a standard school day. For these teachers, the biggest consumer of evening and weekend spillover time is pep band home games, pep band tournament travel, and festival organization and travel. Participants all inherently understood that the nature of their rural teaching jobs included long spillover hours, and that their time spent working was not

necessarily unique to their demographic. Koza (2005) reflected this sentiment in the observation that historically, many secondary music educators (particularly band directors) have felt “perennially marginalized” (p. 190). As a result, a culture of spillover has been adopted to enhance a sense of legitimacy among colleagues of other core subject specialties. It would seem that administrators of rural schools have followed a similar trend of trying to gain a perception of legitimacy by making great efforts to model small schools after large ones. Unfortunately, it seems that their efforts have taken the concept of working long hours for music teachers to an extreme level. School structures, faculties, and students trying to replicate the large school model through pep band and athletic co-ops and large group music festivals are time- and cost-intensive endeavors when rural.

All five participants talked about the evening and weekend obligations as stressors that had a negative effect on their perception of workplace satisfaction. Kate reminisced about a K–8 teaching job she had early in her career. When comparing that first job with her current one she said longingly, “the best part of that was that I didn’t have all of the extra. You didn’t have your weekends taken up and you could spend evenings at home” (K, I, 195–196). Lisa said that the time she spent preparing for festivals and riding on a bus to tournament games was one of the contributing factors to her leaving her job in Centerton. “I would have stayed in rural schools forever if it hadn’t been so time consuming outside of school” (L, I, 353).

As a point of comparison, Carl and Roger had experience teaching secondary performing ensembles in larger schools and said that extra time obligations were comparable between larger communities and rural schools, but they felt that rural music

teachers missed more school time due to larger distances to travel. Hancock (2008) noted that working additional hours was one of the leading causes of music teacher burnout and excessive stress and suggested that “additional study is needed to understand the relationship between excessive time demands and attrition/migration” (p. 140). At first glance it seems that the data corroborated Hancock’s findings in that among the participants of this study, spillover time has an effect on decreasing workplace satisfaction. For teachers like Kate and Lisa who view themselves as elementary music teaching specialists, the emphasis on secondary performances is a time-consuming and professionally unrewarding endeavor. As a result, Lisa no longer teaches rural K–12 music. Kate maintains her position only because there are no other employment options in Cranford where her family ranch is located. Conversely, spillover time was not a factor of attrition among teachers like Dave and Carl whose inclination it is to teach secondary music ensembles.

Family

Ingersoll (2000, 2002) wrote that “personal reasons” account for more turnover than either retirement or staffing actions (lay-offs, school closings, staff restructuring), and the data show these motives are common to schools of all sizes and locations. Lisa moved from a rural K–12 job to a K–4 elementary music job in a larger community to be able to spend more time with her young son and her parents. Dave moved to Springfield to be nearer to his parents, Roger took a rural K–12 teaching job to be nearer to his ailing grandparents, and Kate tried to move to her hometown but could not find affordable land. Only Carl took his current job in an action that moved him farther away from his family.

It seems that family factors play a role in decisions to stay or move.

Administrative rapport

The deciding factor for Carl moving to Ackley was the immediate rapport he felt with the school district's single administrator. According to Carl, this superintendent/principal valued music education and was willing to ensure that a quality applicant filled the open position. This was made evident when Carl learned that his application for the job was submitted during the third time that the position had been advertised. The previous two advertisements did not produce a candidate that the superintendent/principal felt would be a good "fit" for the district. After three years, Carl was offered a job in a larger community and said that his biggest reservation about leaving Ackley was that he would miss working for such a great administrator.

As was displayed with Carl, when teachers are appreciated, challenged, and connected to the school and students, they may be more likely to remain in a teaching position (Robinson, 2012). Lisa reported that her high school principal in Centerton failed on all three counts and she could not find a new job fast enough. She went on to say that "probably half of my decision to leave [Centerton] was based on my last year working for my principal" (L, I, 209). Conversely, in her current position, she feels valued as an educator and not only enjoys her work but has no plans of leaving any time soon.

Among participants, administrative rapport, or lack thereof, by itself is not a singular reason for attrition, but, it is definitely a contributor to a cumulative feeling of utility. Carl took a job in large part due to the personal relationship he wanted to forge with his administrator; Lisa left a job in large part due to the personal relationship she had

with her administrator. Dave gave examples of unworkable schedules, shrinking budgets, and a general lack of support from his administration, but has remained in his current job for more than two decades.

Research question 2

After analyzing reasons for attrition and their effect on job mobility, the second research question pertained to determining if teachers reported a change in their perception of maximization of job utility over their careers. Kelly (2003) observed that the general inclination of undergraduates is to follow a path of familiarity by seeking jobs that are similar in demographic to their personal experience. This research question was designed to see if people maintain those preferences once they enter their teaching careers. It seems as though after people begin working, the concept of an “ideal job” changes with life experience, but teachers maintain more or less constant inclinations as to favored areas of focus.

Dave is a great example of changing ideals with constant favored focus. When he graduated from the state university his goal was to move to a rural community for 3 to 4 years to enhance his resume as a means to find a job as a high school band director in a community similar to the one he attended. Within a few years he found that he appreciated living in small towns and ended up spending the next three decades teaching and raising a family in communities with fewer than 1,000 residents. Throughout his career, Dave’s job description has included teaching general music and choirs, but he still primarily views himself as a band director with other duties rather than a K–12 music educator.

