

Burnout Prevention for High School Music Educators

A Collaborative Capstone Project

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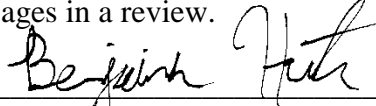
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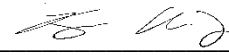
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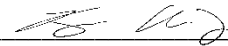
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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to analyze causes of stress in the high school music classroom and explore burnout prevention techniques for high school music educators in the Orange County area. A survey went out to local high school music educators that currently teach in Orange County, to assess what stressors these teachers were experiencing. For three weeks, four teachers aimed to purposely exercise up to five times a week and journal the type and duration of exercise in a personal journal mentioning any change in stress levels that occurred. At the end of the intervention, teacher participants were interviewed. Stressors did not change from the implementation of the intervention for three weeks. All intervention participants felt that the intervention would be a viable long-term burnout prevention technique and just required more time to yield better results.

Table of Contents

	Page
Approval	2
School of Education Citation and Permission	2
Library Copyright Permission Agreement.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Table of Contents.....	5
Chapter	
1 Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study	11
Definitions of Terms.....	13
2 Review of Relevant Literature	14
General Aspects on Burnout as a Phenomenon	14
Recognizing Burnout	16
Combatting Burnout.....	19
Preventing Burnout	21
Burnout on Female Music Educators.....	23
Causes of Satisfaction on the Job.....	26
Reason for Teacher Attrition or Quitting.....	27
Burnout in Music Education Majors and How it Carried Over into Teaching.....	28
Teacher Burnout Due to Classroom Management.....	29
Teacher Burnout Due to Score Based School Curriculum	29
3 Methods.....	31
Setting	31
Participants.....	31
Roles of the Researchers.....	32
Intervention Plan.....	32
Data Collection Methods	33
Ethical Research Practices	35
Plan for increasing validity	36
Confidentiality and informed consent.....	37
4 Findings and Discussion	38
Conclusions.....	44
Recommendations for Further Research.....	46

References.....	48
Appendices.....	52
A – Burnout Causes Survey.....	52
B – Intervention Information and Request.....	54
C – Interview Outline.....	55
D – Weekly Journals.....	57

Chapter 1

Problem

Burnout in any profession refers to workers being overworked and overwhelmed (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). The average high school music teacher position requires the teacher to be more than an educator by taking on extra administrative responsibilities such as fundraising, balancing budgets, and repairing instruments (Gordon, 2002). Each extra facet of the job brings unique stressors that are specific to music educators (Hylton, 1989). This study focused on the causes of burnout specifically in high school music educators and provides data to suggest prevention methods based off a four week intervention implemented on Orange County high school music teachers.

For me, Pao, as an aspiring full-time music teacher, music coach and substitute, and private lesson instructor, teacher burnout was a very important and relevant topic. I had the privilege of working with many music teachers from a variety of age groups, ensembles, and location, and in each experience I saw manifestations of teacher burnout to great variety, depth, and severity. General burnout in teachers was an understood part of being an educator, but its variant in the music classroom specifically intrigued me; through observation and personal experience as a music and English tutor, I saw and experienced different stressors resulting in different resulting effects on the educator, along with different coping mechanisms for these stressors. All vocations entail stress and pressure, but to varying degrees; for the teacher specifically, I saw substantial effects that were both obvious and nuanced. I believed that teacher burnout, and especially music teacher burnout, caused dynamic changes in the teacher's pedagogical approach, often in ways the teachers were not fully conscious of. Additionally, many of the stressors that

contributed to teacher burnout were largely self-perpetuated if not self-created. When stressors are fully external and out of the control of the teacher, it is still within the educator's sphere of influence to decide how to react and deal with the stressor.

Having worked as a music teacher for over five years I, Ben, have experienced forms of burnout both firsthand and from close colleagues. Burnout can tire a teacher out and remove all creative impulses (Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, 2015, p. 21). I have witnessed great teachers get overwhelmed and make poor decisions in the moment that hurt their program, their reputation, and even worse, their students. Students don't remember if you are overwhelmed or overworked but they do remember when you yell at them, especially if it seemed unwarranted. Teachers work so hard to gain the trust of their students and can lose it so easily. Burnout is a poison in the workforce, but a poison that can be avoided or even cured. I wanted to find out the main causes of burnout in teachers and find ways to offer antidotes for this poison. I realized that burnout affected so many teachers that there must be patterns that can be identified. If patterns could be identified then I thought I could decipher ways to prevent the patterns from happening in the first place. Beyond finding the patterns that cause burnout I wanted to find out what specific areas of teaching were affected the most. Did teachers get sloppy with pedagogy? Perhaps they would become bitter and show a lack of passion in front of their students. I believed burnout could affect teachers differently and I wanted to find out the different ways so that they could be avoided. (Freeman, 2016).

We thought that it was incredibly important for music teachers to acknowledge when teacher burnout was occurring, and the effects it had on their students and classrooms. When educators are able to gain an additional perspective to their pedagogy

and/or classroom either through collaboration with colleagues and effective self-reflection, they are able to better understand the scope of which they are being affected by teacher burnout, along with the degree to which their classrooms are impacted by proxy. We believed that burnout could have significant effects for the students, and that often times it is brushed aside as being normal stipulations of being a teacher; although we believed this to be somewhat true, it seemed to perpetuate a teacher environment in which teachers do not value the importance of destressing and dealing with teacher burnout as a significant problem that is directly affecting the way they approach the classroom.

A number of challenges arose from thinking about the pervasive nature of teacher burnout in the music classroom. As stated before, music classrooms and music educators often operate differently than the traditional academic classroom; thus, not only can the stressors themselves be not related, but the ways to deal with the stressors may not cross over whatsoever from a music classroom and a biology classroom. Thus, in its practicality, performing research and data collection might have faced difficulty in its relevance to non-musical classrooms. Along the same vein, each classroom, school, district, and even state can vary from classroom to classroom, school to school, etc. In other words, the specific perspectives towards dealing with burnout may differ wildly from school site to school site based on a large number of factors such as the teacher's personality and history, the student clientele, administrative support, or socioeconomic status of the surrounding area.

Gathering data through interviews may have caused a challenge in that candidates may not have provided authentic and genuine responses due to factors such as social

pressure, administrative pressure, or even self-imposed pressure not to appear ungrateful. On a more fundamental level, some educators simply may not have had the time to go through an interview, as their schedules and days are packed with obligations both in teaching and in personal life.

Lastly, amongst a plethora of other potential challenges that teacher burnout causes teachers, lack of support may have been the greatest and most substantial stressor for music educator burnout. Music educators often feel unsupported both monetarily and socially; public school budgets hardly prioritize the arts, and administrative support is not always present either. The general public and governing bodies show relatively little substantial support for the importance of the arts. These factors, along with a multitude of others, combine to create crippling feelings of inadequacy, ultimately generating profound levels of teacher burnout.

Utilizing networking as a means to gain access to multiple sources was recommended in order to face the issue of obtaining access to music educators giving genuine and meaningful feedback and responses regarding the topic. Additionally, making the criteria more general was also recommended as a way to better approach the topic of burnout as it affects all kinds of teachers; although the research was meant to focus on music educators specifically, having data from non-music educators was a way to create a source to compare and contrast differences in teacher burnout, stressors, and coping mechanisms. Through these recommendations, I hoped to generate and obtain meaningful data to work towards finding solutions to the problem of teacher burnout as it affects our immediate area and social space; I hoped to use connections to reach out to

other, less-known music educators for a greater variety of responses to questions regarding their experience with teacher burnout.

General advice regarding coping with the causes and contributors to teacher burnout involved ensuring space between work and personal time, involving the self in activities, hobbies, and recreation non-related to the material being taught (in our case, teaching music), and building social spaces with other music educators in which discourse occurs regarding their experiences, sharing personal methods of dealing with stressors and burnout in general. I hoped to see these recommendations and more in our interviews with music educators, hoping to generate a substantial and effective list of methods through which varying music educators found success in dealing with the inevitable teacher burnout that seems to occur to all teachers.

In order to get started with the intervention process, we planned to construct and put together a brief but effective survey regarding the causes of burnout; after compiling a list of music educators in the Orange County area, we planned to send out thirty surveys, hoping to receive back the majority of surveys distributed. In addition to the creation of the survey and compilation of music educators, we hoped to identify four specific music educators to ask them to engage in some of the prescribed methods to combatting or preventing burnout from the literature; following a sufficient period of time, we hoped to interview them regarding general burnout as it affects their teaching experience and how the prescribed methods initiated affected their teaching experience if at all.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand how teacher burnout affects music educators specifically in the Orange County area and to what extent these educators engaged in conventional methods of reducing stress and burnout. We wanted to find ways for our colleagues and for ourselves to prevent burnout for the sake of the students. We figured if burnout carried over into the classroom and stifled our creativity it would have a negative effect on the growth of our students (Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2015, p. 21). To achieve this purpose, a multi-step approach to intervention was planned: a survey would be created to assess causes of burnout, a small group of educators would be chosen to engage in preventive techniques for teacher burnout, and a set of interviews would occur for these same educators to assess the effectiveness of these techniques, along with their specific experiences with burnout and their teaching careers. Through this intervention, we hoped to gain concrete data regarding the overall experience of burnout in music educators in Orange County by learning about the specific ways educators experienced and dealt with burnout.

Three research questions were created to guide discussion of the subject and development of the intervention:

What specific stressors or categories of stressors are causing stress and potentially

teacher burnout in music educators in Orange County?

In what ways do high school music teachers in Orange County combat teacher

burnout as they experience it?

To what extent do high school music teachers in Orange County use the

documented, conventional approaches to combating teacher burnout?

Further discussion and related topics include: the extent to which having non-music hobbies affect burnout in high school music teachers; the extent to which meaningful musical experiences affect burnout in high school music teachers; and the extent to which music teachers feel in control of their classrooms, as it relates to their levels of stress and burnout. These continuing ideas came largely from research and literature review, as non-musical hobbies, substantial musical experience, and classroom management were three factors that consistently appeared in numerous journals, research studies, and other sources regarding music teacher burnout. (Cox & Stern, 1993; Figueras, 2016; Friedman, 1991; Kramer, 2012; Payne McLain, 2005; Powers, 2012; Scheib, 2004).

Definition of Terms

A concept that exists in any profession or experience involving service to others, burnout as a concept may be generally defined as a situation of overworked and disillusioned human service workers (Vandenberghe; Huberman, 1999). Teaching is one of few professions that entails sustained and substantial exposure and interaction with others in quantity and quality; the number of students that a single teacher has contact with, and the potential depth of relationships formed with these students, are hard found in other vocations. For music educators specifically, classroom sizes can be double the size of the traditional classroom size. Thus, it is no surprise that burnout affects music educators to greater extent relative to their peers both in education and other human service professions (Christian, 2016; Figueras, 2016; Scheib, 2004).

Chapter 2

Review of Relevant Literature

Introduction

In the same way teacher burnout is pervasive across all subjects and grade levels across various school districts in the country, the literature and research regarding general burnout in education is robust and extensive. Much writing, both scholarly and personal, has been explored regarding the many aspects of burnout: how it manifests itself in the teacher, its effects on the classroom, common causes and symptoms, and differences and similarities in burnout between disciplines and content areas to name a few (Cox & Stern, 1993; Hylton, 1989; Vitale, 2012). Although much research has been conducted on the topic in a general sense, the depth of resources regarding the nature of burnout as it applies to high school music educators is relatively less extensive, particularly as it applies to school districts with relatively high academic success (Ballantyne, 2006; Bernhard, 2005; Bradley, Cheek, Lan, & Parr, 2003; Hughes, 1992). This chapter seeks to explore material pertinent to burnout as it affects high school music teachers, organized by thematic categories.

General Aspects on Burnout as a Phenomenon

Burnout as a concept can be defined as a situation of overworked and disillusioned human service workers (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). As a phenomenon, burnout is not limited to the teaching profession, and can exist in any capacity in which an individual works with other individuals either in collaboration or in service to them. Due to the sheer amount of exposure teachers have with their students, colleagues, and peers in the school setting, they may be more predisposed to become

burnt out by nature of the profession. Teachers in general may come into contact with as many as 30 different students per class period, while music teachers may have ensembles near 60 to 70 students at once; by sheer volume, music teachers are exposed to a greater number of students, which may result in a greater chance of becoming burnout (Christian, 2016). Thus, although burnout is hardly an understudied phenomenon that exists in the teaching world, an exploration as to its potentially magnified occurrence in the music classroom may yield new information as to how teachers with increased class sizes may fare with the effects of being burnt out.

Relative to faculty in other academic departments, music educators are often times the only music educators at their school site. In larger school sites, the school may employ a second faculty member for the music programs, but educators in other departments such as general science generally have more than 2 coworkers to confide in, discuss ideas with, and reflect with (Figueras, 2016; Hodge, Jupp, & Taylor, 1994). Thus, music educators face a specific kind of burnout that other faculty members in other departments may not have experience with; isolation and feelings of being disconnected with the overall school environment (Allsup, 2005). Physically, the music classroom itself is often times found to be isolated with the rest of the school, further contributing to feelings of isolation (Allsup, 2005; Friedman, 1991).

Students themselves may experience burn out as well; when students feel burnt out, their responses only affect themselves and their personal experience with the school environment relative to the teacher's experience. However, when teachers experience burnout, their students also suffer residually from the personal feelings of disillusionment and depersonalization (Cox & Stern, 1993). Students who are eager to learn and are

naturally engaged in the learning experience at school become frustrated when teachers themselves become unmotivated, disengaging, and cynical due to burnout. Students who require extra motivation and guidance to become engaged in their learning process will fall further into their tendencies of boredom, mistrust, and apathy towards school and education in general (Cox & Stern, 1993).

Additionally, a major source of burnout often comes from the educator themselves; burnout is rarely solely an environmental issue, but may be caused by unresolved, unconscious conflicts that contribute to long-standing character issues in the psychology of the educator (Freeman, 2016). These kinds of psychological factors often are outside of the teacher's conscious awareness and can have debilitating effects on the educator's perspectives of their teaching and their teaching experience in the classroom.

A negative perspective caused by events in the past, such as being conditioned to project anger onto the external world as a defense mechanism for internal frustration, can cause symptoms attributed to feeling burnt out (Freeman, 2016). In many instances, the individual assumes the cause of feeling burnt out residing in the environment itself, when their particular psychological perspective interprets events and experiences in their teaching in a way that creates unnecessary or sometimes untenable feelings of burnout; this is seen when educators feel burnout following positive instances and rewards in the workplace (Freeman, 2016). The psychological profile, including the psychosocial history of the individual, is another substantial factor to the experience of burnout in educators.

Three major areas of focus when addressing and discussing teacher burnout include: the ability to recognize burnout, the ability to provide effective remedies for burnout, and the ability to avoid burnout.

Recognizing Burnout

Many aspects of the classroom environment can be indicative of an educator experiencing burnout. Observations on the students' attitudes towards the teacher or education in general, the overall classroom temperament, and characteristics of the teacher themselves are windows towards recognizing burnout (Cox & Stern, 1993; Hamann, 1990; Powers, 2012; Scheib, 2004). Although not all observations may directly link to a teacher experiencing burnout, the variety of these symptoms in these categories often are clear signs of stress, which is the main contributor to burn out.

Teachers observed to be substantially uninteresting, unapproachable, unimaginative, dull, and generally avoiding of contact with students have a likely chance of being burnt out (Bradley et al., 2003; Christian, 2016; Cox & Stern, 1993; Freeman, 2016; Hamann, 1990; Kertz-Welzel, 2009). They may feel exhaustion and desperation towards their work, feeling as if their work consumes their entire lives; this is generally paired with the feeling that everything to be completed for day can never be completed. One of the most prevalent symptoms observed and recorded is a "perceived general negative student attitude and a lack of self-discipline and motivation in the classroom," which stems from poor classroom management skills creating a feeling of lack of control (Cox & Stern, 1993, p. 34). Monotony in rehearsal-lessons and a lack of creativity when approaching the music classroom in general for extended periods of time are consistent indicators of an educator facing burnout. These symptoms can be hard to recognize for

the individual as well, making it difficult to address and acknowledge as a legitimate issue to address; additionally, because music educators change between many different roles and responsibilities within a given day, they often “inadvertently cross the line between low-level burnout and high-level stress” (Hamann, 1990; p. 31). Burnt out educators may rely on increased drinking, smoking, or eating as ways to find relief from increased fatigue and stress. On the students’ side, the residual effects of burnout in teachers include students who are generally unmotivated to learn and apathetic towards school and learning in general (Cox & Stern, 1993).

Feelings of constant fatigue, high stress, and restlessness can sometimes manifest in irregular or prolonged physical ailment, such as weight loss or gain, perpetual colds, higher cholesterol levels, severe and chronic fatigue, migraines and headaches, high blood pressure, rheumatoid arthritis, thyroid disease, chronic back pain, or peptic ulcers (Bradley et al., 2003; Cox & Stern 1993; Hamann, 1990). In addition to physical manifestations of burnout, a slew of psychological disorders and symptoms may begin to develop, including but not limited to: impatience, irritability, unnecessary worry, apathy, deep cynicism, detachment from the profession, general paranoia, and deep-seeded hopelessness (Cox & Stern 1993; Freeman, 2016; Hamann, 1990).

Educators who are the most productive with their time, dedicated to teaching their respective subject matter, and committed to their vision of teaching as a career and life choice are among the most likely candidates to be affected adversely by burnout (Hamann, 1990). Highly motivated and idealistic educators who have genuine passion in their profession either as musicians, teachers, or music teachers are seen to be more susceptible to succumbing to stressors and experience burnout in a significant way

(Christian, 2016; Hamann, 1990). The importance of a better understanding of burnout as it affects all educators is evident, as the implication is that the ideal characteristics teacher-training programs try to develop in teacher candidates are the very same characteristics that may make them more prone to suffering from burnout in their future careers. It is equally evident why the teaching profession, and particularly in music education, is riddled with negative self-attitudes, fatigue, and a salient sense of cynicism.

Combating Burnout

Many similarities exist between the kinds of approaches prescribed to be successful for preventing burnout and combating burnout and stress when it occurs. Similar themes and concepts appear, but a few specific differences exist.