Like Dave, when he entered the workforce Carl wanted to be a high school band director with large competitive marching band like the one he came from. After moving to his rural teaching job, however, he has no desire to return to the program of his upbringing. He enjoyed his time in Ackley, and has come to appreciate what teaching K–12 music in a rural school has to offer, but his desire to exclusively teach band has been realized. In his new job he will be in charge of bands students in grades 6–12 with no general music, no choir, and no competitive marching band.

Lisa also wanted to return to her hometown to teach, which she ultimately did, but her ideal teaching job description was not defined when she began her career. Throughout her public school and university training she never had inclinations as to being an instrumental or vocal specialist and as a teacher was content to teach whoever was in need of an educator. As her career developed and her family grew she found the time commitment associated with secondary music instruction to be overwhelming and she started leaning towards elementary music as an ideal. “The first year [in Centerton],” she said, “it was okay and even the second year, but then I had my son and it wasn’t okay anymore – things change” (L, J4, 172–173).

Kate was the least career oriented participant. She talked about getting a degree in elementary education (with a music minor) as a means to support herself but had no clear ideal job. This is still true today. She grew up in a small town and saw no other living outcome for herself. Whether in the classroom or managing a local restaurant, where she worked had always been secondary to where she lived. With a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and music minor her inclination has always been to work primarily

with that age. If she had her druthers, she would spend her days teaching elementary music, but she seems content in K–12 music education. Unlike the other participants, this attitude has remained constant throughout her career.

Also expressing a desire to ultimately teach elementary music, Roger had initial inclinations to be a large school choir director in the state. Having the opportunity to do so early in his working life quickly revealed that his passion did not lie in that career path. In addition to not being professionally satisfied running a large choral program, immediate and extended family issues forced him to reevaluate his career goals. Roger still prefers teaching choir and private vocal lessons but does not want to spend the extra time associated with secondary level performance schedules.

MacDonald (1999) noticed that attrition rates “are highest in the early years of the career” (p. 838) which seems to suggest that people who enter teaching careers do so without clear professional aspirations and are inclined to leave a position when their desires become more focused. Carl, Roger, Dave, and Lisa all reported a similar trend in their career movement.

Research question 3

After analyzing factors of attrition and tracking if the perception of career utility changes with time, the third research question was designed to examine some of the benefits and challenges of maintaining a rural K–12 music teaching job. Among the personal traits of people who experience a high utility of happiness in rural music education jobs are those who appreciate dynamics of living in a small community. The first issue with rural livelihood is that there is a lot of driving time. Sometimes even basic

amenities are not available, and a round trip drive of three hours for groceries is commonplace. After returning from shopping trips, to appreciate living in a small community a person needs to be content with, as Carl said, quiet evenings and no bustle. Interestingly, even though social events are infrequent, a music teacher living in a small community is never anonymous or alone in a crowd. Dave said part of the appeal to living where he does is that he is always recognized as the music teacher when he is in public. Furthermore, in a small community the school is the social center so career and life are interconnected. A music teacher has to be willing to spend evenings and weekends at their place of work directly or indirectly involved with social, musical, and athletic events. Lastly, a rural music teacher does not need to be an ardent sports fan, but it helps.

Benefits to teaching rural K–12 music

All of the participants described rural K–12 music teaching as exhausting work, but with definite advantages. Three themes emerged in relation to benefits of teaching in these schools: 1) small classes and long-term student/teacher relationships, 2) musical autonomy, and 3) rewarding professional interactions and development in spite of long distances between schools.

Small class sizes

The enrollment of the rural schools in this study ranged from 55 to 300 students K–12. These numbers allow for teachers to have small classes. For example, one of the general music classes taught by Kate in Cranford was a combined 5th/6th grade class and had a total of 12 students. The high school choir where Roger teaches had 9 students, and

Lisa's 7–12 grade band in Centerton had 25 students. These small classes allow for special relationships to forge.

When teaching grades K–12 a teacher has a unique opportunity to be a huge part of the life of a student. Carl mentioned the close personal relationships that can be developed between teachers and students in small rural communities. He has enjoyed “forming strong, cohesive bonds with...students and getting to know them and seeing them as they mature and grow and everything” (C, I, 279–280). Dave also valued the opportunity to “know the kids personally, at a professional level but know them on a one-to-one basis...learning life skills as well as musical skills” (D, I, 274).

Lisa also said that small classes and lots of time on a bus allow for deep personal connections to be made. She elaborated that beyond just getting to know students, small class sizes are good for inexperienced teachers because there is an opportunity to figure out behaviors and classroom management strategies work. With only a handful of students, a teacher can have time to learn names and behaviors more quickly and efficiently than in a large school.

Bates (2010) noted that when rural music educators are interviewed about their teaching situation, they reported low population numbers and small class sizes lead to a sense of community. This community aspect was “usually given as one of the greatest advantages of teaching music in rural schools” (p. 90). All participants agreed emphatically.

Musical autonomy

Beyond small classes, extreme rural schools often employ only one music

educator for all grades. A teacher who teaches K–12 music for 13 or more years has a unique opportunity to provide the sole musical instruction for a student’s entire school experience. While that prospect could be construed as daunting, participants viewed the autonomy of that situation as a real benefit.

Lisa talked about her experience in rural schools as an opportunity to understand child development. When teaching everyone from kindergarten through high school seniors in a day, an educator can see a cross-section of development and maturation. Kate expressed a similar sentiment and said that often she felt as much like a parent as a teacher when helping her students negotiate the tribulations of childhood.