Strategies for preventing burnout before it occurs and combating it when it is already present are cited to be the same often (Allsup, 2005; Hamann, 1990; Kramer, 2012; Scheib, 2004). However, when burnout has already been detected, strategies such as not taking on further work, collaborating with peers and other music educators, revisiting personal and professional goals, trying to build in new and creative ways for future lessons and teaching, and engaging in relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, meditation, journal writing, and other introspective and reflective exercises have been shown to reduce stress and feelings of burnout effectively (Cox & Stern, 1993; Kramer, 2012; Powers, 2012; Scheib, 2004). These suggestions also double as ways to prevent burnout from occurring in the future, in the same way that combating burnout and preventing it from occurring both stem from the same root causes of stress and teacher burnout; prevention techniques are pre-emptive versions of prescribed remedies for burnout. While implementing effective discipline and management techniques may be

remedies for burnout, developing and researching effective discipline and management techniques may be prevention techniques for burnout (Figueras, 2016; Friedman, 1991; Payne & McLain, 2005). Similarly, keeping and modeling a positive attitude for students, attending conventions to hear about other teachers, their struggles, and their ways to deal with classroom management, reading journals on teacher burnout, devoting time for non-music aspects of life like family, exercise, socializing, and having a general mindset for change are all effective remedies for burnout (Allsup, 2005; Cox & Stern 1993; Hylton, 1989; Powers, 2012; Scheib, 2004).

Interestingly, music itself as a therapeutic approach was also documented as an effective way to combat teacher burnout, compared to conventional cognitive behavioral therapy without aspects of music therapy. In a study involving a sample of general subject elementary educators, two approaches were employed and studied for their resulting effects on stress and burnout: prescribed cognitive behavioral therapy without music therapy techniques, and the same cognitive behavioral therapy with basic exercises drawn from music therapy (Bradley et al., 2003). Results indicated a significant difference in two of three categories measured as factors in teacher burnout: depersonalization, personal accomplishment, but not emotional exhaustion; participants who engaged in music therapy were able “to better express their feelings and to establish a relationship with other professionals through social bonding, increased coping skills, and the opportunity to express negative emotions through non-verbal behaviors or responses” (Bradley et al., 2003, p. 211).

Preventing Burnout

The literature and documentation on approaches to preventing burnout, both for music and non-music educators, ranges from highly specific activities and experiences to general attitudes and mindsets to adopt, all of which have been documented to have positive effects in reducing the experience of teacher burnout (Allsup, 2005; Bradley et al., 2003; Cox & Stern, 1993). Common themes occur; most approaches involve some form of reflection and introspective mental exercise. Other approaches focus on involvement in hobbies, activities, and interests outside of music or the classroom, while some suggest exploring different avenues towards professional development in the form of conferences, seminars, or forums (Hylton, 1989; Kramer, 2012; Powers, 2012).

Music educators specifically are seen to experience burnout at greater degrees relative to their peers in different academic subjects. This is often attributed to the nature of music as an art; music teachers tend to have a personal investment in the performances they lead as they can be taken as direct reflections of their artistic vision, even in the high school stage (Allsup, 2005). This may lead any mistakes, errors, or failures to be taken personally as a reflection of the music educator as a musician. Personal overinvestment in these performances often comes from misaligned teacher expectations, standards, and assumptions between what they believe to be the ideal ensemble scenario and what reality is for their specific classrooms (Allsup, 2005). The fact that performances usually occur in low frequency over the school year contributes to the over importance placed on them; these events rarely reflect the amount of work dedicated by the students and the teacher over the course of the unit, and when they do not go as planned, teachers and students both feel unsatisfied, jaded, and disappointed personally. Allsup focuses on self-

reflection on one's strengths and weaknesses in his/her individual practice as teachers, and creativity in lesson and rehearsal design as two perspectives to help prevent burnout as it occurs specifically in music educators (2005).

The job responsibilities attached to being a high school music educator often involve a plethora of roles not originally associated with being a musician and being a teacher; music educators specifically have to be effective at fundraising, creating and managing booster programs to support the music program, and managing and budgeting funds between expenses like instruments, repertoire, and coaches. Only in between taking these various roles does the music educator get the chance to do what he/she has been trained to do and teach music at the high school level; these roles, as different as they may be from the position itself, are necessary for any music program to thrive (Gordon, 2002; Hughes, 1992). Each role brings with it stressors and pressures, ultimately culminating to an exponentially greater amount of stress and burnout that music educators uniquely encounter, compared to their peers in non-music disciplines (Figueras, 2016; Hylton, 1989). Effective and procedural time management skills are extremely important in managing the many responsibilities associated with the position; this entails balancing personal, professional, financial, social, spiritual goals, planning early and building time for professional, social, and personal goals, setting priorities for what is important and delegating to others when possible, as well as general priorities like exercising often, observing healthy dietary habits, building time for rest and relaxation, and exercising the mind through intellectual stimulation (Hylton, 1989; Kramer, 2012; Powers, 2012). Other important mindsets and skills include delineating when and where to invest energy and effort in our teaching and when to release control, what kind of

situations to expend and conserve energy, how to recognize when it is acceptable to give up control of a situation, and how to say no to the litany of requests that bombard a music educator (Cox & Stern, 1993; Kramer, 2012; Powers, 2012).

Other general practices common to music and non-music educators alike provided include: being prepared and well-organized, constantly self-evaluating personal performance, having long and short-term goals in one's professional life, maintaining a positive self-image, not over-extending and taking on more work than possible, having a genuine passion for the profession and for art (Allsup, 2005; Bernhard, 2005; Cox & Stern, 1993; Freeman, 2016; Gordon, 2002).

Burnout on Female Music Educators

Even less explored than burnout in music educators is the difference in burnout as it affects male and female music educators. Many studies utilize a healthy mix of female and male participants to reach similar results and conclusions: burnout in music educators tends to occur in greater severity for music educators than their peers in non-musical content areas (Figueras, 2016; Hodge et al., 1994; Kertz-Welzel, 2009). However, whether due to scale, impracticality or lack of space to analyze specific ways burnout affects individual educators, less literature exists on the way burnout affects not only music educators versus other academic educators, but female music educators versus male educators as well.

The literature that exists documents important differences in the way female music educators experience their occupations relative to their peers, including ways in which stress contributes to burnout, the nature of the stressors themselves, and the resulting kinds of stress felt by the female educators themselves (Figueras, 2016; Kertz-

Welzel, 2009). Female educators in general operate at school differently than men, largely due to the fact that the school environment is generally male-dominated, output-oriented, and focused on achievement (Kertz-Welzel, 2009). Kertz-Welzel explains that though schools may not always physically employ more male teachers than female teachers, the structure of the school environment, curriculum, and general pedagogical approach is often “male-oriented”, meaning that it may rely less on attributes conventionally delineated to the female brain such as creativity, intuition, and emotional exploration and more on traditionally “male” attributes such as methodology, achieving results and structured approaches with patterned, logical rules (Sousa, 2017). This may result in symptoms of burnout in female music educators that male educators may not experience, such as feelings of guilt and over-demand due to conflicting professional and private roles of being a good wife and good teacher at the same time (Kertz-Welzel, 2009). These symptoms can lead to self-destruction and emotional isolation. Because the school environment is generally male-oriented, women are found to often be treated as juveniles, powerless, and inexperienced, which can further lead to feelings of exclusion and further physical/emotional isolation (Kertz-Welzel, 2009).

Modern-day school environments and curriculums often focus on achievement and producing state-mandated results and ratings. There are a plethora of quotas and targets to be reached, and a large portion of that responsibility lies on the teacher (Kertz-Welzel, 2009, Shaw 2016) although the actual achievement of these quotas and targets often involves various factors that may or may not be in the teacher’s direct sphere of influence. The general approach by female educators, as explained by Kertz-Welzel, incorporates a greater use of open and creative teaching, reliance on intuition, and

emotional development in teaching styles, all of which is seen to be partially in line with research regarding sex differences in brain anatomy (Galvan, 2013; Sousa, 2017). This contrast in teaching approach, focus, and direction is in itself a stressor contributing to teacher burnout for female educators, in a way that some male educators may not experience or be entirely aware of.

A large portion of these conclusions rely on the tenet that sexual differences exist between the male and female brain, which can result in different neurological preferences and behaviors (Sousa, 2017); in other words, due to the differences in neurological configuration between male and female brains, male and female educators may react to stressors in their environment in different ways and thereby experience different feelings and sensations in response to stressors.

Interestingly, common approaches to combating stressors and burnout itself such as self-reflection, conscious thought regarding personal and professional growth, and being a reflective practitioner in general are tied to the ways female educators approach their pedagogy and overall teaching perspectives (Kertz-Welzel, 2009). These mindsets constitute and inform a commonly shared philosophy of music education shared among many practitioners and researchers that is often cited as being some of the most effective ways for all educators to detect symptoms of burnout, combat burnout, and avoid burnout in the future. Kertz-Welzel connects these techniques and the philosophy as a whole to the conventional way female (music) educators generally approach their craft, and sources like Sousa (2017) and Galvan (2013) corroborate this claim as a whole.