From a musical perspective, having students for an extensive part of their childhood and musical development creates a feeling of ownership on the part of the teacher. Carl called himself his “own feeder program” (C, I, 223–228). He said that if a middle school student could not read a particular rhythm there was nobody to blame but himself. Lisa described the pressure of teaching all grades to produce such extensive musicianship, but that not having anyone to rely on (or blame) for student abilities provides an excellent opportunity for a teacher to develop a wide range of skills in a short time.

Of course, no one person can effectively teach all requisite musical skills, and small class sizes mean fewer musicians from which to draw in performing ensembles. Carl said that the difficulty level of music his ensembles performed was nowhere near what is typical of larger schools. The challenge with performing musical literature of a high level of difficulty is a result of several factors. First, with only one music teacher in

the entire community, assistant teachers or private studio instruction is not an option. Second, these small ensembles rarely have full instrumentation to explore advanced repertoire. Finally, rural schools often have secondary bands and choirs that are comprised of students in grades 7–12. In a group of musicians of this span in ages, trying to find literature that is not overwhelming to the youngest students while keeping the older ones engaged is frustrating. Performing advanced literature, however, is not the ultimate goal as Dave proudly pointed out, “it’s not always about the results, it’s about progression” (D, I, 368–380). Dave continued to say that the biggest joy he receives from his job is the large strides his students make in musical growth, especially when he gets to see the growth from the very first day of school until high school graduation.

Professional development

Available research stated that professional isolation is as a factor that can potentially affect attrition rates. Burkett (2011) wrote that “rural school districts experience higher rates of attrition because of, among several factors, limited professional development opportunities” (p. 54). Among participants in this study, the opposite seems to hold true. Although being the only music teachers in their respective school districts, Carl, Kate, Lisa, and Roger were all members of pep band co-ops that allowed for professional interactions. Feelings were mixed as to the overall effectiveness of the pep band co-op, but there was the ancillary benefit of dialog among professionals within a field. This dialog among people with nearly identical job descriptions could potentially help assuage feelings of isolation and promote overall job satisfaction and effectiveness (Maltas, 2004). Carl mentioned that this kind of communication was more

commonplace in his rural teaching job than in larger communities with specialized music educators.

In addition to the pep band co-ops, one thing that all five participants were particularly impressed with in the state in which they taught was the availability and collegiality of district and state-wide professional development opportunities. The professional development was so highly valued that each reported traveling many hours on roads that could potentially be closed at any moment, in any season, due to colossal storms or livestock movement. As I was traveling between schools for my interviews I was witness to such an event. On my way to Ackley I had not seen another car for nearly an hour when I came around a bend in the road and saw that the secondary highway was closed by several ranch workers on four-wheelers who were moving a herd of sheep from one pasture to another. I dutifully came to a stop and waited for 30 minutes as I sat in my rental car while a sea of wool blocked the entire road from sight. Braving these unpredictable road conditions for the sake of conference opportunities is commendable and gives these educators a chance feel connected to their teaching position.

In relation to professional development and collegiality, one thing that was particularly striking was how socially connected all of these music educators are. Each participant not only knew who taught music in every school in their immediate area, they knew a significant number of other music educators in schools of all sizes throughout the state. In this state, conventions and other professional development opportunities are as much social reunions as educational events.

Challenges of teaching rural K–12 music

Rural music education, like any other teaching job, has a unique set of challenges that effect the perception of overall job utility. Participants listed four themes that had an adverse effect on their satisfaction with teaching K–12 music: 1) salary, 2) generalization of skill, 3) geographic isolation, and 4) career hierarchy.

Salary

When considering teaching salary as a factor of a decision to stay in a current teaching position or seek employment in other school district, Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels (2007) reported that financial benefits are of “medium importance.” This is also the case among participants in this study. When talking to committed educators with rural K–12 teaching experience about their career paths, each one spoke about how low rural teaching salaries are, but none listed their pay as contributing to a decision to keep or move from a job. Lisa said that salary was “not even an issue” (L, I, 134) in her decision to leave rural teaching, but quite pleased with the increase in pay when she moved to a larger school district. Conversely, Kate said that rural school salary is a “huge thing” (K, I, 77–80), but she continues to teach in small communities and has no plans of ever leaving. Of his salary Dave said, “it’s not the main issue with most of us but it has to be factored in. We live in the real world” (D, I, 257).

An interesting theme related to low salaries in rural schools is the allocation of funds in school budgets. These schools display great efforts to conform their operations to a model that is based on larger schools and communities. Athletic and pep band co-ops and large group music festivals are expensive to maintain. Every rehearsal, practice,

game, or performance incurs expenses related transportation and missed class time.

Busses have to run be and maintained, and drivers have to be paid. Missed class time not only means paying substitute teachers, but it is a loss of teaching time which interrupts classroom routines and enhances a feeling of ennui. Roger readily admitted not teaching when large numbers of students were missing from his classes. Lisa did as well when she said poignantly, “there were days when I could have taught so much more one-on-one but I was too unmotivated, stressed-out, and discouraged to do so” (L, J4, 19–20). If rural schools adapted their philosophy to fit their population rather than trying to emulate other schools they could enhance teacher effectiveness and have funds available to increase salaries.