Causes of Satisfaction on the Job

Burnout can take the enjoyment out of teaching, but what really makes a teacher's job rewarding to begin with? The students are often a cause of stress but can also be a large cause of job satisfaction (Heston, Dedrick, Raschke, & Whitehead, 1996, p. 319). According to a survey conducted among high school band directors, strong interpersonal relationships in the workplace can cause positive changes in job satisfaction (Heston et al., 1996). A 2016 study on 206 teachers showed that across the board teachers that have strong linear relationships with other teachers and administration showed higher job satisfaction and higher job performance than teachers without strong linear relationships in the workplace (Uzun & Ozden, 2017, p. 84).

Within a workplace, it is important for beginning music teachers to have a mentor to make sure they are establishing healthy and productive teaching habits (Krueger, 2000). Krueger's study from 2000 stated that teachers felt more satisfaction on the job when sufficiently supported by mentors in and out of the classroom. Dale DeCesare implemented a program for retired teachers to mentor new teachers and recorded assorted data from testing and other assessments to determine if there was benefit for new teachers to have mentors. This study not only showed that teachers were engaged in their lessons, but also showed an improvement in math scores for students who learned from a teacher that had a teacher mentor (DeCesare, 2017, p. 6).

Heston (1996) also attributed parental support and administrative support (Krueger, 2000) to job satisfaction, reinforcing the notion that a well-supported teacher will enjoy teaching. Higher-level administration that controls budget and salaries also affects teacher satisfaction. Teachers in areas and districts with low salaries showed

signs of dissatisfaction contrasting with the teachers in high paying districts being more satisfied with their jobs (Roch & Sai, 2016, p. 990). Teachers that do not feel supported by their administration tend to leave the district or even the profession (McDaniel-Hall, 2012, p. 2). On the other hand, according to McDaniel-Hall, when teachers felt supported the retention rate of teachers improved (2012).

Reasons for Teacher Attrition and Quitting

Culture has been shown to influence a music teacher's decision to remain in the profession (Krueger, 2000). Krueger (2000) stated that most Indiana music teachers enjoyed teaching music and felt that it had worth in schools, but still doubted their career choice because socially it was looked down upon to teach music. A teacher that does not believe in what they teach will not last in the profession. However, Krueger (2002) pointed out this social epidemic went beyond that to the point of forcing confident music teachers to doubt their own worth.

If a music teacher could conquer the whispers of the community, and their own self-doubt, they still faced poor working conditions that would wear out a worker of any profession (Scheib, 2004, p. 54). Unsupportive administration can drain a teacher of any subject of his or her enthusiasm for teaching (Friedman, 1991, p. 326).

Teachers do what they do for the benefit of students. Students' willingness to participate or a students' lack of enthusiasm can be grand stressors for teachers (Heston, 1996). Teachers devote countless hours for the sake of their students, so when students stop trying, or refuse to participate, it can direct teachers toward burnout.

Another reason that teachers end up leaving the profession is resentment due to prioritizing their job before their family. Stone (2018) explained, in his lecture at the

Southern California Schools Band & Orchestra Association (SCSBOA) conference, that teaching needs to be important but it cannot be more important than spending meaningful time with one's family. "Family cannot come second to teaching" (Stone, 2018). Stone elaborated that spending time with family rejuvenates a busy mind and is a positive gesture toward your family. If your family life is not healthy, then your work life cannot flourish.

Burnout in Music Education Majors and How it Carried Over into Teaching

Time spent in college can provide a deeper knowledge of a subject and reinforce passions related to one's content. Time in college also prepares students for proper organization and instills professional techniques that students carry with them for their whole career. All habits can be transferred from college to career, not just positive examples (Kitzrow, 2003, p. 165). Evidence has been found that there has been an increase in the number of college students with severe psychological problems that demand use of school counseling services (Kitzrow, 2003). College stressors are linked to trouble sleeping and other sleeping disorders (Buboltz, Brown, & Soper, 2001, p. 131).

The *Journal of Music Teacher Education* published an article about mental health of music teachers in relation to college life (Bernhard, 2005, p. 43). Bernhard (2005) displayed evidence that many college music students faced anxiety, stress, depression, substance abuse, relationship management, and career issues. Students studying music education had the normal load of classes and typical college life but added on top observing current music teachers and playing in required ensembles at the university (Kitzrow, 2003, p. 165). Coming from a background with these stressors and starting a

job at a school with poor working conditions and a lack of support, new music teachers are susceptible to teacher burnout (Scheib, 2004, p. 53).

Teacher Burnout Due to Classroom Management

Schools have started to see an increase in having larger class sizes (Harfitt, 2014, p. 331). With class sizes reaching thirty students per one teacher, odds are not in the favor of teachers. Harfitt states in his 2014 study, that teachers need to be engaging to have a successful classroom environment, and must recognize class size, altering their teaching accordingly. Consider the high school music classroom. Music classes, due to their ensemble structure, can have varying class sizes often enrolling between thirty to one hundred students (Hughes, 1992, p. 5). Losing control of a classroom is a dominant stressor for teachers that experience that situation (Gordon, 2002, p. 157). Classroom management does not come naturally to many teachers and it is a concept that must be practiced and improved upon. Little information and practice is given to beginner teachers and college students on how to manage a music classroom. General teacher education programs touch on classroom management but not many music education programs prepare teachers to handle their classrooms or the stress that comes along with it (Gordon, 2002, p. 157).

Teacher Burnout Due to Score-Based School Curriculum

Teachers working in a healthy teaching environment and good school climate still have stressors at the workplace, but take away the safe teaching environment and school climate and teachers stressors begin to lead to burnout. The “era of accountability,” and the push for higher test scores school-wide, have caused conflict across schools regarding the importance of non-academic, or specialty, classes (Shaw, 2016).

Beyond school-wide stressors of score-based curriculum, there is the music world equivalent with performance-driven festivals (Shaw, 2016). Festivals provide students a chance to grow, perform, be adjudicated and process advice from a professional in the subject. All of these qualities are great reasons to take groups to festivals, but working for a school or program that demands high scores at festivals to the point of ignoring student needs can be difficult and stressful (Shaw, 2016). Michael Stone, panel facilitator for SCSBOA, stated in his 2018 conference presentation that if you value the performance and product, but the teaching and interaction with the students is not your main focus, then you will burn out.

Chapter 3

Methods

Setting

The setting for this research project was general in that it was not confined to a specific classroom, school, or district; participants involved were drawn from multiple Orange County, California districts in different high school performing arts programs. The scope of the research was larger than a specific classroom and sought to study high school music educators (and their programs) across all of Orange County. No student performance data was directly measured, as the participants were all music educators themselves.

As of 2016, per the U.S. Census, Orange County had a population of approximately three million one hundred thousand people. As stated by Education Data Partnership, Orange County had approximately two hundred and ninety-six thousand teachers employed throughout the county (2016). Of these teachers, 65% were white, with the next largest demographic being 19% Hispanic. This county has been working toward a class size limit of 24 students per class and though they have not reached that ratio yet they are scheduled to meet that by the year 2021 (Ed-Data, 2016).

Participants

We chose choral and instrumental teachers currently teaching at high schools in Orange County. Participants were selected through convenience selection, keeping the results specific to our local county. Although many music educators across differing age ranges experience burnout in different ways, we wanted to focus on secondary education in that it was most relevant to us as music educators ourselves. Many stressors and

conditions are shared across age ranges, but there are particular aspects of the high school classroom that do not often transfer to younger or older students. Age range varied depending on the age range of Orange County music educators. Achievement data was gathered as part of the intervention and interview process, gathering the degree to which the technique of purposeful exercise helped to lower stress and feelings of burnout in interviewed participants.

Roles of the Researchers

For this action research project, we had two roles fulfilled: a principal investigator and a data analyst. Both roles were heavily involved in researching, implementing surveys and the intervention, as well as interviewing participants. The principal investigator's role was to lead the organization of the different portions of the action research project, submit key forms and assignments for timely response, and to serve as the main line of communication with the action research project mentor and graduate professor. The data analyst's role was to lead the review of relevant literature and research regarding the topic and analyze the results of the data received from surveys, interventions, and interviews. Both roles were collaborative, and responsibilities were shared evenly.

Intervention Plan

First, we sent out a survey followed up by a descriptive email about the study (Appendix A). The survey listed several researched causes of teacher burnout for music teachers and requested that teachers check the boxes of each cause that applies to them; researched causes came from reoccurring themes from the review of literature, such as large class size, classroom management issues, lack of student enthusiasm, poor

organization, lack of proper amount of sleep, lack of community support, unsupportive administration, and lack of interpersonal relationships in the workplace (Allsup, 2005; Cox & Stern, 1993; Freeman, 2016; Friedman, 1991; Hamann, 1990; Hodge, Jupp, & Taylor, 1994; Hylton, 1989; Powers, 2012; Scheib, 2004; Vitale, 2012). Then we chose four participants to try out researched techniques to prevent burnout, with an interview for these participants after three weeks for them to use these techniques; researched techniques to combat burnout used included regular physical exercise and journal writing. Intervention Participants were sent a description of what was being asked of them and the general timeline of this intervention (Appendix B). During the interview, participants discussed the effectiveness of the technique they used to combat stressors and potential burnout, along with any other considerations as to the way these techniques affected their teaching, classroom, personal lives, or outlook on teaching as a career (Appendix C).

Data Collection Methods

The survey listed several researched causes and symptoms of teacher burnout for music teachers and requested that teachers check the boxes of each cause that applied to them (Appendix A). We implemented the intervention to the four participants and before interviewing them, had them fill out the survey again after they had been trying prevention techniques for three weeks. The interview was a semi-structured interview process to find the most out of how the intervention helped each individual participant, while also allowing participants to contribute their experiences and opinions regarding the entire process itself (Appendix C). A survey was used as it was the most direct way for survey takers to explicitly check off which stressors were causing or contributing to

feelings of burnout, therefore directly answering our first research question asking what stressors were causing or contributing to feelings of burnout.

Interview participants took the same survey with the same burnout causes listed. Participants chosen for interview each tried the same researched burnout prevention methods maintaining strong internal validity; extraneous variables were best controlled by ensuring each interviewed participant tried the same prevention method. Information received from participants was documented in the participants' own language. A peer debriefer was consulted in addition to the two main researchers to verify validity. Descriptive statistics were documented to locate patterns in music teacher burnout and prevention strategy success. Reflective journals were also used to answer research questions. Because the nature of many techniques to combat burnout and stress were introspective, we thought that using introspective ways to gather data, such as interviews and reflective journals, was appropriate to gathering data effectively and efficiently. By using an interview, we believed it would lead to the most direct way of answering our research question regarding what ways music educators combat feelings of burnout as they experience them; by asking them directly in interview format, we were able to hear their responses first hand with great detail. Additionally, through the interview format, we hoped to obtain detail towards answering our last research question regarding the extent of which music educators were already using prescribed techniques to combat burnout, as shown by the research; through the interviews, we learned whether or not music educators were aware of these techniques and how much they were already employing them in their everyday lives.

Ethical Research Practices

There were minimum perceived risks for human participants in this study. Some potential risks were emotional distress from realization of being burnt out or embarrassment from answering questions from the checklist or interview that may reveal malpractice. Based on intervention practices, some risks may have been potential physical harm from performing physical exercise or mental and/or health-related harm from a change of diet. Because the checklist portion was administered online, there may have been a potential risk of loss of confidentiality if it was somehow tracked online back to the original IP address of the participant.

In order to minimize these risks, careful wording of survey and interview questions and remarks were made in order to not insinuate inaccurate or exaggerated conclusions from these prompted questions. This minimized emotional distress or embarrassment. In order to minimize physical harm or mental/health-related harm from encouraged physical exercise and diet regulation, careful research as to the most effective and safe forms of physical exercise and diet change was made to offer participants safe but effective forms of physical exercise and diet change to implement as part of the intervention.

Anticipated benefits of the study for participants included a reduction of stress levels as they relate to burnout, and potentially reducing or eliminating feelings of burnout altogether. The study hoped to educate participants on burnout in general, in the way it can be detected, combatted, and avoided in the future. Indirect benefits included an overall increase in general physical and mental health as a result of potential reduction of stress and/or burnout, and an improved classroom experience for both the teacher and the

students as a result of a potentially less burnt out teacher. Lastly, an anticipated benefit of the study for the field of education was greater education and research into the way burnout affects and applies to music educators in the Orange County area.

Plan for Increasing Validity

As stated above, we consulted a peer debriefer to increase validity of our study. The peer debriefer was a colleague not directly involved in the study, who discussed our preliminary analysis and strategies for further research. Our peer debriefer facilitated the logical analysis of data and interpretation as well. Through thorough collaboration with the peer debriefer, we were able to ensure that the data collection process used was appropriate and effective in gathering the necessary data to answer our research question.

Using multi-method strategies also allowed us to increase validity. This allowed us to triangulate in data collection and data analysis. We used reflective journals, surveys, intervention, and interviews as our varied methods and strategies to gather data to be triangulated for patterns and themes.

Providing thick description of the setting and study, including the recording of accurate, almost literal, and detailed descriptions of people and situations was employed as well. We included important terms that were used and understood by the participants for validity as well. This took form largely in the interview portion, in which detailed and extensive note taking was used to ensure appropriate detail was achieved.

By collaborating with multiple researchers, using member checks, and obtaining literal statements of participants and quotations from interviews and documents, we were able to provide a plethora of strategies to increase validity of the research. Careful notetaking and management of this descriptive data was ensured through meticulous note

taking and efficient organization and communication between researchers in order to provide the greatest degree of validity of data collected as possible.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Because surveys occurred digitally, and interviews occurred off-campus, no signed site authorization was necessary. However, because all participants are adults, adult consent was obtained.

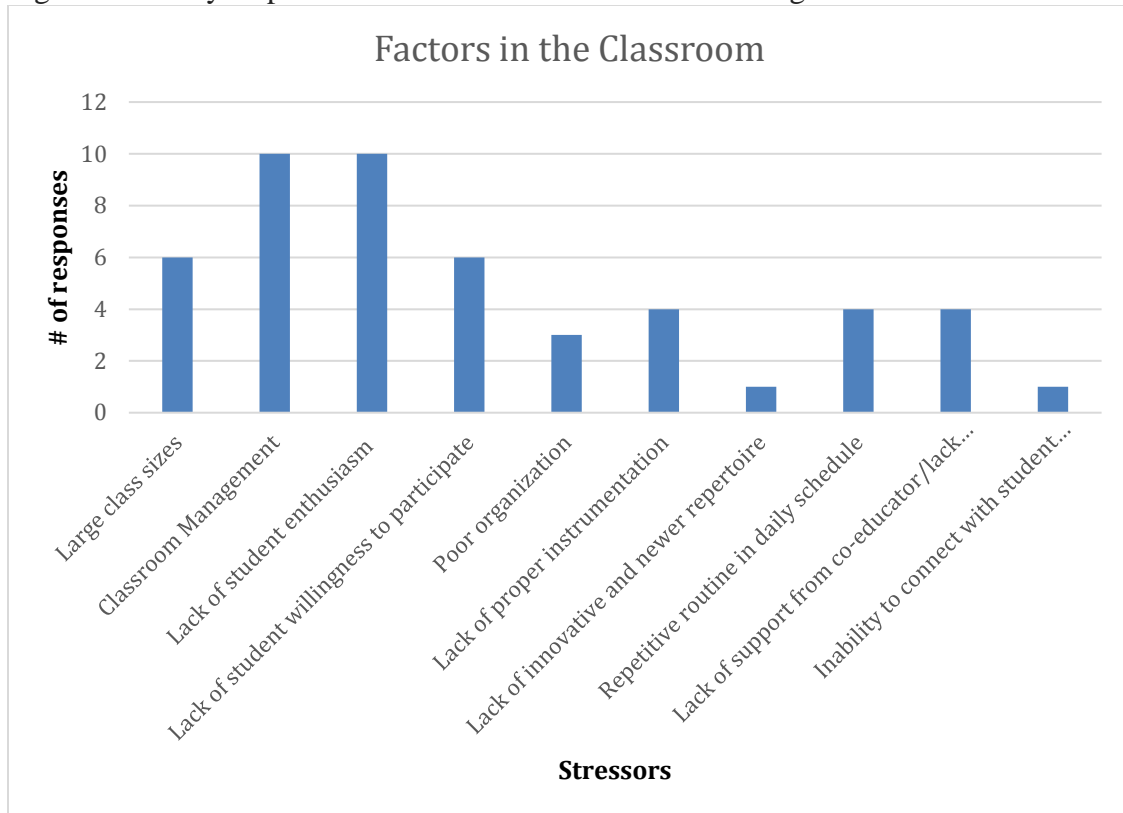
To achieve confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms when discussed in writing. Additionally, results were also discussed in groups rather than as individual data sets. Lastly, to assure confidentiality for all participants, the destroying of all data was scheduled for three years from the end of the study in May 2021.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

Findings indicated that the most frequent stressors causing teacher burnout involved interactions with students either in classroom management, or a lack of student enthusiasm. Survey results indicated that 62.5% of survey responses attribute classroom management and a lack of student enthusiasm as the top factors in the classroom that cause stress and potential feelings of teacher burnout in Orange County (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Survey responses to factors in the classroom causing stress.