Generalization

Due to small numbers of students in rural schools, it is not feasible for these districts to hire multiple music educators. Moreover, to create full time employment teacher job descriptions can become quite cumbersome. In their rural teaching jobs each participant was responsible for general music, band, and choir classes for kindergarten through 12th grade. In addition Carl was in charge of directing an all-school play, Lisa taught math and reading classes, and Lisa and Kate were high school class advisers. These “big gear shifts” (C, I, 319) in course responsibility are exhausting. None of the participants reported being able to adequately prepare lesson plans nor were they able to prepare for the mental and emotional demands of such a wide range of ages and disciplines. All participants had a rounded musical upbringing with extensive instrumental and vocal training, but, as Lisa said, “the amount of time and flexibility and

the energy that is required of you is insane” (L, I, 350). Dave agreed, “I think that’s what one thing is that people don’t like about K–12 teaching is how scattered your focus is. There’s just so much to do all the time” (D, I, 186–196).

With so many unique classes to prepare for in a day it’s no wonder that these educators feel scattered. Kate pointed out that a lot of preparation goes into planning a lesson for any class, and that “preparation is just as much for classes whether there are 5 or 20 kids in the class” (K, J2, 18). This amount of preparation and teaching is exhausting. Carl said that he has “been so tired at the end of the day I can’t reach the steering wheel” (C, I, 320). Roger had a similar assessment of his daily workload. He said that he only gets 35 minutes to prepare for lessons each day, “so that is pretty exhausting trying to get anything done” (R, I, 238–244).

Beyond the sheer number of classes rural K–12 music teachers are accountable for, developing and teaching a curriculum in this setting can be difficult. One significant challenge is finding musical literature that is inspiring enough to motivate the oldest students without overwhelming the younger ones. Four out of five participants taught bands and choirs that were comprised of grades 7–12 in a single ensemble.

A rural music teacher needs to have a broad skill set and be flexible with musical prowess. In terms of having a broad skill set, rural music teachers are often called on to teach all music classes kindergarten through high school seniors, and sometimes duties include classes that are unrelated to music such as reading or math. Teachers who have extensive pre-service experience with instrumental and vocal music are happier in small town jobs. Kate went so far as to say that people would probably have a better chance of

being happy in a rural music teaching job if they grew up in a similar environment. Dave and Lisa did not agree with this assessment and related the successful experiences of their current student teachers who came from large schools.

As far as flexibility of musical ability, small schools with small classes do not have the same talent pool to draw from as larger schools counterparts. Additionally, small classes rarely have balanced performing ensembles so music teachers in these schools should be flexible with their demands and expectations. Dave and Carl each talked about musical satisfaction from seeing growth and not necessarily from performing advanced literature with large-group instrumentation. These comments corroborated Bates (2010), who proposed that teaching rural music comes with the understanding that great music teachers do not always have the best sounding ensembles.

This means that a teacher with large school expectations could experience a lower utility due to their ambitions. This lack of satisfaction could then run the risk of permeating their messaging to their students. When that happens rural students can unfairly be, as Roberts and Green (2013) reported, treated as deficient in comparison with nonrural students, assumed to need to become less-rural or something other than they are, and have their achievement measured in a curriculum that “values and prioritizes metro-cosmopolitan ways of being, while remaining ambivalent to rurality” (Roberts & Green, 2013, p. 768). If a person applies for a job teaching in a rural school they will most likely achieve more success in their position if they understand the dynamic of the school and community as an entity unto itself rather than as a comparison to somewhere else. The nature of rural music education can be a boon if the right person has the right job. Isbell

(2005) noted that the “rewards of teaching at a small school in a rural community outweigh the challenges if you think creatively” (p. 30). This creative person should be willing to entertain the question of what music education is and what it means to a community. With sensitivity to rural abilities and willingness to move beyond the “metro-cosmopolitan” model that is embodied in larger communities and university training programs a music teacher in these schools can see large growth in students and go a long ways in the goal to maximize their professional happiness.

Geographic isolation

When analyzing remote school music teaching, the topic of isolation is prevalent and is typically discussed in terms of social isolation and professional isolation. Social isolation can be thought of in the home if a person is married, has roommates, or lives alone. This is true no matter where a person lives. Outside of the home, however, rural music teachers deal with a social irony that people in larger communities do not experience. Towns that have very few residents tend to have a thick web of social interconnectivity. A person who is highly visible in this kind of environment, like a music teacher, is recognized regularly and often. Depending on personality having this kind of high profile social life can be enjoyable or smothering. Lisa reported not having common interests with many community members which led to a strong desire to move to a larger community. Dave, on the other hand, sees the constant familiarity of people as a significant reason for staying in his job for as long as he has. Kate and Roger were both raised in extreme rural communities and reported the social nature familiar and had no impact on job utility.

Depending on a person's experience and social needs, geographic isolation can be desirable or detrimental. Often the geographic isolation is hard on people who grow up there, causing these communities to be a place to be from rather than a place to go to. Howley (2009) recognized that rural towns have traditionally been "places that the ambitious, modernist individuals have, for a hundred years, learned to leave" (p. 537). Lewis (1920) concurred that the trend in rural communities is for the younger generation to "flee to the cities...and...stay there" (p. 256). Results among participants were mixed as compared to the research. Kate and Roger grew up in a rural community and continue to live in a similar demographic and geographic location, citing familiarity of the demographic as a motivator to stay. Lisa and Carl left rural teaching in part to have more immediate amenities and more broad social opportunities. Only Dave chose to move to a rural location and stay there.

Career hierarchy

One of the challenges with attracting experienced teachers to rural K-12 jobs is a perception of career hierarchy implying that small towns are places to build experience for when a job in a larger school opens. Lisa and Roger talked about rural K-12 jobs being a great place to begin a career because those jobs provide an opportunity to hone in on a specialty.

Beyond building a skill set and developing a specialty, there is a perception of status with teaching in rural school compared to larger communities within the state. Roger began his career in larger schools and felt that to teach in a larger school in one of the few metropolitan areas in the state was a privilege and he was honored to have the

“status associated with teaching in a large school” (R, I, 262). Dave told a story about his friend who currently teaches in one of the largest high schools in the state but previously taught rural K–12 music. In his first job he often had cordial conversations with other educators at conventions, but when hired into his current position he was immediately viewed as a person for whom respect was owed and advice could be sought.

Both Roger and Dave have first-hand experience with the career hierarchy perception between rural and nonrural music teaching jobs, but neither feels that the issue should be as prevalent as it is. Dave said, “some of us don’t buy into it anymore” (D, I, 225–231). Unfortunately, a lot of people do “buy into it.” Carl said that he was often approached by community members and colleagues who said that he is “too good” and that they don’t “deserve to have [him] teaching in their little town” (C, I, 245). If a person is career oriented, desires a higher salary, and feels a need to specialize musically, rural music education will end up being a place to pass through rather than to stay in.

Summary

When an employment agreement is begun in a school district, or anywhere else, all involved parties benefit when the employment circumstances portray what Kwok, Adams, & Price (2011) referred to as a good person-job fit where an individual’s personality, experience, and skill sets “fit” with interpersonal and working demands of a job. Finding a quality person-job fit can be described with the economic concept of utility maximization and served as the theoretical framework for this study.

Participants revealed that teaching K–12 rural music is a demanding job that can be highly rewarding if the “right” person is hired. Often the person who is ultimately

hired for these jobs is a young teacher who may or may not have any experience or understanding of the unique nature of rural music teaching. With an awareness of the demands of a job, a potential applicant might be more inclined to stay in a rural job long enough to understand its nuances and to have a positive impact on the students under their care.

Implications for Educators

One sure way to “experience the entire vast nature of music education” (R, I, 208) is to be employed as a K–12 music teacher in a rural school. Unfortunately, it seems as though the demand for these jobs is relatively low and the supply is high. Among the reasons for this high attrition rate is that many times the people who are employed in these jobs are not a good “fit” for the type of employment. The purpose of this dissertation was to ascertain perceptions of job satisfaction with rural teaching in order to more deeply understand why such demand exists due to attrition. It would seem that a person who could gain high utility in these jobs is a person early in their career who can embrace the unique challenges of rural schools and appreciate a small town lifestyle.

After gaining a deeper understanding of living in rural communities and the idiosyncrasies of teaching music there, the question then becomes; who are the creative generalists who would enjoy living and teaching in a small community? The consensus among participants was that a job teaching K–12 music provides teachers with an opportunity to teach a wide variety of subjects. A benefit of being such a generalist is the chance to find which specialty of music education would be most advantageous to pursue in future employment, but being a rural K–12 generalist comes with long hours without

the opportunity to give any one area the attention it needs. Potentially included in the long hours is everything from pep band to elementary school plays to teaching math.

In addition to being willing to teach a widely-varied course load, it seems that paramount to longevity is some sort of a personal connection to the community. Without a sentiment of overstatement Lisa said that the only way to spend a lifetime teaching K–12 music is to marry a rancher. For maximum utility from the perspective of both the school and the teacher, however, the goal is not necessarily to find a person to spend an entire career in rural music education, but to stay for five to six years rather than one or two. A person needs to commit to enough time to truly understand the dynamic of what they are doing.

With the need for a wide range of teaching skills to a wide variety of students with very few musical resources, it would seem that an educator who can be personally satisfied and effective in the classroom should be more highly regarded than one who teaches a narrow range of ensembles with assistant directors and the availability of local private study. Roger said that he often felt that the “talent of teachers in smaller schools goes particularly unnoticed” (R, Q, 256). Dave is of the opinion that it takes a highly skilled educator to be successful in rural K–12 teaching jobs. Unfortunately, the opposite seems to be the case. Bates (2010) noticed that within the paradigm of education, rural K–12 music teaching position might be viewed as an entry level or starter job compared with a position directing a large suburban high school or university ensemble. Roger observed that there are “very few beginning teachers I know at larger high school programs” (R, Q, 97). Dave also corroborated the research when he said that “I don’t

think it is just a perception that small schools have more turnover. Because the large schools, I've watched, and people stay there quite a number of years" (D, I, 349). The perception of rural music teaching jobs as entry level jobs goes beyond academic research. Participants in this study viewed their rural teaching experience as a chance to learn their craft to prepare them for the next phase of their careers. Roger said, "I would encourage younger individuals to apply for rural jobs just for the experience to find where their strengths are, as you will have every opportunity to test you skills across the curriculum" (R, Q, 217–222). Lisa agreed, "I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do as a music teacher and K–12 let me experiment and that was really good for me" (L, I, 416–417). The problem with this attitude is that if a person takes a job with the mindset of non-permanence they will be constantly looking beyond their position and are far more likely to leave before they can have any effectiveness in their program.

Many new rural teachers are relatively inexperienced so it would be advantageous for the programs that train them to offer opportunities of exposure before potentially being hired in a school with no other music teachers for miles. Collegiate music teacher education programs could assist with getting a person that fits the job by including rural cultural awareness in teaching method classes and by utilizing more rural schools for observations and student-teacher placements. One possibility to assist with the logistics of such far-reaching placements would be to utilize technology. Student teachers could be placed in rural schools and their supervisors could mentor through Skype or other real-time video options.