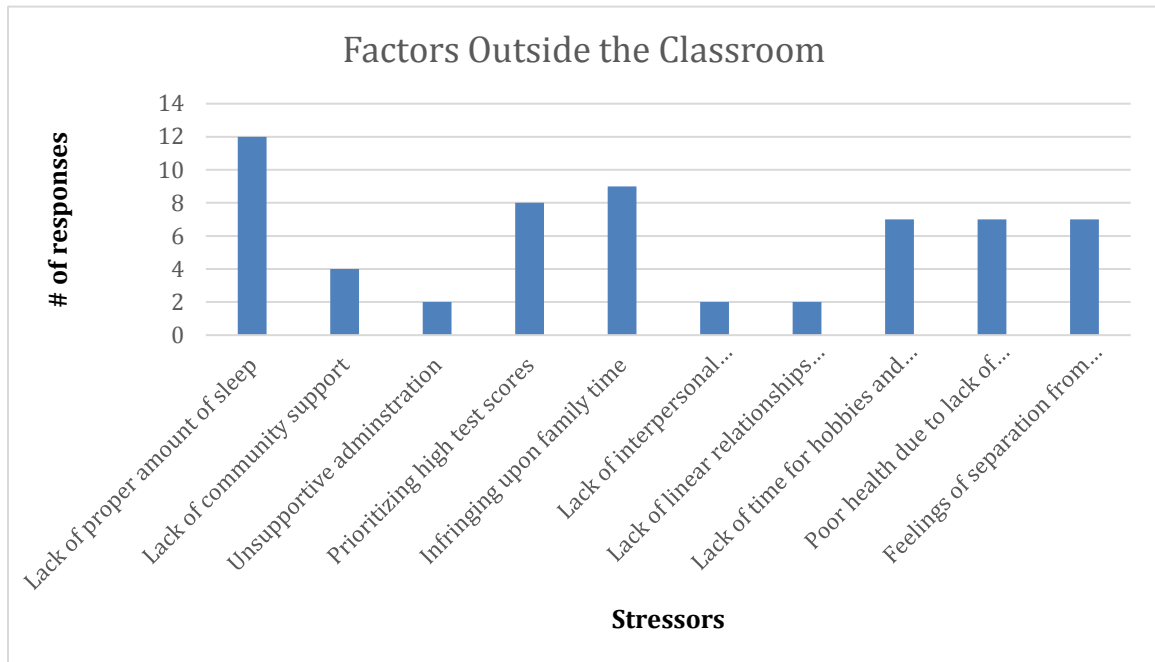


Data from intervention participants also supported these results; all participants interviewed offered the sentiment that their students were apathetic and had little to no interest and enthusiasm and attributed this as a main stressor that had gotten worse over the course of the three-week intervention. Generally, all participants stated that not only

did stressors remain the same, more were added compared to the beginning of the intervention. This was attributed to the fact that the classroom was in a much different part of the academic year than when the intervention ended. Added events and responsibilities on both students, such as Advanced Placement testing, and teachers, such as school trips and after-school rehearsals, had caused stress levels to increase for teachers, and potentially for students as well. Other top contributors to stress directly from the classroom included large class sizes and a lack of student willingness to participate.

Factors outside the classroom that were top contributors to stress and feelings of burnout included lack of proper amount of sleep, infringing upon family time, and the prioritization of high test scores by school curricula and education programs (Figure 2). Lack of time for hobbies and other interests, poor health due to lack of exercise and a proper diet, and feelings of separation from the rest of the school site all were major factors cited as contributing to stress and feelings of burnout.

Figure 2. Survey responses to factors outside the classroom.

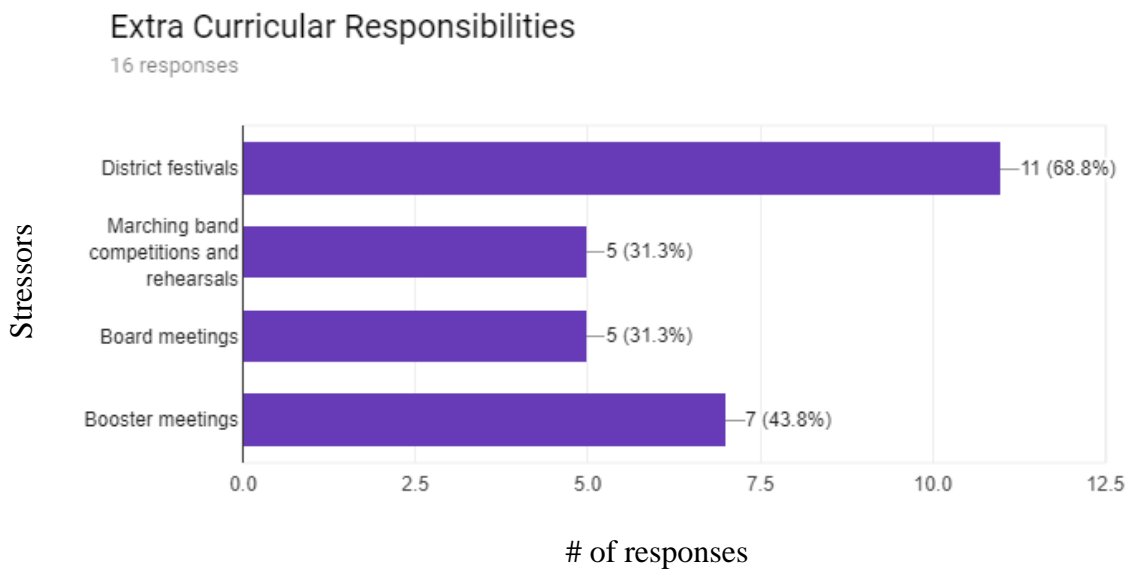


The intervention process was designed specifically to address factors pertaining to exercise and physical health. Factors like sleep and stress itself were indirectly and by association involved in the focus on physical exercise. Intervention participants all reported a positive increase in both physical and psychological wellbeing; participants testified having more energy in class after instances of purposeful exercises along with better sleep as well. Continuing a scheduled exercise plan also was reported to creating feelings of accomplishment and productivity, both of which contributed to a lowering of stress levels. Along the same lines as the survey's results, intervention participants spoke regarding the infringement of the job's responsibilities on family time as a major stressor.

Extra-curricular responsibilities contributing to stress took shape in district festivals and booster meetings. Marching band competitions and rehearsals as well as board meetings were also reported on the survey as contributors of stress but not to the extent of the other responsibilities noted (Figure 3). One survey response and some

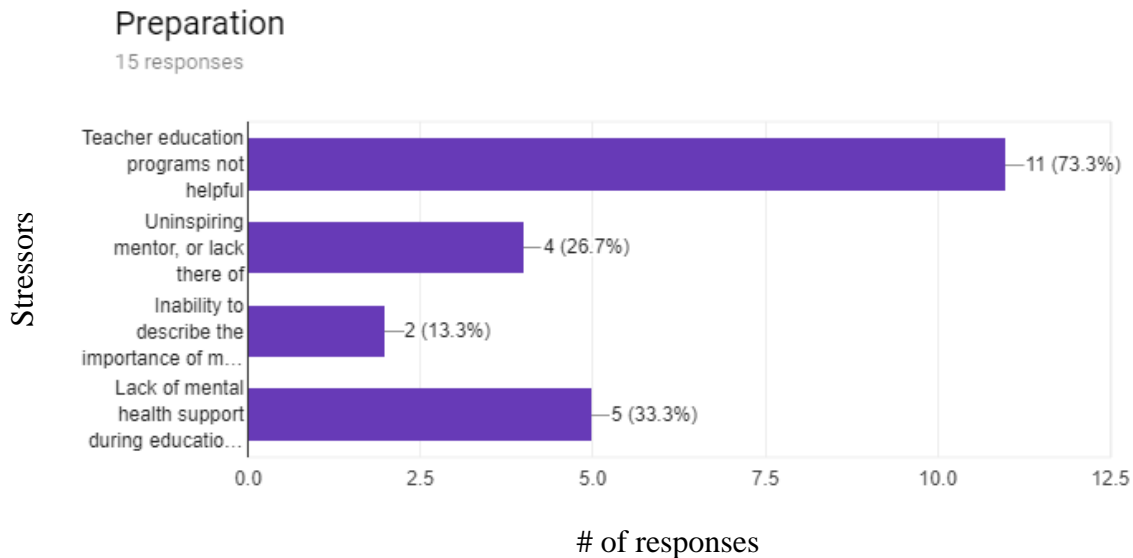
intervention participants spoke regarding district festivals specifically, stating that reduction of commitment to multiple district festivals as well as eliminating travel to different festivals by flying in judges to their schools was a prescribed way to lower unnecessary extra-curricular workload, and therefore help with lowering stress levels and combat teacher burnout:

Figure 3. Survey responses for extra curricular responsibilities.



Lastly, factors involved in teacher preparation programs were also significant stressors contributing indirectly to teacher burnout in Orange County music educators. Survey results indicated that 73.3% of responses stated that their teacher education programs were not helpful (Figure 4). Lack of mental health support during education programs was also a contributing stressor.

Figure 4. Survey responses for preparation.



Intervention Participant 4 (IP4) reported specifically a lack of services offered and techniques taught during preparation programs to help with stress; in IP4's experience, their preparation program had no specific mention or coverage of feelings of burnout that may develop during the job. A majority of all interview participants reported feelings of being underprepared by teacher credential programs, and not expecting the job to entail heavy administrative and logistic responsibilities, which was in line with general conclusions drawn from the survey.