Once teachers are in the workforce, many small school administrators "don't

necessarily do their part to make sure that people don't get burned out in those positions" (L, I, 344–347). Optimally, school administrators would adopt a more introverted attitude and have their teachers adapt to their own unique situation rather than trying to adhere to a philosophy based on a larger school model. Barring that kind of paradigm shift, administrators in these schools can educate potential applicants through in-person interviews and full disclosure of all of the work detail before hiring. Carl revealed that he applied for and was hired for his rural position in the second round of applications. His administrator was not impressed with the first set of applicants and insisted that the job search continue. This attitude towards finding a good person job fit impressed Carl and was a contributing factor to his longevity.

Recommendations for Future Research

Participants in this study were more professionally mobile than research would suggest they should be. Dave has been in his current teaching position for 22 years, but none of the other 4 participants reported staying in a single position for more than four years. There is no discernible trend among participants as to whether moving to or from rural schools is the typical path. It is worth noting, however, that other than Dave all of the participants have fewer than 12 years of total teaching experience. Ingersoll (2001) reported that turnover rates decline through the mid-career period. A follow-up study with these participants later in their professional lives could reveal more specific trends with experience and attrition rates as they relate to rural music teaching.

Also, a quantitative follow-up study could be used to ascertain backgrounds of all music educators in the state or region to determine how much of an impact personal

history has on job choice and workplace utility, especially regarding rural employment. These data could also include teacher identity information to see if inclinations of specialty remain constant throughout careers and job descriptions. All five participants in this study reported maintaining an identity as a “band,” “choir,” or “general music” teacher throughout their careers. A quantitative study could help determine what inclination would be most conducive to long-term happiness in rural schools.

Participants in rural K–12 teaching jobs are geographically isolated, but report frequent professional interactions. Further research is warranted to gain a deeper understanding of the term isolation and its effect on workplace utility and attrition rates among teachers of music and other “singleton” subjects.

Finally, several participants mentioned a state-wide mentoring program for new teachers in remote schools although the effectiveness of the program as it relates to attrition is unknown. Future research is needed to understand the effect this program has had on teachers entering the workforce, in the schools, and if the mentors have helped the person and the job fit together better. Along the same reasoning it would be interesting to see if a regional or national electronic support group for rural music educators would have an impact on attrition rates.

Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was not to find a way to keep people in rural jobs for an entire career, just to understand if there is a way to keep them from leaving so soon. When considering job utility, a teacher bases their perception of job satisfaction on what is rewarding and what challenges are faced. If the challenges outweigh the benefits, they

will seek employment elsewhere. Sadly, participants all said that for maximum effectiveness, a minimum of 5 years of service is ideal, thus only one of them was living up to their own recommendations. By creating a description of professional and personal traits of people who could have high utility of happiness in this teaching environment, the results of this study could be useful in developing tools to target specific demographics for recruitment into music education programs or could provide rationale for including rural cultural awareness and pre-service teaching experience at the post-secondary level. Ideally, the discussion will then continue to music educators who are seeking employment, or are already employed in small communities as well as to the administrators who are hiring them. This information could help create a better understanding of the dynamic of rural music teaching and lead to a better person-job fit for candidates and longer retention rates of educators in these schools.

Appendix A: Initial Contact Email

Dear _____,

I got your name from _____ and am hoping you can help me with research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation through Boston University. For this project I am collecting information on teacher career movement; particularly among teachers who, either currently or previously, has experience teaching music in “remote rural” schools.

If you are interested in participating in the study I will I will coordinate a time with you to visit your classroom for an interview that should take approximately 45 minutes. I would also like to spend at least one class period observing you in your classroom. After the interview I will send you a series of six weekly prompts to gather a few more of your thoughts. Each will be short and should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

All information gathered through emails, questions, and interviews will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used for names and places in data reporting to assure anonymity.

If you are interested and willing to help me with my research please respond to this Email and I will be in contact with more information. Thank you for your time and I look forward to getting to know a little more about you and your career

Sincerely,

Rich Kuntzelman

Appendix B: Consent Script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this six week research study. The purpose of this discussion and future emails is to learn about career movement among people who currently teach or previously taught music in remote rural schools. The information gleaned from this discussion will be used in my dissertation research at Boston University. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time. You may also choose not respond to one or more of the questions. This discussion will last approximately 45 minutes, and there will be five follow-up emails in the coming weeks. Each Email response should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. I will be audio recording this discussion, but the transcripts and the dissertation will not use your name, the name of your school or community, or any other identifiable information. At the completion of the research study I will contact you for closure or to schedule a follow-up interview if any further information or clarification is needed.

If you have any questions you may ask them now or you can contact me later at richardian@hotmail.com. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Diana Dansereau at drd1@bu.edu. You may obtain further information about your rights as a research subject by calling the BU CRC IRB Office at 617-358-6115.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview technique allowed the inclusion of anecdotes and other connections for which I might not have prepared questions. Topics of conversation included, but were not limited to:

- Describe your current teaching assignment
 - courses/grades taught,
 - extracurricular obligations,
 - community performance expectations,
 - number of music teachers in the school district,
 - number of buildings/rooms you teach in,
 - number of students in the student body,
 - number of students you teach,
 - how long have you been in your current assignment?
- Provide the same information for your previous teaching assignment(s)
- Factors of attrition
 - Experience
 - Describe your high school experience in terms of school size, community size, musical ensemble memberships and opportunities
 - Describe your undergraduate and graduate experiences
 - Salary
 - Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with your current salary?
 - How does your current salary compare to your previous employment
 - Administrative Support
 - What do you feel is the role of a school administration in terms of music education?
 - How does your current/previous administration compare?
 - What characteristics does your current/previous administration have that you are satisfied with?