Survey results along with intervention interviews both yielded data in line with the literature reviewed: student attitudes and classroom management were high factors contributing to stress and burnout for high school music educators (Cox & Stern, 1993; Heston, 1996). One survey response reported the development of an ulcer presumably from stress in the job, which corroborated with the observation that feelings of high stress can manifest in irregular or prolonged physical ailment (Cox & Stern, 1993; Bradley et al., 2003; Hamann, 1990). Strategies for combating and preventing burnout shared by

intervention participants were in line with strategies reviewed in the literature; both intervention participants and the literature emphasized heavily the importance of separating work with personal life, taking on less work, and developing organizational and management skills (Allsup, 2005; Cox & Stern, 1993; Hylton, 1989; Kramer, 2012; Powers, 2012; Scheib, 2004). Based on survey results, intervention participant responses, and the literature, unsatisfactory preparation programs and a lack of resources for management of mental health during these preparation programs both were large contributors to feelings unpreparedness, therefore leading to inherent stress with the position even before taking it on (Bernhard, 2005; Buboltz, Brown, & Soper, 2001; Kitzrow, 2003). Lastly, both the literature and intervention participants made a great emphasis on the overburdening administrative and logistic responsibilities that accompany the position, stating that without good time management skills and organizational preparedness, stress and feelings of burnout increase exponentially (Bernhard, 2005; Figueras, 2016; Gordon, 2002; Hylton, 1989).

Compared to the conventional approaches to combating teacher burnout as found in the literature review, it was found that educators only employed a few of the many different kinds of techniques documented. Intervention participants listed techniques such as compartmentalization, exercise, and organization as key ways to help with feelings of stress and burnout, but did not mention practices such as peer collaboration with other music educators, revisiting personal and professional goals, innovative teaching practices, or seeking professional development in the form of conferences, seminars, and forums (Allsup, 2005; Hylton, 1989; Powers, 2012; Scheib, 2004).

Conclusions

The chosen intervention technique of purposeful exercise along with a descriptive journal yielded hopeful results in the form of increased energy and better sleep on a small scale. Overall the intervention participants did not feel a major change in any of those fields however they did undoubtedly notice improvements in specific instances when actually implementing the intervention. The intervention was on the right track, but with only three weeks of implementation, there was not enough time to get lasting results that affected the stressors educators were feeling personally. Each intervention participant mentioned in the interview that this would be a viable long term burnout prevention strategy for music educators at the high school level.

Through the survey and the intervention we were able to get clear answers for our three main research questions that guided our study. In regards to articulating the stressors or categories of stressors that were causing stress and potentially teacher burnout in music educators in Orange County, we were able to narrow it down to four categories found in literature that were echoed by current Orange County music educators. The four categories were factors inside the classroom, factors outside the classroom, extra-curricular responsibilities and preparation. Our survey indicated that for factors in the classroom, Orange County music educators specifically related to classroom management stress and stress due to lack of student enthusiasm. Outside of the classroom the majority of our teachers reported a lack of proper amount of sleep and work infringing upon family time. For extracurricular responsibilities, these teachers claimed that district festivals caused the most stress over other administrative responsibilities. Surprisingly, in regards to preparation, a strong majority of Orange

County music educators felt that teacher education programs, mainly credential programs, were not helpful and did not adequately prepare them for the stress there jobs would entail.

Our second research question, regarding what ways high school music teachers in Orange County combat teacher burnout as they experience it, was answered through our intervention participant interviews. We were surprised to see that teachers did not previously consider exercise as a way to combat burnout. A few of the interviewees mentioned that having such a busy schedule was previously a big obstacle to using exercise to combat burnout. All intervention participants had a procedure for organization and staying on top of their work to combat burnout. Intervention participant 2(IP2) mentioned that he would go home after work and spend ten to fifteen minutes alone to relax after the work day and to recharge to have the most energy for his family. IP2 claimed to have been implementing this strategy for several years and it is the most helpful advice he gives to any and all other educators. Intervention participant 3(IP3) echoed the same sentiments and added that he would read books for enjoyment as a form of burnout prevention or remedy. Intervention participant 4(IP4) did a similar prevention strategy of organization and quiet time but took it a step further to add that the balance is different for each educator and only the educator themselves would know what the right balance is for them personally.

Our final research question asked to what extent do high school music teachers in Orange County use the documented, conventional approaches to combating teacher burnout. The strategies previously mentioned were backed up by literature we read on this subject. IP2's advice about having quiet time along with IP4's strategy of balance

mirrored ideas of finding serenity and balance in a teacher's schedule in a few of the articles we read (Allsup, 2005; Cox & Stern, 1993; Kramer, 2012).

Recommendations for Further Research

In order to give an even more viable answer to our specific study, both researchers recommend elongating the duration of the intervention of purposeful exercise to at least eight weeks perhaps a whole semester in addition to adding more participants. Exercise gave more energy, caused better sleep and seemed to have the ability to relieve stress but really needs to be studied for longer than a three week intervention. It is also recommended that the study be done at different times throughout the year. Each of our intervention participants mentioned stressors that were specific to the time of year that the intervention took place. Spring studies run into the added stress of tours, spring concerts, AP tests, and spring musicals. Fall and winter offer stressors of their own such as marching band practice and competitions as well as Christmas or winter program preparation. We recommend researching if different times of the year require different burnout prevention techniques to combat the specific seasonal stressors.

Aside from exercise, journaling, and stress reducing quiet time, some participants brought up the topic of directors performing outside the school day on top of their educational duties. Some directors feel they benefit from singing or playing an instrument in a professional level ensemble that matches their own personal musical ability. Other directors claim that don't want to touch their instrument anymore since all they do all week encompasses music. We recommend extensive study on this topic to see if performing with a high level ensemble is a viable burnout prevention strategy and if it combats apathy that could come from burnout. On the other hand, we recommend a

contrasting research topic could be finding out to what extent do music educators relieve stress when putting aside performing and not participating musically in ensembles outside of teaching.

Furthermore we recommend extending this study to teachers of different subjects. Do similar stressors relate to teachers of different subjects? Would exercise perhaps be even more viable to teachers working with subjects that don't require work outside the school day? We recommend similar research to be done on what stressors affect teachers of specific subjects in Orange County before testing the same burnout prevention techniques. We recognize science teachers won't have weekly marching band competitions but we know they also have extra work setting up and preparing labs as well as the occasional science Olympics which may compare to some music related functions and festivals. The whole point of learning about ways to combat burnout is to be able to teach at our best for the longest period of time for the benefit of our students. We recommend more research to be done on this topic in any and all other subjects.

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Appendix A

Causes of Burnout for High School Music Teachers

Below is a list of common stressors and causes of burnout as stated by researchers on the subject. (See sources). Please check all the stressors or causes of burnout that you feel pertain to you personally as a current educator of high school music.

Factors in the Classroom:(Directly regarding teaching)

- Large Class Sizes
- Classroom Management
- Lack of student enthusiasm
- Lack of student willingness to participate
- Poor organization
- Lack of proper instrumentation
- Lack of innovative and newer repertoire
- Repetitive routine in daily schedule
- Lack of support from co-educator/lack of co-educator
- Inability to connect with student population

Factors Outside the Classroom:

- Lack of proper amount of sleep
- Lack of community support
- Unsupportive administration
- Prioritizing high test scores
- Infringing upon family time
- Lack of interpersonal relationships in the workplace
- Lack of linear relationships with teachers and admin
- Lack of time for hobbies and other interests
- Poor health due to lack of exercise/diet
- Feelings of separation from the rest of the school site as a music educator

Extra Curricular Responsibilities:

- District Festivals
- Marching band competitions and rehearsals
- Board meetings
- Booster meetings

Preparation:

- Teacher Education Programs not helpful
- Uninspiring, or lack of a, mentor
- Inability to describe the importance of music education
- Lack of mental health support during education programs

By filling out this survey and signing below, you consent to the use of this data for our research purposes of better understanding the kinds of factors contributing to teacher burnout in music educators in the Orange County area. Your responses and all data will remain confidential through use of pseudonym, presenting data in groupings, and safe keeping of all data in password-protected accounts to be destroyed in 3 years.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Intervention Information and Request

“Burnout Prevention in High School Music Educators”

By Ben Hunter and Puo (Roger) Wu Fu

As part of an action research project we are conducting on the topic of music teacher burnout, we are looking for candidates for an applied intervention of some strategies documented in research literature to combat feelings of burnout. Our target demographic is Orange County high school music educators, and we would be grateful to have you as our intervention candidates. If you are able and willing to participate in our study, you would be tasked with the following daily tasks for data collection:

The participant will:

- Aim to exercise five times a week for three consecutive weeks.
- Weekly document the type and duration of exercise while keeping a journal of the process.
- Take this Survey before and after the three week intervention:
<https://goo.gl/forms/CZODV0Kw8yReftrB3>
- Meet with Ben Hunter or Roger Wu Fu at the end of the 3 weeks for a semi-structured interview.

Merriam-Webster defines exercise as “bodily exertion for the sake of developing and maintaining physical fitness” (2018).

For the sake of this study, you may choose any type of purposeful exercise. (i.e. more than walking from the parking lot to your classroom, but a purposeful walk around the neighborhood would definitely count.) We ask that you document in your journal what type of exercising you are doing, the date you did the exercise, and the duration of the exercise. Feel free to make any notes on the process along the way in regards to feelings of added or relieved stress.

**Please remember exercise is not without its risks, and may result in injury. Risks include but are not limited to: risk of injury, aggravation of a pre-existing condition, or adverse effect of over-exertion such as muscle strain, abnormal blood pressure, fainting, and very rare instances of heart attack. This study trusts that you know your own body and will pick exercises that match your fitness level and comfortability.*

By partaking in this intervention and signing below, you consent to the use of this data for our research purposes. Your responses and all data will remain confidential through use of pseudonym, presenting data in groupings, and safe keeping of all data in password-protected accounts to be destroyed in 3 years.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Intervention Participant Interview Outline

After the participant has implemented the burnout prevention strategy for three weeks, the participant will fill out the original survey checklist a second time with pen and paper to monitor any changes in stressors or opinions related to causes of burnout. The participant will then meet for a semi-structured interview that will follow the provided outline of questions but offer room for elaboration for a deeper understanding of the results.

1. Consider the survey you filled out prior to the three week intervention and again post-intervention.
 - a. Do you find that the same stressors cause you stress now?
2. Were you able to consistently partake in the intervention process?
 - a. How many days a week?
 - b. Duration per event?
3. What obstacles, if any, prevented you from fulfilling the intervention?
4. Had you participated in similar burnout prevent techniques prior to this study?
 - a. Please describe.
5. How did the intervention affect your sleep pattern?
6. Self-assess and reflect on your teaching in the classroom this last week.
 - a. Did you see a positive change to the social environment in your classroom?
 - b. Did you have more energy throughout your teaching day?
 - c. Were you inspired to try new teaching strategies?
7. Do you feel the intervention yielded positive results for you personally?
 - a. How so?
 - b. If not, how could it have been altered to help you personally?

8. Do you feel this would be a viable long term burnout prevention plan?
9. What other strategies have you tried using to prevent burnout as a music educator?
 - a. Do you recommend these to other Orange County music teachers?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix D

Weekly Journals

Week 1 (3/4-3/10)

Both researchers this week began compiling a list of teachers in this area that fit the scope of our topic. We started with high school instrumental and choral directors that we knew of and began researching other Orange County teachers. This brought up a productive discussion on whether or not to use a teacher that is retired. Though their knowledge on the subject would be extremely helpful, we decided to stick to current music educators at the high school level in Orange County. We also reviewed our survey and decided that it would benefit from adding a few stressors to the existing list.

During this week, we took time to continue to detail, edit, and adjust aspects of the survey we plan on sending out to Orange County high school music educators; after a little bit of a break post-IRB approval, I found I was able to re-approach the action research project and the subject matter in general with a clearer perspective. Time away from dense and continued research was helpful in letting me consider aspects of teacher burnout in different ways. Particularly this week, I have been dealing with a number of challenges with some trouble students, along with heavy and sustained rehearsals with the musical I'm conducting. I was able to think about my experience from the viewpoint of the research we conducted regarding aspects of burnout. A lot of things I had not considered before seemed to be crystal clear, and I felt it was extremely simple but extremely important to consider things like becoming LESS involved in teaching in off time, maintaining a healthier sleeping schedule, and having an outlet to talk about frustrations related to the job with someone for therapeutic purposes. All in all, it became

painfully obvious this week that its important to take care of personal needs, and to help students understand that teachers are also human beings.

Week 2 (3/11-3/17)

We finalized our list of music educators that we would include in our study. As the intervention specialist, I also reviewed our survey and helped our data analyst finalize a complete draft for us to send out. The data analyst was able to add a few more researched points to our survey to maximize our data polled. The data analyst converted our survey word document into a form that is easier for the participants to fill out. The data collection tool was officially completed.

Both researchers discussed which participants were also going to implement the intervention of exercise and a journal in addition to taking the survey post-intervention and participating in an interview.

Because our action research project focuses on high school music educators in the Orange County area, I felt it was acceptable to talk with colleagues and friends outside of Orange County who teach music regarding some aspects of burnout. This week, after compiling a preliminary list of teachers to send the survey out to and starting discussions on whom to interview and implement an intervention with, I spoke to a close friend who has expressed feelings of being burnout in his current position as music educator outside of Orange County. We were able to talk a lot about some of the reasons he was feeling burnout, and what he had done in order to combat it. It was interesting to hear a lot of things that I had either heard before or had gone through myself, but his combative approaches were even more interesting. Things shared included feeling unsupported by the district or administration, lack of personal fulfillment in the field, a generally

condescending attitude by others regarding music and the arts, and students who appeared to not care or were unappreciative. One interesting solution offered was going back to school; he had applied and been accepted to a master's program to study full-time, quitting his job altogether. This solution is certainly tempting and I have thought about it myself, but it was interesting to see leaving the profession altogether as a solution, as he has expressed that he wants to come back to teaching in the future. I definitely will think about discussing this idea of going back to school with interviewees, as I think "taking a break" from the job is certainly something that many high school music educators think about during their deepest streaks of feeling burnout.

Week 3 (3/18-3/24)

Now that the data collection tool was finalized, and we had our list of teachers, we began sending out the first wave of surveys. Teachers seemed to relate to this topic and were very willing to participate in this survey checklist. It seemed that even though they were very busy, they wanted to take time to help the topic of burnout prevention.

This week we ensured that the survey list we created was finalized. After collaboration on things to add and remove, we sent out the survey to the first batch of OC music educators. We've gotten a few responses so far and are hopeful to start seeing trends and patterns in people's responses. As preparation for future intervention, we discussed potential intervention candidates to reach out to and implement our intervention for the remainder of the research period. We are excited to begin looking into some detailed work towards studying teacher burn out in a more focused way with our intervention candidates. Things are at their peak for many of these educators with district festival season currently occurring, and spring break is also a week away for a lot of schools; this

seems to be an important period to get the topic of burn out on people's minds as it is something that might be in the forefront of an educator's mind given the busy season and potentially unresponsive students.

Week 4 (3/25-3/31)

This week each researcher contacted two participants for the intervention and explained the whole process. The two participants I was in charge of contacting were both interested in helping but had some concerns with their schedule. Each of the two directors had tours with their music ensembles and did not think they could maintain the full five days a week requested of them while on tour. I actually found this to be accurate research since a common duty for high school music educators is to organize and execute a tour.

Both participants agreed to do the intervention and planned on starting it on April 1st. No Joke!

As this was the week before our first week of the intervention process, this week was about finalizing participant expectations and debriefing of the intervention process for the participants involved. Both participants had travel plans of some sort (with one doing a band trip overseas), but we were able to discuss ways to incorporate easy yet effective instances of exercises even during spring break travels. One participant was concerned with added responsibility along with having to manage 100 high school students overseas, but we were able to structure a pseudo-schedule to try to keep while traveling. It was interesting to note that even without the responsibility of having to teach, exercise was still seen as a liability rather than an opportunity to take care of personal health.

Week 5 (4/1-4/7)

The participants took the survey before beginning the intervention process on April 1st as to compare before and after results in the interview planned for the end of the intervention. This week the participants began the intervention process of purposeful exercise five days a week and journaling the process. The exercise time was difficult to find as some of the participants were touring with their bands and choirs, but the intervention was gaining information that would eventually help us come up with accurate results. We had also sent out the second wave of surveys to more Orange County high school music educators.

This was the second week of our intervention of three; this was the first week back from spring break, so participants seemed to have some trouble being able to incorporate exercise along with their regular school schedules. This week was about reminders and helping participants try to continue the implementation of purposeful exercise they were able to achieve easily during spring break with a "heavier" and more "stressful" school schedule.

Week 6 (4/8-4/14)

This week I checked in with the intervention participants to see if they had any questions or obstacles. I started planning the post-intervention interviews and encouraged the participants to continue journaling the type, duration, and times of exercise to produce the best results. Both researchers also checked in with some of the survey participants to encourage completion of the checklist survey. We are starting to receive more results. This was the final week of our intervention, so I made sure to wrap up with the participants their expectations. The interviews will ensue after this week, so I also made

sure to update them on the interview and scheduled times to meet with each participant. Additionally, I began to look at some of the data collected to start formulating some ideas as to the kinds of patterns we saw, the patterns we expected, and the concepts we saw from our literature review.

Week 7 (4/15-4/21)

All intervention participants completed the intervention at the end of this week. Interview times were officially scheduled and a paper version of the survey was prepared for the intervention participants to take in person before the interviews to decide if any specific stressors changed because of the intervention.

This was our week to interview our participants regarding the end of their 3-week intervention process. It was a great time being able to finally talk to the participants regarding their experiences, and the interviews went very smoothly. A lot of information was gleaned from the interviews and a lot of it was very surprising as well! The end of the week involved finding patterns and triangulating between literature reviewed, survey results, and interview responses to finally get a draft of our Chapter 4.

Week 8 (4/22-4/28)

This week all intervention participants underwent a semi-structured interview process. Both researchers compiled all the answers into a document. Both researchers, led by the data analyst, went through the responses and began recognizing and documenting patterns. Once all intervention participants were interviewed, we closed the digital survey and compiled those results as well. The data analyst went through the gathered data and created graphs for easier understanding of the information and to be used in our final report. Both researchers began writing the final chapter of the study. As the primary

researcher I also went through and fixed all the formatting of the document, put all writing into the official document, and completed the table of contents.

This was our last week of the action research project; we pooled all data together and began looking for patterns in all three areas we used: literature, survey, and intervention participant interview. It was gratifying and interesting to see things we expected and results that were surprising as well. We wrapped out our last chapter and prepared the final edits for our project.