- What characteristics does your current/previous administration have or not have that you wish would be different?
- Time working outside of the regular day
 - How do you feel about assessment data collection and reporting that is required for your current/previous jobs?
 - How do you feel about other paperwork and administrative duties that is required for your current/previous jobs?
- Professional Development Opportunities
 - Would you describe the environment among teachers (music and otherwise) in your district as collegial and collaborative?
 - What is your opinion of district-offered in-services? Are they meaningful and relevant?
 - How often do you get the opportunity for music-specific professional development?
- Specific Rural Concerns
 - What other music/musician roles do you or did you play in the community in which you teach/taught (private teacher, church musician/director, lead a local group)? Were you actively recruited for those roles? Were they unofficially connected to the school position in some way? Did you expect to be called upon for these community positions?
 - How, if at all, does your relationship with your community affect what you do as a teacher? How do you see your relationship within your community (i.e., high profile, low profile)? Can you have a private social life? What do you think of this? If you have both rural and other experiences, how do the two differ?
 - What do you see as the key benefits of teaching in rural schools?
 - What do you see as biggest detractors from teaching in rural schools?
- Identifying the “ideal” teaching position
 - What are your future teaching goals? In what type of setting/situation/placement do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years? 15 years?

- During your collegiate career, what type of setting/situation/placement was your goal in which to teach? Is that goal different now?
- Why did you take a position teaching in a rural school district? What prior ideas did you have about what it would be like to teach in a rural school district? In what ways, if at all, did your prior ideas change?
- What type of teacher would you recommend teaching in a rural district? Would they be new or experienced teachers?
- If you could go back through your decision-making process of deciding to take a job in a rural school district, would the outcome be the same?
- Why did you take your current teaching position (if it is different than your previous teaching position)? If you could go back through your decision-making process of deciding to take your current job, would the outcome be the same?

Appendix D: Journal Prompts

After interviews were conducted and transcribed, the data were coded for themes and then I created five participant journal entries for further data enrichment. Once per week identical journal prompts were emailed to each participant. Each time the journals prompts were answered with a written email response.

Prompt 1.

Will you take a few minutes in the next day or two to provide some detail on your pep band co-op? Specifically I am interested in: How many schools are involved? Who decides who directs which games? Where are the games held? How many games is the band expected to perform for? Has the co-op model changed the number of games per season? Describe the relationship you have with the other directors in the co-op. What are your thoughts on having a pep band co-op? Is it good for the kids? Is it good for the community? It is good for you as a professional?

Prompt 2.

The assumption I have made is that there is a higher turnover rate and fewer teachers applying for open jobs among K–12 rural music teaching positions than in any other size school. Do you feel this is an accurate assumption? Can you offer any specific details to support or refute that claim (i.e. number of open positions right now, unfilled jobs at the start of the school year, teachers with provisional teaching certificates, etc.)?

Prompt 3.

Describe your perfect-world teaching job (If there were no outside concerns such as salary, time, etc.). How many classes per day? What classes? How many students?

What ages? How many performances? What kind of performances? Etc.

Prompt 4.

A common concern among many rural music teachers is students missing class time for other activities (sports, BPA, FFA, etc.). Can you tell me how many kids you have in each of your secondary-level classes and the approximate percentage of those students that miss class regularly? Will you also let me know how often those classes are missed?

Prompt 5.

This final prompt is thinking about the future of K–12 rural music education and the people who work there. If you have any further thoughts about any of the previous prompts or about our interview you can also include them here. For long term health of a music department and in fairness to students, what experiences would you recommend an “ideal” candidate for a K–12 music job have (experienced teacher or new, familiar with the area or not, what kind of college/high school experience, what kind of life/professional experience)? How long do you feel the average teacher should stay in one rural school district? When positions do come open, what resources do you recommend for advertisement or recruitment for applicants? When should this recruitment begin (when the candidate is in high school, college, currently working)?

Appendix E: Sample Salary Schedule

2015–2016 Salary “Springfield School”

2014–2015 Salary Base: \$27,398

Percent Increase: 1%

2015–2016 Salary Base: \$27,672

Year	BA	BA+10	BA+20	BA+30	MA	MA+10	MA+20
0	\$27672	\$28613	\$29581	\$30052	\$30522	\$31491	\$32432
1	\$28779	\$29830	\$30882	\$31408	\$31933	\$32985	\$34037
2	\$29886	\$31048	\$32183	\$32764	\$33345	\$34479	\$35642
3	\$30993	\$32266	\$33483	\$34120	\$34756	\$35974	\$37246
4	\$32099	\$33483	\$34784	\$35475	\$36167	\$37468	\$38851
5	\$33206	\$34701	\$36084	\$36831	\$37579	\$38962	\$40456
6	\$34313	\$35918	\$37385	\$38187	\$38990	\$40456	\$42061
7	\$35420	\$37136	\$38685	\$39543	\$40401	\$41951	\$43666
8	\$36527	\$38353	\$39986	\$40899	\$41812	\$43445	\$45271
9	\$37634	\$39571	\$41287	\$42255	\$43224	\$44939	\$46876
10	\$38741	\$40788	\$42587	\$43611	\$44635	\$46434	\$48481
11	\$39848	\$42006	\$43888	\$44967	\$46046	\$47928	\$50086
12	\$40955	\$43224	\$45188	\$46323	\$47457	\$49422	\$51691
13	\$42061	\$44441	\$46489	\$47679	\$48869	\$50916	\$53296
14	\$43168	\$45659	\$47790	\$49035	\$50280	\$52411	\$54901
15	\$43168	\$46876	\$49090	\$50391	\$51691	\$53905	\$56506
16	\$43168	\$46876	\$50391	\$51747	\$53103	\$55399	\$58111
17	\$43168	\$46876	\$51691	\$53103	\$54514	\$56894	\$59716
18	\$43168	\$46876	\$51691	\$54458	\$55925	\$58388	\$61321
19	\$55814	\$57336					

A teacher shall move no more than one (1) step or year of experience in any one year provided an additional year of experience is gained.

Teachers new to the system will be granted credit on a 1:1 basis for all previous teaching experience up to a maximum of six years.

All teaching shall have been in consecutive years in fully accredited schools. Consideration for non-consecutive years may be made for teachers who left teaching to further their education, i.e. earning a Master’s Degree. Subject to the preceding limitations, placement on the salary schedule and years credited will be at the discretion of the superintendent.

The District may place teachers with less than three years’ experience at step three (3) of the salary schedule. These teachers will be advanced to step four (4) upon successful completion of their first year and continue to advance each subsequent completed year as it qualifies them under the terms of this agreement. Step six is the maximum step at which a new teacher may enter the District.

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Curriculum Vitae

Education:

DMA Music Education – Boston University, 2016
 MA Music Education – University of Wyoming, 2006
 BME – Montana State University, 2000

Certifications:

Washington Resident Teaching Certificate (Secondary Instrumental Music)

Work Experience:

Aug 2012 – Present	Director of Bands, White River High School, Buckley WA <i>Duties:</i> teach concert bands (two), percussion ensemble, jazz band, marching/pep band, music appreciation, music theory, guitar, beginning band
2007 – 2012	Director of Bands, Fergus High School, Lewistown, MT <i>Duties:</i> taught concert bands (two), percussion ensemble, jazz band, marching/pep band, 5 th and 6 th grade general music, beginning bands,
2006 – 2007	Director of Bands, Somers Middle School, Somers, MT <i>Duties:</i> taught 6 th grade band, 7 th –8 th grade band, jazz band
2001 – 2006	Director of Bands, Evanston High School, Evanston, WY <i>Duties:</i> taught concert bands (two), jazz bands (two), marching/pep band, music appreciation, music theory. Served as instrumental music department head
2000 – 2001	Music Teacher, Ennis Schools. Ennis MT <i>Duties:</i> taught 5 th grade band, 6 th grade band, MS band, HS band, MS choir, HS choir, 6 th grade general music, pep band
1991 – 2000	Various Positions, Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT <i>Duties:</i> planetarium show operator, LASER show production assistant, archeology field assistant

Festivals and Conferences:

Adjudicator, 2013, 2014, Olympic Region Solo and Ensemble Festival, Lacey, WA
 Director, 2011, Montana District 10 Honor Band, Colstrip, MT
 Adjudicator, 2010, Wyoming State Marching Band Festival, Casper, WY
 Adjudicator, 2007–present, Various Music Festivals in MT & WY (band, jazz band, woodwinds)
 Director, 2007 Regional Middle School Band Festival, Valier, MT
 Presenter, 2006 Wyoming Music Educators' Convention, Laramie WY

Student Ensemble Honors

Percussion ensemble selected to perform for 2015 WSSDA Conference general session

Administrative and Political Positions:

Co-Chair, Green River Regional Middle School Band Contest, 2015–present
 Founder and Chairman, Montana Jazz Festival, 2008–2012
 Central Representative, Montana Bandmasters Association, 2011–2013
 Co-Chair, Montana District 8 Music Festival, 2007–2012
 Host and Chairman, Montana Eastern-A Band Festival, February, 2010
 President, Wyoming SW District Music Education Association, 2004–2006
 Site Coordinator, Wyoming All-State Music Educator’s Convention, 2004
 Host and Chairman, Wyoming Southwest District Music Festival, 2002
 Vice President, MSU Collegiate MENC Chapter, 1996–1998

Awards and Recognitions:

2010 Fergus High School Teacher of the Year
 2004 Evanston Chamber of Commerce “Pat on the Back Award”
 1996 Quam’s Taekwondo Instructor of the Year

Publications:

Granlie, D. & _____ (2011). Lewistown director creates “Made in Montana” concert. *Cadenza*. 55(2), 21.
 _____ (2006). Red is beautiful: Music education in the Russian Federation. *Windsong*. 2006, 12–13.

Professional Organizations:

Washington Music Educators Association
 National Association for Music Education
 National Education Association

Ensemble Memberships:

Plateau Community Orchestra, director, 2013
 Sounds of JW Pepper Reading Band, alto and bari saxes, 2003–2013
 Montana Bandmasters MMEA General Session Jazz Band, tenor sax 2010
 Winds of Montana Concert Band, alto sax, 2009
 Kalispell, MT Community Band, tenor sax, 2007–2008
 Kalispell, MT Christian Center Pit Orchestra, bari sax and clarinet, 2006
 Laramie, WY Community Band, tenor sax and percussion, 2002–2005
 Wyoming MEA Conference Jazz Reading Band, bari sax, 2002–2006
 Evanston, WY Community Band, alto sax and assistant director, 2001–2005